

**SPRING** 2021

# Windows to Wildlife

Your support at work in Idaho's landscapes



# Lending a Hand to Help Wildlife, Habitat **Conservation, and Researchers**

Community (or citizen) science is an opportunity for anyone to take an active role in scientific discovery. Regardless of background, community scientists are people just like you who voluntarily contribute time, effort, and resources to help researchers, biologists, and scientists collect meaningful and useful data.

Anyone, anywhere can be a scientist. Community science makes the scientific research process accessible to everyone by lowering the barriers to entry and raising the impact of citizen or community engagement. Using simple tools and everyday technologies, community members with little expertise can make and share critical contributions to research.

By engaging with community members, researchers can collect a larger amount of data, and often span more geographic regions, in a shorter amount of time. In turn, this data informs larger conservation efforts. It's also a great opportunity for participants to learn more about species that interest them. It's a win-win situation for all of us—including Idaho's wildlife!

Collaborative efforts are mutually beneficial. The scope of scientists' research is often limited by time, budget, and

people power. With the help of community scientists, research can be done more quickly, information can be shared more readily, and our knowledge can expand exponentially.

#### **Idaho's Community Science in Action:**

- Over 200 community scientists with the Multispecies Baseline Survey (MBI) contributed 2000+ hours of labor by building slug traps. building radiation shields for climate monitoring stations, prepping bait for bait stations, and maintaining bait stations in the field. With the help of community scientists, photo images and DNA samples were captured from two Species of Greatest Conservation Need - wolverine and fisher.
- Idaho Master Naturalists throughout the state participate in community science research surveys for bats, roadkill, bumble bee, creel, moth, and waterfowl. They also help biologists with gill netting, fire rehab photo monitoring, fin clipping, water quality monitoring, and more!





Un-bee-lievable

**Project WAfLS** 

**Getting Started With** eBird

**Global Big Day** 

**Getting Started With** iNaturalist

City Nature Challenge Boise

City Nature Challenge **Bonner County** 

**Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee** Atlas

**Western Monarch** Milkweed Mapper

On the Trail at Roswell Marsh WHA

# Community Science Project Update

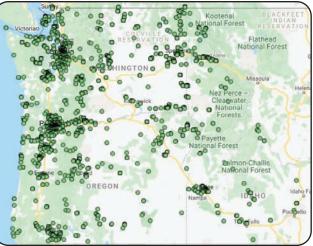
# Community Science in Idaho: An Un-Bee-lievable Success!

by Joel Sauder\*, Wildlife Diversity Biologist Clearwater Region, Idaho Department of Fish and Game



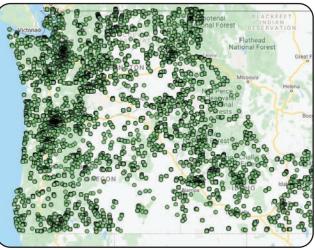
2019 bumble bee training with citizen scientists.

PHOTO: IDEG



Bumble bee distribution data before the Atlas.

PHOTO: Pacific NW Bumble Bee



Bumble bee distribution data after the Atlas. PHOTO: Pacific NW Bumble Bee Atlas

In 2018, the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas was launched. The goal of this collaborative effort between Idaho Fish and Game, the Xerces Society, and Washington Fish and Wildlife was to harness the power of volunteer community scientists to help map occurrences of bumble bees. Historically, much of the available data on bumble bees was centered near urban areas, particularly those with colleges or universities. One goal of the Atlas was to collect data more evenly across the three state area (ID, WA, and OR), which would help biologists gain a better understanding how bumble bee populations were doing.

The response of citizens to the Atlas has been nothing short of un-bee-lievable! Over three years, participants have submitted more than **20,000 observations of bumble bees and conducted over 1,000 formal surveys!** 24 species have been documented as part of the Atlas, including the first known observation of the American Bumble Bee (*Bombus pensylvanicus*) in Idaho, and the second known observation of the High Country Bumble Bee (*Bombus kirbiellus*).

