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# The Nature Center Stream

FALL

The Seasonal Newsletter of the MK Nature Center

2014



## Koelsch Elementary Bikes to MK



After not getting picked to attend Salmon and Steelhead Days 2014, Koelsch 5th grade teachers decided to make it happen! Due to lack of funds to afford the bus, they outfitted all the 5th graders with bikes and helmets and made the 5 mile journey anyway... all 65 of them! Boise Bicycle Police Officers helped direct traffic at the tricky spots. The kids were tired and HAPPY when they arrived. They were able to do the Class in the Creek program and tour the Nature Center before the long ride back to school.

*MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection*



## Dave's Two Cents

Dave Cannamela, Superintendent, MKNC

Its good to have friends in the media.

As most of you probably know, Pete Zimowsky recently retired from the Idaho Statesman where he had a long and illustrious career as an outdoor writer. I think Pete's love of the outdoors is the basis for his understanding and appreciation of the value of the Nature Center. And that's probably why Pete became, and remains, a friend and supporter.

We learned to make it a habit to contact Pete whenever something was happening at the Nature Center and Pete would always give us some good publicity. On occasion when he was looking for a story, he would stop in, chew the fat, take some photos, and hopefully come up with some subject matter. Beyond that, he (and his wife Julie) have been faithful gift shop customers and regular supporters of our annual bird seed sale fundraiser.

We thank Pete for his efforts to promote our mission and we look forward to our continued friendship and wish him well in his retirement!



## Invasion of the Tree People?

We have a couple of new residents at the Nature Center. They don't move much and they are not related to the trees in the Wizard of Oz, so no need to be wary.

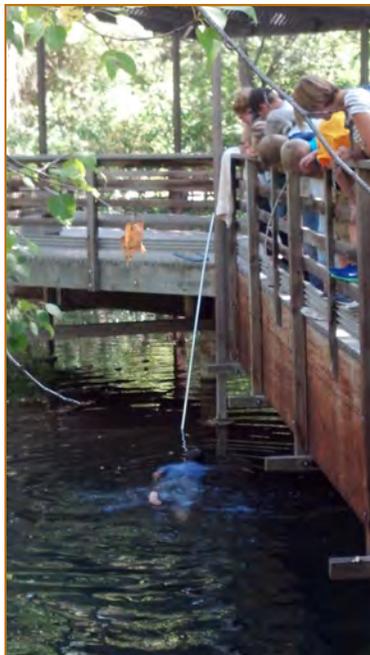
See if you can find them. You can be sure they are watching you!

Volunteer Educator  
**Melissa Lynn**



Melissa Lynn helped with nearly 30 program this last summer. Melissa is an undergraduate at Oregon State University in Environmental Engineering. Her boyfriend had a summer internship at Micron and Melissa decided to spend many of her summer days with us, volunteering at the Nature Center. She lived just down the greenbelt, so could ride her bike here and enjoy the Boise River environment. Melissa watched a couple of programs and then jumped right in and was a natural with the kids.

On the weekends, Melissa and her boyfriend explored Idaho via multiple camping trips and enjoyed what Boise had to offer. We are feeling the void this fall now that Melissa has returned to Corvallis for the fall semester. Thank you, Melissa!



## Dave Takes A Dive!

On the last day of Idaho Salmon and Steelhead Days, we were all burned out and ready for a relaxing weekend.

However, right before we closed the doors, we got word that someone had dropped their glasses in the pond. The whole Nature Center crew came out to look for them, but

Dave took it one step further. The temperature of the Nature Center Stream is a constant 60 degrees and 10 year old Abby Ames dropped her only pair of prescription glasses in the water. Numerous attempts to find them from the bridge did not work, so Dave took a dive. No wet suit. Just a borrowed pair of goggles. With a little help from Travis (volunteer highlight, page 13), he found them!

*Photos clockwise starting in upper left: Dave diving for glasses as we all watch. Dave posing with the found spectacles. Abby so happy to have her glasses back, albeit wet and swampy smelling. Dave giving Grandma Linda Cawley a surprise soaking hug-a lot of laughing followed.*

# Which Tree? Nicole LeFavour, MKNC Volunteer

At the MK Nature Center you'll find over ten species of conifers. Conifer trees are cone bearing trees often mistakenly called "pine trees." Pines are indeed conifers, but there are other cone bearing trees. We often call cone bearing trees "evergreens" and most of them are... but not all of them! The Nature Center has native and non-native conifer trees, most of which are labeled. If you want to learn your conifers, this is a great place to come! See how you do identifying native trees with pictures of their cones.

