

Windows to Wildlife



WINTER 2013 A PUBLICATION OF THE IDAHO WATCHABLE WILDLIFE PROGRAM AND IDAHO'S WILDLIFE DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Swan Viewing in a Winter Wonderland

by Rob Cavallaro*
Regional Wildlife Biologist, Idaho Department of Fish and Game- Idaho Falls Region

Trumpeter swans, the largest waterfowl species in North America, were once threatened with extinction due primarily to unregulated harvest. Trumpeter feathers were sought after for quill pens, ladies' hats, and for use as powder puffs. Establishment of refuges and legal protection has brought trumpeter swans back from the brink and several populations are now thriving. In Idaho, trumpeter swans are designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need due to threats to their breeding and wintering habitat.

Trumpeter swans in eastern Idaho are part of the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) that numbers approximately 5,500 individuals. Most RMP trumpeters breed in Alberta, Canada but there is also a smaller, more fragile, breeding flock in the Greater Yellowstone Area.

Although trumpeters breed in relatively low numbers in eastern Idaho, the Upper Snake Region provides the most important winter habitat for trumpeters in the Rocky Mountains. During the 2011 midwinter count conducted from aircraft by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with IDFG, nearly 60% of the RMP was wintering in the Upper Snake Region along the Henry's Fork, South Fork, Teton and Main Snake River corridors.

One of the best places to enjoy viewing wintering trumpeters is in Island Park area along the Henrys Fork River. Approximately 450 trumpeters winter in the area between the community of Last Chance and Harriman State Park, affording winter recreationists a unique opportunity to observe a beautiful living icon of the Yellowstone area as they ski or sled groomed trails along the Henrys Fork River.

Harriman State Park has a variety of overnight accommodations for winter adventurers and a groomed ski trail system that follows the Henrys Fork River and unparalleled wild swan viewing. Harriman also shelters a diversity of wintering waterfowl such as Canada goose, northern pintail, American wigeon, mallard, common goldeneye and an occasional Eurasian wigeon. Other wildlife frequently seen along Harriman State Park trails includes bald eagle, moose, and river otter.

Several lodges in nearby Island Park that enable excellent swan viewing right outside hotel or dining room windows. The Truthhunter Lodge in Last Chance has a fly shop, art gallery, bar, restaurant, and lodging situated 160 feet from the Henrys Fork River. The Anglers Lodge, located near the mouth of the Box Canyon of the Henrys Fork River, also affords comfortable accommodations in proximity to wintering trumpeters. Just north of Last Chance at the confluence of the Buffalo River and the Henrys Fork is Pond's Lodge, which features cabins of all sizes and a full-service bar and restaurant adjacent to ski and snowmobile trails along the Buffalo River.

To learn more about planning a trip to view wintering trumpeter swans in Island Park visit www.islandparkidaho.com.

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Trumpeter swan (BY-NC) Caleb Stemmens on
Flickr: EOL Images



WATCHING IDAHO'S WILDLIFE

Hagerman Wildlife Viewing Area

by Debbie Dane, Executive Director*
Southern Idaho Tourism

The Hagerman Valley is known for its beauty, recreation opportunities and birds; and now birders, from the casual to the passionate have a new place to watch the different species that frequent Anderson Ponds in the Hagerman Valley.

The Hagerman Wildlife Viewing Area is located at the Hagerman Rest Area (milepost 184) just a few miles south of the community of Hagerman; it is designed to provide opportunities for visitors and birders to view the abundant and diverse species in their native habitat.

Volunteers with the advice of experienced birders and the Idaho Fish and Game designed the area to be accessible to view or photograph birds without disturbing them. Birders view the different species on the ponds through a unique stainless steel viewing screen featuring wildlife cut-outs. The screen was designed and fabricated by Hatfield Manufacturing in Wendell, who usually fabricates devices and apparatus for the area's dairy farmers. "We wanted a screen that provided the best possible birding experience for all ages and was low maintenance for the Department of Transportation who maintains the rest area," comments Jim Olson, Chairman of the Thousand Springs Scenic Byway Committee. All major construction is complete and the site is enjoying use by area families and birding enthusiasts. Interpretive signs, painting, and additional vegetation for cover will be installed in the spring.