In 2020 alone, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, volunteers donated more than 3,000 hours conducting surveys, and drove more than 50,000 miles, for a combined volunteer match value of \$152,000! Without the contributions of community scientists there is no way biologists could have collected so much data in such a short period of time. Currently all that data is being analyzed to produce a better understanding of the habitat associations, distribution, and population status of bumble bees across the Pacific Northwest.

However the best news it that the Atlas effort is not over! Over the winter, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service selected the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas to receive another three years of funding. Over the next three summers (through 2023), the Atlas will be looking to expand surveys where bumble bee data is lacking, as well as start surveys intentionally targeting species like the Western Bumble Bee (*Bombus occidentalis*), Morrison's Bumble Bee (*Bombus morrisoni*) and the Suckley Cuckcoo Bumble Bee (*Bombus suckleyi*). The Atlas will also be expanding to include California for the first time.

So the opportunity and need for community scientist engagement in the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas is as great as ever. In mid-April the Atlas will be "relaunched" on the project website with updated project goals, information on how to participate, directions on how to sign up for training workshops, and

instructions on how to adopt sites to survey. Your participation can contribute valuable information that will help direct the successful conservation of Idaho's bumble bees.

Learn more about the Pacific NW Bumble Bee Atlas and how to participate on page 6!



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# Community Science Project Update

# Project WAfLS: The End of an Era, and a New Beginning!

by Robert Miller\*, Wildlife Biologist Intermountain Bird Observatory, Boise State University



Short-eared Owl populations have declined precipitously over the past 40 years in the western United States. However, until now the true magnitude and cause of the declines have not been well understood. Six years ago, the Intermountain Bird Observatory launched a landscape study of the owls, known as Project WAfLS (Western Asio flammeus Landscape Study), that started in Idaho and Utah and eventually expanded to a total of eight western states. We recruited partners in neighboring states and over 1,000 community-science volunteers each spring to look for owls using a statistically rigorous survey method that we developed.

We have found that the population of Short-eared Owls in recent years has been reasonably stable, but has shifted broadly from state to state, likely synchronizing with local prey cycles. This is great news if it remains stable, as we had suspected that the decline was continuing. We have also confirmed that anthropogenic (human-altered) landscapes, while regularly used by short-eared owls for breeding, have higher turnover (less consistent use) than native landscapes. This suggests that anthropogenic landscapes may be acting as an ecological trap for the species - meaning the habitat is attractive for breeding, but results in poor success. During the six-year project we have discovered a large number of anthropogenic sources of mortality. These may be limiting the owls' population and be the cause of the ecological trap, as all of these sources occur in higher densities on anthropogenic landscapes. These sources of mortality include roadway mortality, aircraft strikes, agricultural harvest mortality, fence-line collisions, stock-tank

drownings, and solar farm mortalities.

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 $Post-breeding\ movements\ of\ two\ Short-eared\ Owls\ fitted\ with\ transmitters\ during\ summer\ 2020.$ 

PHOTO: IBO

Our plan moving forward is to discontinue the broad Project WAfLS surveys, although they may still occur in some states through our partner organizations. We will instead shift our efforts to the next stage of Short-eared Owl conservation by using our discovered knowledge from Project WAfLS to seek answers at the next level of detail. We are specifically interested in the ecological trap question and if the sources of mortality are additive (limiting the population) or compensatory (would have occurred anyway through other means).

We have launched a roadway mortality pilot study in eastern Idaho (Project PROWI, partnering with Idaho Fish and Game and the Upper Snake chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalists). We have also launched a Shorteared Owl movement project (with Alaska Fish and Game, Owl Research Institute, Wyoming Game and Fish, and Teton Raptor Center) tracking the nomadic movements of individualsand their proximity to the mortality risks listed above. And, in the spring of 2021 we will be launching an alfalfa harvest

mortality mitigation project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Game, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Each of these new initiatives build on the results we collected through Project WAfLS and will provide critical data for future decisions.

All of these projects will continue to depend on our fantastic network of committed community science volunteers.