Conifers are an important food source for many of Idaho's bears, squirrels, and birds. Also, they provide shelter for deer, elk, birds, martins, and mountain lions, just to name a few species.



## Cone Quiz!

### ANSWERS

Bottom Row: Ponderosa Pine

Middle Row: Engelmann Spruce, Rocky Mountain Juniper, Western Larch (Tamarack),

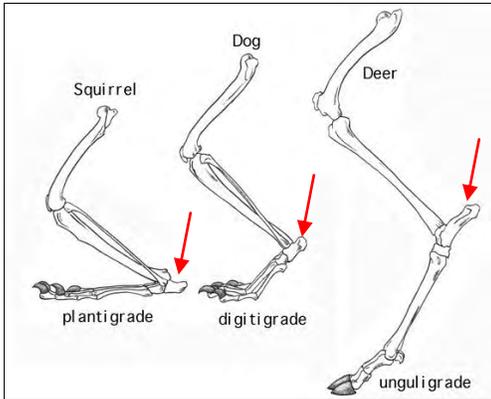
Top Row: Douglas Fir, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir,

Look down at the trail. Is it dusty? Is it muddy? Is there a fine layer of snow? Walking along Idaho trails, sometimes you can see sign of animal travel imprinted in the soil.

Thick mud at springs and creek crossings or even following a rain can preserve animal tracks for days or even weeks or months if they are left undisturbed by rain or other passersby. The paw prints of bear, elk, cougar and deer can form and harden, giving you a look back into the comings and goings of species no longer near by.

Fine dust is delicate. It preserves tracks and sign for only minutes or hours as wind and rain quickly erase the imprints animals leave behind. Dust however is an excellent place to look for tracks and sign because it is fine enough to record the passing of small light creatures like birds, insects, mice and mink. Dust can even record sign of the tails, the fur or minute detail of pads, wings, feet and hooves. Generally the more fine the detail, the fresher the prints.

Snow is much like dust. Depending on conditions, tracks may last minutes in thin dustings or weeks in slush which freezes after a thaw. In cold weather, fresh deep powder is not the best for tracking because animals tend to sink, burying their own tracks deep beneath them. But because snow is so vast, and extends far beyond the narrow confines of a trail, winter tracking is great fun, especially after a fine fresh snowfall.



CC-BY-Phil Meyers, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

## WHAT CAN YOU TELL FROM A TRACK?

**1. Family or species** - Mammals fall into three kinds of tracks. Animals that use their whole foot like humans, bears, and raccoons are categorized as **plantigrades**. Those mammals that walk up on their digits or toes (cats and dogs) are called **digitigrades**. And the members of the deer family are **unguligrades**, which means they basically walk on their toenails. Notice the heel placement in the diagram on the left marked with red arrows.

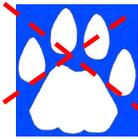
When I find a track, these three categories can help me narrow down the choices. Then, I consider the **habitat**. If I am in the forest, far from water, I can pretty much rule out a mink or goose, of course.

- **Cat and dog** tracks can be challenging, but there are several important differences:

### CAT

- More round overall shape
- Nails typically don't show (but sometimes do)
  - NO X shape
  - Three lobes on pad
- Toes are tear-drop shaped
- Pad larger percent of track

Your choices: Domestic cats, bobcat, mountain lion, lynx



### DOG

- More oval overall shape
- Nails typically show (not always)
- X shape in space between toes and pads (shown in red)
- Triangular shaped pad
- Toes are oval
- Pad smaller % of track