The project was not without its challenges. The Byway Committee worked their way through contract and construction delays and increased materials costs. "This project is unique because of the support it has of the stakeholders in the area" said Dave Parrish of the Idaho Fish and Game who is a former chairman of the Byway Committee. This support came in the form of donated labor and materials by contractors and the Department of Transportation and additional match funding provided by the Hagerman Valley Chamber of Commerce, Prairie Falcon Chapter of the National Audubon Society, and Watchable Wildlife. "Everyone involved kept their eyes on the end result and invested, worked, and made the project a reality," states Debbie Dane, Executive Director of Southern Idaho Tourism.

photo © Wallace Keck



WINTER WILDLIFE EVENTS

Boise Watershed

11818 West Joplin Rd., Boise; (208) 489-1284
www.cityofboise.org/Bee/WaterShed/Home/index.aspx

The Boise WaterShed is open every 3rd Saturday of each month from 10 am - 2 pm as part of the Watershed Weekend series. Join us for an outdoor walking tour of the Wastewater Treatment Plant at 1 pm. FREE admission! No pre-registration required unless indicated.

Jan. 19 - Family Snow Day

Everyone loves a snow day! Join us for a flurry of activities from 10:00 to noon at the Boise WaterShed, followed by a trip to Bogus Basin for an afternoon of snowshoeing courtesy of Bogus Basin SnowSchool. The morning will include fun snow-related activities, crafts, and games. At 10:30, BSU Geoscientist PhD student Annika Quick will do a demonstration on Idaho's Mighty Glaciers. Join us as we learn how glaciers can literally move mountains! At noon, pre-registered participants will be driven to the Bogus Basin Nordic Lodge (courtesy of Caldwell Transportation Company), where snowshoes will be provided. Small groups will be led by SnowSchool leaders on family-friendly trails. Beginners welcome!

All may participate in the morning activities at the Boise WaterShed, but space is limited on the snowshoe trip. Registration and a \$5 per person donation is required by January 16 to reserve your place in the program. Call 608-7300 or email boisewatershed@cityofboise.org. No wastewater tour today.

Feb. 16 -Presidents for the Planet

Create eco-friendly arts and crafts and enjoy our exhibit hall. At 10:30, Travel back in time with Janet Worthington from the Idaho Humanities Council as she introduces you to the living history character Abigail Adams: The Dearest Friend of John Adams.

March 16-Spaceship Earth

Likewise Planet Earth is our spaceship, with billions of people depending on its limited resources. At 10:30 join Cellular Biologist and BSU student Jake Goyden to come learn about what astronauts do to survive in space and how Earth faces similar challenges. Learn about space research happening in Boise. You can even try liquid nitrogen ice cream! At 1:00 go on a wastewater treatment tour to see how Boise cleans its waste water.

Activities and crafts take place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., followed by a wastewater treatment plant tour from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. For guest safety, closed-toe shoes are required. FREE admission! No pre-registration required.

Castle Rocks State Park

(208) 824-5901;
www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/coeur_d_alene.html

March 18; 10am-12pm

Kids: Learn about Castle Rocks while traversing the park on snowshoes. The camp for children 5-9 years old will be held on February 18th for 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Activities include backcountry hike, animal track identification and nature in winter. Snowshoes will be provided. Space is limited and reservations are required. All activities are Free.



Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

18 miles southwest of Arco, on Hwy. 20/26/93; (208) 527-1300 ;
<http://www.nps.gov/crmo/>

A Trip to the Moon: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the hour, 25 minutes; Visitor Center

Part of the award-winning Outdoor Idaho series, this film provides an excellent introduction to the natural and cultural history of the Monument.

Among the Craters of the Moon: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the half-hour, 17 minutes; Visitor Center

Created in 2005 by documentary film-maker Steve Wursta, this is a shortened version of an hour long presentation about the fascinating life and adventures of explorer and park-founder, Robert Limbert.

Patio Talks: Daily at 3 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. Saturdays; 15 min.; Visitor Center

Enjoy a short presentation on the visitor center plaza. Check at the visitor center for topics.

Cave Walks: Daily at 1 p.m. and 9 a.m. Saturdays; 1½ hours, 1 mile; Caves Area trailhead

Follow the trail through seas of ropy lava into the strange underground world of a lava tube. Wear sturdy close-toed shoes, bring a flashlight, and a cave permit.

Deer Flat NWR

13751 Upper Embankment Rd. Nampa; (208) 467-9278; www.fws.gov/deerflat

All events are held at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. Visit www.fws.gov/deerflat or contact 208-467-9278 or deerflat@fws.gov for more information.

