IDAHO’S OSPREYS MOVE EAST

By Dr. Wayne Melquist

In an effort to establish a population of ospreys in southeast South Dakota, in 2004 the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks requested the assistance of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and University of Idaho in providing nestling ospreys. Northern Idaho is home to a healthy population of nesting ospreys. Since inception of the project, 72 juvenile ospreys have been collected from nests (one nestling is always left in a nest) in the Coeur d’Alene River drainage and transported by plane and vehicle to release (hack) sites in SD.

In 2008, the release of 20 birds in Yankton, SD was coordinated by raptor biologist and rehabilitator Jane Fink (Birds of Prey Northwest in Coeur d’Alene), with assistance from Greg Kaltenecker (Idaho Bird Observatory in Boise) and a host of volunteers. Similar to other hacking projects, the ospreys were placed in hacking boxes at approximately 6 weeks old and fed daily. Once the ospreys reached their normal fledging age of about 7-9 weeks old, the box was opened to allow the birds to fly for the first time. The ospreys were continually monitored during daylight hours and provided food at the hack site. It took a few weeks for young osprey to be proficient at catching prey (fish) and thereby independent from the hack site.

Five of these birds received satellite-tracking transmitters in a continuing effort to monitor migration routes and wintering areas. Based on past tracking efforts, the released ospreys tend to follow the Missouri and Mississippi River drainages to the Gulf coast. Once there, the birds either turn east and migrate down Florida and island-hop through the Caribbean to South America. Migrating young that turn west tend to migrate along the Texas coast into Mexico and Central America. One of the youngsters appeared to winter in Cuba, while another went west and south into Costa Rica.

The transmitter on 1 of the 5 birds instrumented this summer failed before the bird initiated migration. The other four birds continue to be on the move:

- Female A-01 left the hack site on 7 September and headed to the Mississippi River drainage in central Arkansas. From there she headed east, ending up in the Columbus, GA area near the Alabama-Georgia border north of the Gulf of Mexico. A-01 remained in this area for a month when the signal was unfortunately lost on 21 September.
- After leaving the hack site on 12 September, A-15 arrived at the Gulf of Mexico near Freeport, TX 4 days later. The bird continued down the coast to the La Coma, Mexico area, where it remains today.
- A-04 left the hack site on continued on page 2

Locations (red dots) of the four osprey fitted with transmitters.
Idaho is the “land of plenty” when it comes to the great outdoors. Many Idahoans spend time outdoors year-round, and visitors to our state marvel at its beauty.

Did you know, however, that today’s children are increasingly disconnected from the natural world? Many of today’s youth have few outdoor experiences. For all of Idaho’s bountiful outdoors, a good number of our children do not spend time outdoors.

In 2006, author Richard Louv published “Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder.” The book gave voice to an undercurrent of concern among child advocates that today’s children are suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally from a disconnection with the natural world. The results of this disconnection, Louv argues, are sobering. Our youth are experiencing obesity, diabetes, depression, and attention deficit disorders at an alarming rate.

The “cure” for many of these physical, mental and emotional problems may be just outside the door! Outdoor activity inspires children to be more active, both physically and mentally. Children who become engaged with nature at a young age are more likely to care about nature and be active in outdoor pursuits when they become adults. They, in turn, become parents who understand the value of the nature-child connection and the natural world around them. Ultimately, these children will develop a sense of place and respect for our land.

Many Americans are actively working to promote outdoor activity for children, from unstructured outdoor experiences to organized events. Idahoans, too, are acting to help our youth grow in healthier ways, including spending more time outdoors.

The Idaho Children and Nature Network is a coalition of diverse agencies, organizations and private citizens united in the common cause of empowering all Idahoans to lead healthy lives by developing a sense of place in Idaho’s outdoors. Its mission is to “connect children with nature in Idaho, from backyards to mountaintops.”

The Network will leverage collective resources to increase community awareness, provide access to information, increase participation in outdoor activities and foster respect and appreciation for Idaho’s outdoor heritage, improve integration of environmental education, create private-public partnerships, and work to improve the physical, mental and emotional health of Idaho’s children.

During January, the Network will launch a statewide initiative called “Be Outside.” Look for “Kick-Off” Events in your community throughout the year that you and your family can participate in to get a taste of Idaho’s outdoors. A very creative website will be live soon, packed with information such as the fun, accessible and affordable “101 Things to Do Outdoors.” Stay tuned, too, for opportunities to join the Network as a private citizen, business, group or organization. Visit: www.beoutsideidaho.org for more information.