# Getting Started With eBird

## eBird is the go-to platform for birders and scientists alike



eBird is a global database of bird observations. It is an amazing tool for birders to keep track of their sightings, but it is also much more than that. It is a repository for community science observations on an unprecedented scale, and by partnering with us to enable audio and photo upload, it has now become a key portal for the long-term archival of rich media.

If you want to get started with eBird, here are five key steps to help you get eBirding faster (click any step to learn more).

#### Get started with eBird

#### 1 - Create an account

To save your bird observations in eBird, you'll need to create a free Cornell Lab account. This account works across Cornell Lab projects including Merlin Bird ID, Bird Academy, Project Feederwatch, and the Great Backyard Bird Count.

If you already have an account for these other projects, you can use it for eBird, too! No need to create a separate account.

#### 2 - Take the eBird Essentials Course

eBird Essentials is a free, self-paced course that will walk you step-by-step through eBird's most popular features. You'll learn how to keep checklists, explore data, and make your observations more valuable for science and conservation - all on your own time and all completely for free!

#### 3 - Submit birding checklists

There are two main ways to share your bird observations with eBird: submit them through the eBird.org website, or with the free eBird Mobile app.

eBird Mobile is our most popular way to report birding checklists. Easily keep a running list of the birds you see and hear in the field, even without wifi. When you're done, eBird Mobile automatically calculates your time spent birding and helps you calculate your distance - allowing you to focus on the birds. You can even explore data and share checklists with your fellow birders directly from the app!

#### **eBird Checklist Basics:**

Whether you submit bird observations on eBird.org or eBird Mobile, every checklist should include

- Where you went birding (a single map location)
- When you went birding (a single calendar date)
- How you went birding (an observation type)
- Which birds you observed and how many individuals (counting tips)

You will also be asked whether your checklist is complete. A complete checklist is a report of all the birds you could detect and identify by sight or sound. A checklist is incomplete if you identified some birds but chose not to report them (e.g., a list of "highlights only").

#### 4 - Explore sightings

eBird is a powerful resource for finding target species and discovering new places to go birding. Below are some of the ways you can explore eBird data.

- Species maps
- eBird Hotspots popular birding sites recommended by other birders
- Regional summary pages with species lists, recent visits, top birders, and more
- Bar charts of how frequently birds are reported throughout the year

Visit our Explore eBird Data info page for more information about these and other ways to discover birds.

#### 5 - Follow eBird Best Practices

eBird gathers bird observations around the world and makes them available to researchers, educators, and conservationists working to understand and conserve birds. Your eBird observations can power cutting-edge science like eBird's status and trend maps.

(Information from: ebird.org)



With just a tap of your finger: using your mobile phone, you can access eBird during your birding trip to enter your observations

PHOTO: eBird NW

# Community Science Opportunity

# Global Big Day - May 8, 2021

## Be Part of Birding's Biggest Team!

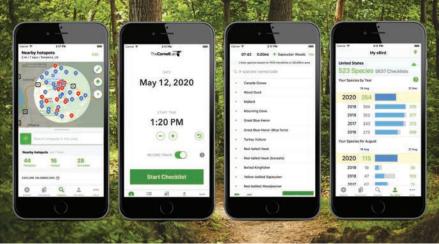
(Cornell Press Release) Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on May 8 and share the birds you find with eBird.

Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with our free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help us better understand global bird populations through products like these animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

Last year, Global Big Day brought more birders together virtually than ever before. More than 50,000 people from 175 countries submitted a staggering 120,000 checklists with eBird, setting a new world record for a single day of birding. Will you help us surpass last year's records? However you choose to participate, please continue to put safety first and follow your local COVID guidelines.

#### How to participate

- Get an eBird account: eBird is a worldwide bird checklist program used by millions of birders. It's what allows us to compile everyone's sightings into a single massive Global Big Day list—while at the same time collecting the data to help scientists better understand birds. Sign up here. It's 100% free from start to finish.
- Watch birds on May 8: It's that simple. You don't need to be a bird expert or go out all day long, even 10 minutes of birding from home counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone. You can report what you find from anywhere in the world.
- Enter what you see and hear in eBird: You can enter your sightings via our website or download the free eBird Mobile app to make submitting lists even easier. Please enter your checklists before 11 May to be included in our initial results announcement.