Scout Day

Take a hike! Make a nature craft! Earn a badge! Scout day is an opportunity to meet other scouts, have fun, and earn wildlife badges for girl scouts or cub scouts. Saturday, Jan, 12, Feb. 2 & March 2: 1-3pm.

Jan. 15- 7pm; Photographing Landscapes and the Proper Camera Equipment

Breeding populations of raptors within the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) have been very well studied. Wintering raptors in this same area, however, have received very little attention. Neil will present his research on the population changes of wintering raptors in the NCA over the last 20 years. Using locally intensive surveys and historic Christmas Bird Count data, Neil explores whether habitat change, climate change, or both, are influencing changes in southwestern Idaho's wintering raptors.

Jan 19, 26; Feb. 16, 23; March 2- Junior Duck Stamp Art Days

K-12 students are invited to drop in between 10am-4pm at the visitor center to have fun, draw, and learn about Idaho waterfowl. All art supplies are provided for you to create your own Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest entry.

Feb. 9- 9:30-4pm; Hibernate, Migrate, or Insulate: A Winter Day Camp

Do squirrels have sleeping bags? Do bears have space heaters? Do geese eat at restaurants? Then how do they survive the challenges of winter? Children in second through fourth grades are invited to join us at this Saturday, interactive winter day camp. Camp will be held from 9:30-4 PM on Saturday, February 9th at the refuge Visitor Center. **Registration is required!**

Feb. 26- 7pm; Snake River History and Artifacts

Archaeologist for the URS Corporation offers a picture into the past by looking at the stories, features, and artifacts left behind by the inhabitants of the Snake River Valley.

Mar. 12- 7pm; Native Landscaping

[Continued page 4]

WINTER WILDLIFE EVENTS

Foothills Learning Center

3188 Sunset Peak Rd., Boise; (208) 514-3755
www.cityofboise.org/Bee/Foothills/index.aspx

Second Saturday Series: Programs are from 10am to 2pm. All ages welcome! Free; no registration is required. Please leave pets at home, thanks!

Feb. 9 – Winter Wildlife Adaptations

Continuing our winter theme, please join Bill London from Idaho Fish and Game for an exploration of winter wildlife. Bill never fails to please with great stories, pelts and skulls, and a lifetime of experience. Learn how animals survive the cold, snowy winter. Then join our staff and volunteers to make animal tracks, along with many more fun activities. This free drop-in program is open to children and adults.

March 9– Spring, Spring, Spring

Feeling those wintertime blues? Join us for an early spring party! We'll hope for good weather (maybe even do a pray-for-spring dance!) and learn how the local plants and animals of the foothills get ready for spring. Activities will include making our very own bird nests and wildflowers, composting our gardens for spring planting, and much more! Take a break from winter and help spring arrive faster. Presentation by Matt Giovanni of the Peregrine Fund about building and monitoring your own American Kestrel nest box for the spring! All this is organized and hosted by our very own BSU fellow, Neil Paprocki.



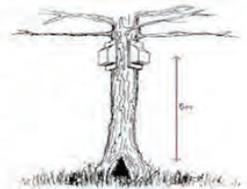
North Central Idaho State Parks
 Cordially invite you to participate in:



The Junior Ranger Program

2012-2013 Schedule:

11-10	Tree Cookies, Leaves	Hells Gate	9am
12-8	Soap Carving	Hells Gate	9am
1-12	Owl Pellets	Hells Gate	9am
2-9	Microscope Discovery	Hells Gate	9am
3-9	Explore Lichens	Hells Gate	9am
4-27	Osprey and Birds	Hells Gate	9am
5-18	Nature Walk	Hells Gate	9am
5-25	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
6-1	Nature Walk	Hells Gate	9am
6-8	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
6-15	Flowers	Hells Gate	9am
6-22	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
6-29	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
7-6	Nature Walk	Hells Gate	9am
7-13	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
7-20	Insects	Hells Gate	9am
7-27	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
8-3	Insects	Hells Gate	9am
8-10	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
8-17	Nature Walk	Hells Gate	9am
8-24	Nature Walk	Winchester	11am
8-31	Nature Walk	Hells Gate	9am
9-7	Nature Walk	Hells Gate	9am



For More Information Please Contact:
 Hells Gate State Park

(208) 799-5015 hel@idpr.idaho.gov



Thank You
 for Your Support!

Thank you to those who made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of a tax check-off donation between October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012.

Idaho's nongame wildlife thanks you ALL!