Wayne Melquist is the former IDFG Nongame Wildlife Manager. Upon retiring from IDFG in 2003, he spent 3 years as a Research Associate Professor at the University of Idaho, where he continues to work part-time on the osprey and other wildlife projects. He has banded and worked on ospreys in north Idaho for 36 years and coordinated the collection of these ospreys.

**Sharing the outdoors together can build strong family bonds and create life-long memories.**
Here are some things you can do to support Idaho’s “Be Outside” initiative:

❖ Take a child outside. Explore! Play! Appreciate! This can be as simple as turning over rocks, watching birds or doing homework outdoors.

❖ Think back to your childhood. Remember what you enjoyed best outdoors, and try to recreate similar experiences with youth.

❖ Encourage “unplugged” time away from technological devices in your home, school or church.

❖ Be a “conduit” of information: tell others about this issue.

❖ Host a children’s outdoor event, or support and participate in family and youth outdoor activities.

❖ Contact the Network to arrange for speakers for your business group, organization, or community.

❖ Give a donation to an organization that is committed to outdoor activity for kids.

❖ Contribute to and use the Network’s website: www.beoutsideIdaho.org

Together, we can encourage Idahoans to “Be Outside!”

For more information, contact Meggan Laxalt Mackey, Network Chair, 208-378-5796.

Welcome to Our New Idaho Watchable Wildlife Coordinator

After 3½ of successfully running the Watchable Wildlife Program, we bid Sara Focht a fond farewell as she continues on with her IDFG career at the MK Nature Center as a Wildlife Educator. Sara’s dedication and enthusiasm enabled the Watchable Wildlife Program to grow to new heights while she promoted Idaho’s watchable wildlife.

Not new to the watchable wildlife scene, Deniz Aygen hit the ground running when Sara passed the Watchable Wildlife Coordinator torch this past October.

Deniz joined the Idaho Fish and Game team in April 2005 while working on the IBIS (Idaho Bird Inventory Survey) project. Prior to this, she worked as a field biologist for research universities and non-profit bird observatories conducting migratory bird counts, banding, and education programs in such places as Virginia, Massachusetts, Michigan, Israel, Italy, and Costa Rica.

She received her BS in Biology from Michigan State University and Master’s from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington with emphasis on seabird diet composition.

Deniz has assisted Sara during the last three years on various watchable wildlife projects from the Idaho Birding Trail guidebook and webpage to educational leaflets. Deniz also is the education director for the Idaho Bird Observatory.

Deniz says, “We are truly fortunate to live in a state where wildlife and recreational opportunities abound. I look forward to connecting Idaho’s citizens with our great natural resources while emphasizing the importance of community conservation and education.”

We are going electronic!

The Windows to Wildlife newsletter brings you watchable wildlife viewing events, topics, and information to your mailbox four times a year. In an effort to be more efficient while making our funds go further (each issue costs over 50¢), we are going electronic. You will still receive a newsletter in the mail once a year, however the three other issues will be delivered right to your email inbox. The spring edition (mailed in April) of Windows to Wildlife will be in print while the summer, fall, and winter editions will be electronic.

Your email address will never be sold or used for any other purpose than delivering the newsletter!

If you would like to make the switch and continue to receive newsletters four times a year, please contact Deniz Aygen at daygen@idfg.idaho.gov or (208) 287-2750. To mail in your request, use the form on page 5.

You can also view the newsletters online at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/news/newsletters/windows_wildlife/
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The Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee is comprised of the following agencies and organizations:

- Golden Eagle Audubon
- Idaho Department of Commerce & Labor
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- Idaho Power
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Windows to Wildlife is a quarterly publication of the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and IDFG Conservation Sciences Program.

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The following people made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of a tax checkoff donation between September through November 2008. This list represents those who marked the contributor box when they donated to the Conservation Sciences Program. However, many subscribers not listed here have contributed generously and Idaho’s nongame wildlife thanks you ALL!

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John A. Vinson

Thank You to All Contributors

Participating in the GBBC?
(see page 6)
We would like to recognize YOU in the next issue of Window to Wildlife!

Send your name, address, and number of birds and species seen to Deniz at daygen@idfg.idaho.gov. Prizes for the top three entries will be awarded!
The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It’s a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity,” said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. “Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future.”

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. The data these “citizen scientists” collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. "The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director, John Fitzpatrick. “With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade.”

JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT
COUNTOFFUN, COUNTOFTHEFUTURE

How to do the GBBC…

IT’S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3!

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 13–16, 2009.

2. For each type of bird you see, count the most you see at any one time.

3. Enter your results on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site!

Visit: www.birdcount.org for more info