Contributing sightings is easy with the free eBird Mobile app. Download for iOS or Android

Watch the sightings roll in: During the day, follow along with sightings from more than 170 countries in real-time on our Global Big Day page.

#### **Global Big Day Pro Tips**

- If you're new to eBird or want to make your checklists more valuable for science and conservation, take our free eBird Essentials course.
- Get the Cornell Lab's Merlin Bird ID app for help identifying tricky species, then use eBird to report them so your sightings are part of the Global Big Day totals.
- Use eBird Mobile Explore to find recently reported species or new places to go birding
- Take photos and add them to your checklist—they might end up on the Global Big Day
- Make your sightings more valuable: submit complete checklists, keep counts of the birds that you see, and keep multiple checklists throughout the day.
- Share what you're seeing on social media with **#globalbigday**!

On May 8, we hope you'll be a part of our global birding team. Have fun, enjoy the birds you find, stay safe, and share your sightings on eBird. Because in our world, every bird counts.



Mountain bluebird - Idaho's state bird!

PHOTO: Public Domain

# Getting Started With > Naturalist

# iNaturalist is an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature

One of the world's most popular nature apps, iNaturalist helps you identify the plants and animals around you. Get connected with a community of over a million scientists and naturalists who can help you learn more about nature! What's more, by recording and sharing your observations, you'll create research quality data for scientists working to better understand and protect nature. iNaturalist is a joint initiative by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society.

That's the vision behind iNaturalist. So if you like recording your findings from the outdoors, or if you just like learning about life, join us! It is also a crowdsourced species identification system and an organism occurrence recording tool. You can use it to record your own observations, get help with identifications, collaborate with others to collect this kind of information for a common purpose, or access the observational data collected by iNaturalist users.

That's the vision behind iNaturalist. So if you like recording your findings from the outdoors, or if you just like learning about life, join us!

#### **Look For These iNaturalist Idaho Projects**

City Nature Challenge 2021 - Boise (see page 7) City Nature Challenge 2021 - Bonner County (see page 8) Idaho Invertebrate Project

Idaho Amphibian and Reptile iNaturalist Project Biodiversity of Idaho

Idaho Mycofora Project

Harriman State Park of Idaho Biodiversity Project

North Idaho Biodiversity

Birds of Idaho

**Idaho Species Observations** 

Idaho Flora

Idaho Roadkill

## Watch This Video to Learn More:





## **WANT TO PARTICIPATE?**

Click on the picture to watch a webinar that teaches you everything you need to take part in the fun of the City Nature Challenge!

April 30th – May 3rd COLLECTION: Take photos of wild plants, animals and fungi. May 4th – 9th

IDENTIFICATION: Identify what was found.

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE

Join in the global collaboration to document the biodiversity in cities across the globe by discovering and recording the species in our neighborhoods, parks, downtown and open spaces.

- STEP 1: Mark your calendar to get outside April 30 May 3.
- STEP 2: Download the iNaturalist app and create an account.
- STEP 3: Take photos of WILD plants, animals, and/or fungi anywhere in Boise or Garden City. Be sure to note the location of the creature or plant.
- STEP 4: Upload your observations (photos) to the app to share with the iNaturalist community.
- STEP 5: Help identify species or learn more as your discoveries get identified by the community May 4 9.

VISIT: City Nature Challenge Website: citynaturechallenge.org | CONTACT: kgnojewski@cityofboise.org or 208-608-7609

City Nature Challenge 2021



PARKS AND RECREATION









BOISE AREA PARTNERS: College of Western Idaho Biology Department and Biology Club, Intermountain Bird Observatory, Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, Boise WaterShed, MK Nature Center, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Botanical Garden, Foothills Learning Center, Boise Urban Garden School, Idaho Native Plant Society- Pahove Chapter, Ada County 4-H



# Participate in the Bonner County BioBlitz!

April 30 - May 3

May 4—May 9

Take pictures of wild plants and animals.