Long-term Effects of Fire on Wildlife

by Beth Waterbury*

Regional Wildlife Biologist, Idaho Department of Fish and Game- Salmon Region

Many people wonder how our wildlife fare during wildfires. We may think of fire as devastating to animals, but it is important to remember that wildfire and wildlife have coexisted for millennia. Periodic fire resets the ecological clock on landscapes, stimulating productivity and biodiversity in plant and animal communities.

What will be left of the 522,000 acres burned in this year's Mustang Complex and Halstead fires? Though charred trees and ashen landscapes may appear devastated and unable to support wildlife, the long-term scenario is anything but bleak. Fires have been a part of Idaho's landscape ever since there's been vegetation to burn. Our plants and animals are adapted to cyclic fire, and many even require fire to grow and flourish.

Fire begins a sequence of events in plant communities that affects all creatures. After fire, nutrients in the ash become available to plants and seeds stored in the soil. And because fires burn unevenly, they create a mosaic of burned and unburned areas, increasing habitat diversity for a variety of wildlife from big game to birds and small mammals.

Elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep could be described as "fire followers," responding favorably to post-fire increases in the quantity, nutritional quality, and palatability of forage. Big game may be temporarily displaced from burned areas until forage becomes more abundant, but the benefits to big game herbaceous cover may last up to 20 years.

A recently burned forest is "bird heaven" to many cavity-nesting birds. Fire-killed trees attract insects that entice bark foragers, such as the black-backed woodpecker. Woodpeckers excavate nests in standing dead trees called "snags." Their abandoned nest cavities are then used by American kestrels, screech owls, mountain bluebirds, or chickadees in the years following a fire.

The post-fire flush of plant growth provides ideal forage and shelter for many animals. Rejuvenated stands of quaking aspen provide nesting, brood-rearing, and foraging habitat for forest grouse and songbirds and are preferred by deer and elk for fawning, calving, and browsing. Young lodgepole pine forests offer nutritious forage and hiding cover for snowshoe hares. Many of the grasses, forbs, and berry-producing shrubs that black bears consume benefit from fire.

Major debris flow events in the aftermath of a fire can scour and reshuffle aquatic systems, but providing there is connectivity to source populations, fish and other aquatic organisms can quickly recolonize disturbed areas.

Whether by fire, avalanche, flood, or insect outbreak, natural disturbances drive nature's cycle of renewal and play an important role in creating and maintaining forest health and wildlife habitat.

Lodgepole pine forest; photo (BY-NC-SA) turi_b on Flickr; EOL Images



Black-backed woodpecker; photo (BY-NC-SA) Mark Peck Bird Photography on Flickr; EOL Images

A Deadly, Emerging Threat: White-nose Syndrome in Bats

by Rita Dixon*

State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

White-nose syndrome (WNS)—an emerging fungal disease that affects cave-hibernating bats—has killed more than 5.5 million bats since first documented in New York in the winter of 2006–2007. As of December 2012, WNS has been documented in 19 US states (Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia) and four Canadian provinces (Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia). The fungus that causes the disease has been detected in two additional states: Iowa and Oklahoma.

Although not all bats are killed by the fungus, seven bat species have been confirmed positive for WNS: eastern small-footed myotis, gray myotis, Indiana myotis, little brown myotis, northern myotis, tricolored bat, and big brown bat. Two additional species have tested positive for the fungus: southeastern myotis and cave myotis.

Of these, both little brown myotis and big brown bat occur in Idaho, known for its significant cave bat resources. Given that the way the disease spreads is not fully understood, implications to Idaho bat populations (should WNS continue to spread) are potentially severe. More than 100 known bat hibernacula are known in Idaho, 76 are in caves, 25 in abandoned mines, and one in a building. Up to six bat species can be found in a given hibernaculum, but Townsend's big-eared bat and western small-footed myotis are the most typical hibernators.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game was awarded three grants for WNS response planning and surveillance. These grants will provide funding to address the potential spread of WNS and the associated resultant loss of cave bat populations. To date, we have used these grants to: (1) develop information on bat hibernacula in Idaho to enable us to prioritize caves and mines, (2) purchase bat acoustic equipment for WNS surveillance, and (3) respond to reports of unusual bat mortality (i.e., more than five dead/sick bats at one location). In addition, we're contributing to a continental study to detect the fungus by collecting swab samples from hibernating bats and cave substrates. We plan to expand on the work completed to date to further develop data, deploy acoustic equipment, and to work with conservation partners and grottos to develop a WNS response plan for Idaho.