Identification of what was found.

**City Nature Challenge: Bonner County (CNCBC)** is a BioBlitz event taking place in Spring 2021, engaging people to document the biodiversity of Bonner County. A BioBlitz is a citizen-science, crowdsourcing effort to record as many species within a designated location and time period as possible.



#### HOW TO ADD YOUR OBSERVATIONS TO THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE.

Join in the global competition to document the diversity of species in cities across the globe by exploring and documenting the diversity of wild plants and animals in your area

STEP 1: Download the iNaturalist app & create an account.

STEP 2: Take photos of WILD plants & animals to make observations. If they're not wild, mark them as captive/cultivated!

STEP 3: Upload your observations (photos) to the app & share with the iNaturalist community.

STEP 4: Learn more as your finds get identified!

**VISIT:** https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2021-bonner-county-id **CONTACT:** imn.sandpoint@gmail.com **OR** Look for us on Facebook!











University of Idaho Extension















# Getting Started With the Pacific NW Bumble Bee Atlas

## Bumble bees are essential pollinators in wildlands and agriculture

#### What?

The Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas is a collaborative project to track and conserve the bumble bees of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Our goal is to gain a better understanding of the distribution of bumble bees throughout the region. This will help us to more effectively enact conservation measures that will benefit these important native pollinators. We've divided the area up into priority grid cells to ensure a broad distribution of sampling in all of the unique habitats of the region. This project will help the researchers gain a better understanding of where bumble bees are thriving in the Pacific Northwest, and glean information about what habitat features are contributing to productive bumble bee communities. Ultimately we will better understand how to manage lands throughout the region that will help to support a more healthy ecosystem.



#### Why?

Bumble bees are essential pollinators in our natural landscapes, as well as in gardens and on farms. Idaho, Oregon and Washington are home to nearly 30 species of bumble bees, and several of them face an uncertain future. The western bumble bee has declined dramatically - especially in the western portion of its range, and species like Morrison's Bumble Bee and the Suckley Cuckoo Bumble Bee are in decline. Conservation partners in Oregon, Washington and Idaho have joined forces to support bumble bee conservation through a region-wide project to collect information on bumble bee species distribution. The missing partner is you - become a community scientist and join us!

#### How?

We aim to make this as fun and as inclusive as possible. As such, we've created opportunities so that you can get involved at many different levels. The first thing you will need to participate is a Bumble Bee Watch account. It's easy to set up online and takes about 5 minutes.

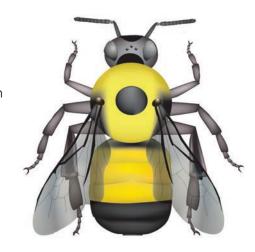
Once you've done that, here are the different levels at which you can get involved:

- At a very basic level you can submit observations of bumble bees to BumbleBeeWatch.org. You can share observations from your backyard, where you work, or on your travels around the region.
- If you are interested in getting more involved you can officially adopt a grid cell and participate in our more formal surveys: either Point Surveys or Roadside Surveys. This takes a commitment to contribute to the project. At a minimum you'll need to:
  - Familiarize yourself with project protocols and procedures. One of the best ways to do this is to attend one of our online training events check the Atlas website in late April for training dates (www.pnwbumblebeeatlas.org/events.html)
  - Visit a location within your grid cell two times (at a minimum more sampling
    is very welcome if you are willing) during the bumble bee season and use our
    standardized protocol to sample for bumble bees as well as the surrounding
    habitat. To meet this requirement you can visit two different locations within
    the grid on the same day, or revisit the same location on two different days.
  - Agree to submit your data online.

If all of this sounds great and you're ready to do all of this AND become a project ambassador, please visit us at pnwbumblebeeatlas.org or contact us at joel.sauder@idfg.idaho.gov



The Western Bumble Bee - *Bombus occidentalis*. This species has declined dramatically in the intermountain west. It is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Idaho. Easily identified by its white rump.



Nevada Bumble Bee - Bombus nevadensis. This large bodied bumble bee is common throughout much of the eastern portion of the Northwest. The males have large bulbous eyes.

# Getting Started with the Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper

# The Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper facilitates the study and conservation of the monarch butterfly in western states

The Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper (WMMM) is part of a collaborative effort to map and better understand monarch butterflies and their host plants across the western U.S. Data compiled through this project will improve our understanding of the distribution and phenology of monarchs and milkweeds, identify important breeding areas, and help us better understand monarch conservation needs. Some of the key research questions that these data will help us answer include:

- Where are different milkweed species growing in the West?
- Where are monarchs occurring in the West?
- Where are monarchs breeding in the West?
- When is milkweed emerging and senescing (dying back) in the West?
- How does milkweed phenology (life cycle) differ by species?
- When is monarch breeding occurring in specific areas/regions of the West?
- · What types of habitats are different milkweed species associated with?

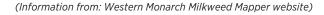


Your help is critical to the success of this project! Because monarchs and their host plants are found all across the western U.S., the best way to document them is to engage a multitude of volunteers and their cameras. You can participate in this effort by using this website to:

- · Upload your photos of monarchs and milkweeds;
- Identify milkweeds using our milkweed key, which profiles over 40 milkweed species found in the west:
- Submit data which will help researchers determine the distribution, phenology, and conservation needs of monarchs and milkweeds in the west; and
- Learn about monarchs, their host plants, and ongoing conservation efforts for these species.

Participating in our project is simple and you can get started now by creating an account via the "sign in" tab at the top of the WMMM page. Once you have an account, go out and start looking! Check your local parks, natural areas, gardens, and even roadsides. We're looking for all stages of monarchs, so don't forget to look at milkweed leaves and stems to see if caterpillars or eggs are present. Snap a few photos (learn more about how to photograph milkweeds and monarchs here) and then sign in and submit your data via our Milkweed and Monarch Sightings forms. Have fun while learning more about monarchs and the special habitats they use in your area!

Data compiled through the WMMM will enhance State wildlife Action Plans (SWAP) by addressing critical knowledge gaps on western monarch distribution, relative abundance, and habitat use within each state. In addition, this information will improve the quality and comprehensiveness of SWAPs by enabling assessment of monarch conservation status, key threats, and actions needed for state and metapopulation viability. Information, data, and tools developed from this project will significantly enhance the utility and relevance of WAPs. SWAP utility will also be advanced through improved networking and data exchange with decision makers, land managers, researchers, and stakeholders to facilitate actions that support landscape-scale conservation of monarch butterflies and other pollinator species.





Monarchs on milkweed.