For more information on WNS, visit www.whitenosesyndrome.org

Little brown bat with fungus on muzzle; photo (BY-NC-SA)
Microbe World on Flickr: EOL Images



CITIZEN SCIENTISTS IN ACTION

A Rare Duck Rescue

by Terry Gray*

Past President of the Palouse Audubon Society, Moscow, Idaho

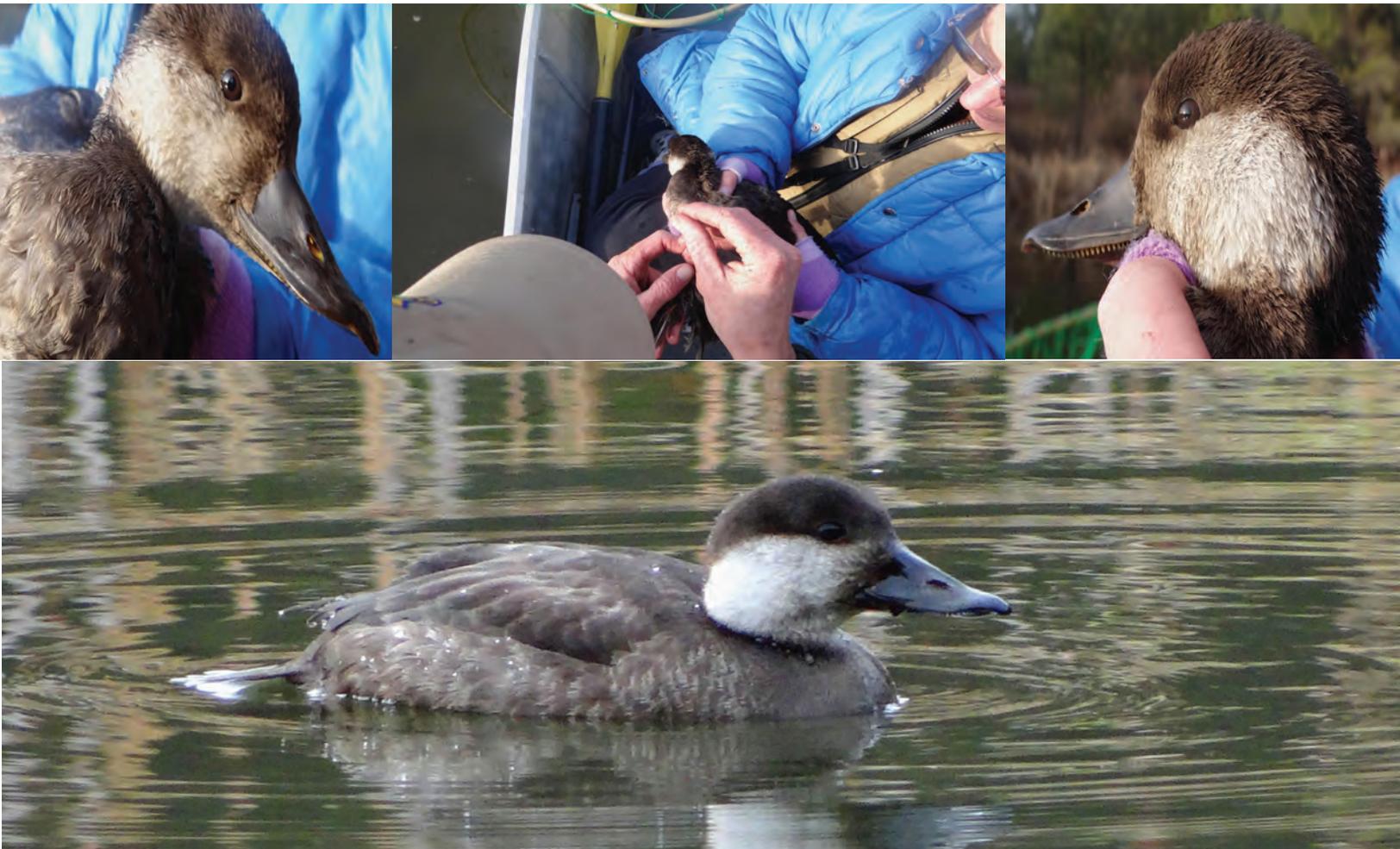
On November 11, 2012 while walking around Spring Valley Reservoir near Troy, Idaho, I took a photo of what I thought was an adult non breeding male ruddy duck. It turned out there were two of these very small ducks at the reservoir and they looked alike. Kirsten Dahl, a birdwatcher, and I observed the two together on November 13th. Later that day, the bird was identified as a female black scoter-- a very rare visitor to Idaho and only the second record for north Idaho according to the Idaho Rare Bird Committee! Black scoters breed in the subarctic and winter along the Pacific coast. Many people came to observe and photograph these birds and also made comments that they looked like ruddy ducks.