Photo: IDFG



Photo: Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper



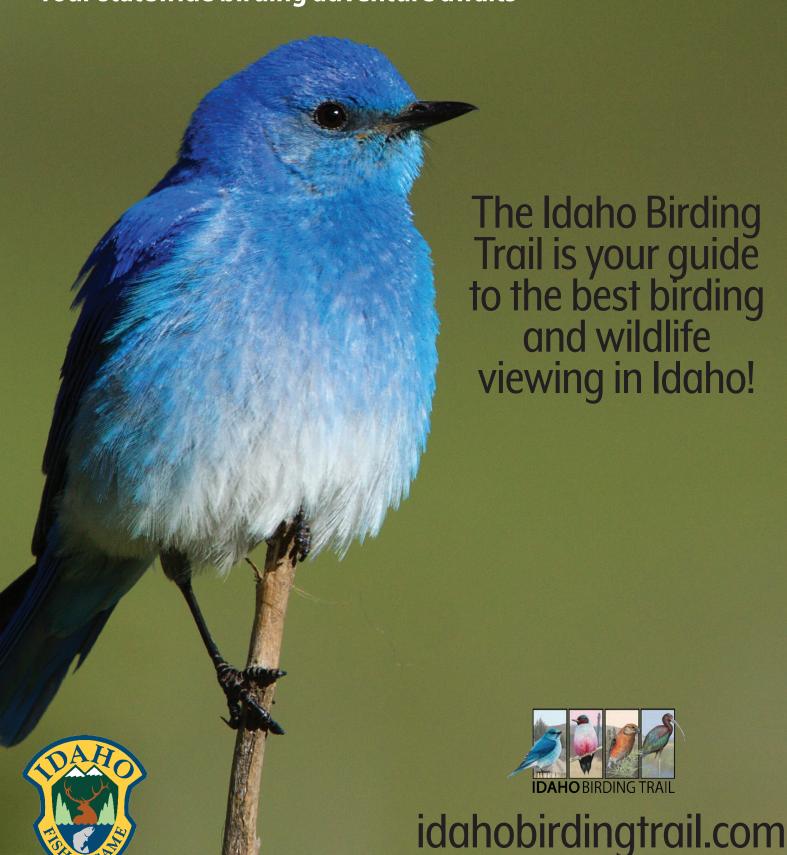
Photo: Xerces Societ

# IDAHO NONGAME WILDLIFE FUND



# Bird IDAHO

Your statewide birding adventure awaits



# On The Idaho Birding Trail

## Roswell Marsh Wildlife Habitat Area



Pebble Lane. Parma • (208) 722-5888 idfg.idaho.gov/wma/fort-boise

eBird ebird.org/hotspot/L234583

LAT/LONG: 43.7490252,-117.004652

DIRECTIONS: I-84 Exit #26; W on US 20/26 to Parma; continue W through town and turn L (S) on Roswell Blvd (ID 18) for 2.8 mi; R (W) onto ID 18 for 2.7 mi to marsh.

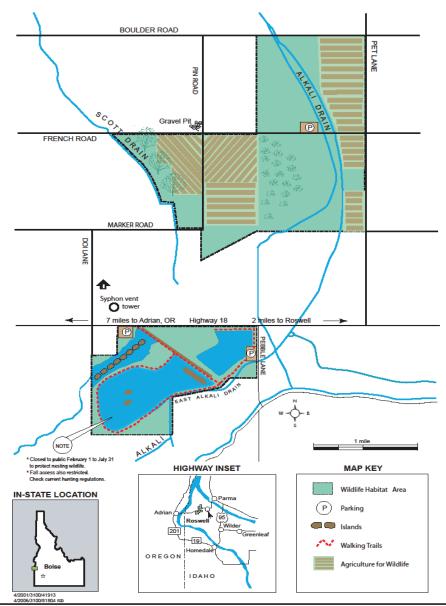
Roswell Marsh Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) is a 680-acre wetland, meadow, and shrub complex located five miles south of the Boise River. The WHA provides nesting and winter habitat for upland birds and waterfowl and serves as an important stopover location for migratory birds. It is one of Idaho's most dependable location for thousands of Snow and Greater White-fronted Geese during spring migation. From mid-March through mid-April, there can be up to 60,000 Snow Geese and 40,000 Greater White-fronted Geese at the WMA. Snow Geese fly out daily to feeding sites on private land before dawn to feed, usually on corn stubble several miles away. They fly back at mid-day to their resting areas on the WHA. These geese spend their winters in central California, fly up to Idaho to refuel, and then continue to fly to their breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic, the north slope of Alaska, or Wrangel Island in Russia!

#### What Did You See at the WHA?

Join the community science revolution and record your observations from Roswell via eBird. eBird is a database of global bird observations. It is free to use and in 2020, 860 million global bird observations from over 597,000 registered eBirders were collected!

### Snow Geese Fill the Air Video











Greater White-fronted Goose



#### Windows to Wildlife

Wildlife Diversity Program PO Box 25 Boise, ID 83707-0025

#### Forwarding Service Requested

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To submit an article, obtain a subscription, or notify us of address change, contact the Editor at the above address.

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Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation

Idaho Power

Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

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U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service