On November 23rd, Kirsten and I stopped at the reservoir to see if the rare ducks were still around. We located and photographed both birds and my photos showed that one of the birds was entangled in fishing line. Kirsten came back to the reservoir on November 25th and took photos of the bird trying to stretch its wings, but it was not able to because the line was wrapped around the wing.

I posted a photo of the tangled bird my Flickr photo site and also reported the situation on two birding listservs. Many people were concerned. I also sent the information to the Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) Clearwater Regional Office. The next day, Kirsten and I joined Justin Barrett and Tiege Ulschmid, biologists from IDFG, in rescuing the scoter. They provided the boat, and we helped locate the duck that needed the line removed. It took a while but we finally were able to capture the bird and remove the fishing line. The line had no hooks but did have one lead sinker that fortunately the bird did not eat. After removing the fishing line, the bird stretched both wings and the wing looked great. The primary and secondary feathers fell back into place and we released the bird. It joined the other scoter. For the next several days the birds stayed at the reservoir and by December 1st the birds had departed the reservoir.

Kirsten and I are both Idaho Fish and Game Volunteers and avid bird watchers. We wish to thank Justin and Tiege for taking time from their busy schedules to help capture and release this bird back to the wild to live another day!

photos © Terry Gray



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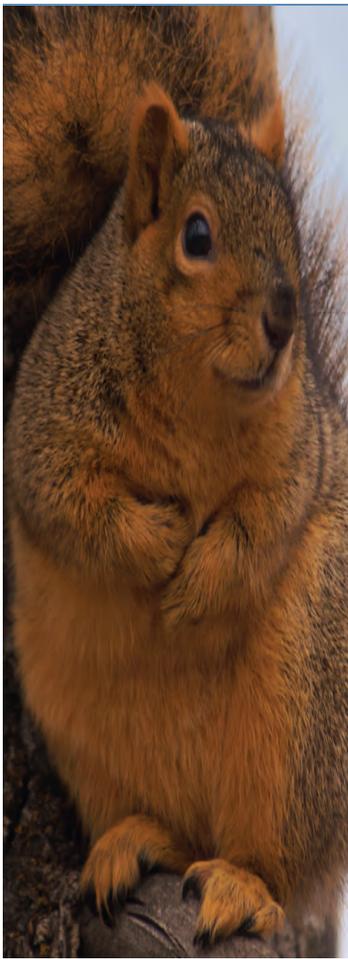
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Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game
PO Box 25
Boise, ID 83707

Questions? Contact Deniz at:
deniz.aygen@idfg.idaho.gov or 208/287-2750



Proceeds from the sale of the poster will benefit watchable wildlife viewing sites in Idaho!



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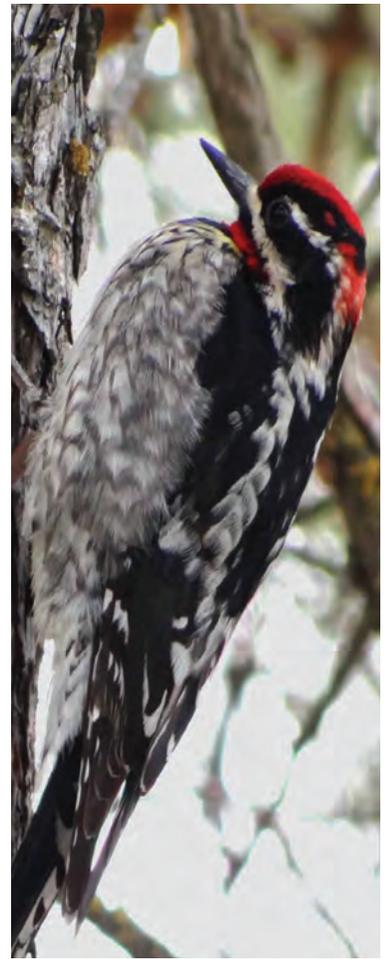
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To submit an article, obtain a subscription, or notify us of address change, contact the Editor at the above address.

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- Idaho Power
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
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