Your choices: Domestic dogs, fox, coyote, wolf

- **Bird tracks** are fun but individual species are often hard to identify. Many birds spend a great deal of their lives on the ground and so are likely to leave tracks. Others do not alight on the ground at all but perch and feed on trees and bushes throughout their lives. Bird tracks can be solitary or occur in huge groups. Ground birds like quail and air-born finches and crows are rarely solitary.
- **Water birds** like swans, loons and cormorants very rarely spend time on land. The mud at the margins of lakes and rivers may on occasion record the passing of huge birds like great blue herons or cranes. Ducks and especially geese, unlike most waterfowl, can spend a great deal of time on land. Their webbed, three-toed tracks are distinct; size can help distinguish ducks from much larger geese. Swans, which are larger still, feed almost exclusively in the water and may come to land only to nest. The tiny wood duck has special claws on its feet that allow it to perch in safety on tree trunks and branches.
- Common **insect and invertebrate** tracks include the darkling beetle, which some people call a stink bug because it releases an foul smell when touched or injured. Large beetles like the darkling, can leave tracks in dust and fine mud just as larger caterpillars, night crawlers and even worms may do.
- The “S” curves of a **snake** are distinct. Snakes actually have different patterns of travel based on species. Side winders have a distinct skipped track with space where no tracks are clear.
- **Lizard and toad** tracks may on rare occasion cross trails. Toad tracks, like rabbit tracks, can often (but not always) be found in pairs where tiny front feet alternate with big back feet as they hop on land. A toad may also leave a belly track when traveling slowly in fine dust, just as a larger lizard will at times leave a line in the dust with its tail. Another amphibian, the salamander, like the two Tiger Salamanders in the tank inside the Nature Center, are generally too light to leave tracks in the mud in which they travel. But if you are lucky and the mud is fine and wet and not too deep, you may see signs of their passing.



Deer and fox tracks found at the Nature Center the morning after a light snow.

2. **Speed** - Animals tracks may spread out as they increase their speed.

3. **Animal Size** - Comparing the size of hoof, foot and paw prints can give you an idea of the relative size of the animal.

4. **Number** - Some animals have a tendency to follow in each others tracks. Wolves, elk and their species will do this and it makes it hard to tell exactly how many were in the pack or herd as they passed.

5. **Urgency** - Some tracks meander. Animals browsing, foraging, playing, and even hunting, fighting or becoming prey may not leave tracks that travel in a straight line. Sometimes an animal has a destination. Its tracks may follow pre-set routes it travels often, between burrows, nests and hiding places or they may trace straight lines, prints widely spaced as the animal sprints, lopes or runs.

# Thank you Farm Bureau and North By Northwest

*Dave Cannamela, Superintendent, Wildlife Educator, MKNC*

I don't make to do lists anymore because my days are too unpredictable and a list of unfinished tasks just becomes a source of frustration. The big stuff gets done. Case in point: Steve Simkins, Director and Producer at North By Northwest productions, called back in early August to ask if they could use the Nature Center as the background for a TV commercial they were doing for Farm Bureau Insurance of Idaho. I said, "knock yourself out." Actually, the Nature Center is honored to be used in this way. We're a public facility and a great setting for this type of stuff. All we ask is that people respect the environment and the other guests. We don't ask for donations or compensation for this type of thing but it sure is great when it happens. We thank North By Northwest, Steele & Associates, and Farm Bureau Insurance of Idaho for their very generous donation!



*Steve Simkins pictured here with his family at MK Nature Center. This is a shot from the commercial Steve produced for Farm Bureau Insurance. Photo by North By Northwest.*

## Oh Ham!

*Dave Cannamela, Superintendent, MKNC*

We just lost one of the best things that ever happened to the Nature Center. Jessica Gordon, our volunteer coordinator, has moved on. She found a full time, benefited position with BSU - theoretically it's a one year appointment, but once they see what they've got, they'll figure out a way to keep her. As badly as Jessica wanted to stay, we just couldn't compete.

As you all know, Jessica was amazing and wonderful. She provided exactly what the Nature Center needs, a caring, efficient person to make people want to be part of the Nature Center ambitions. Jessica added friends and supporters to Nature Center ranks because she genuinely cares about people and she is completely sold on the Nature Center mission. She has insane organizational skills, which are fully necessary for that job, but her real talent is her ability to make people feel comfortable, appreciated, and valuable. The Nature Center thrives on the personal relationships we have with our supporters and Jessica did wonders to build and foster relationships - our supporters *are* our friends. That's the way we like it.



Needless to say, we've got our work cut out for us in finding someone to fill her shoes and keep the ball rolling on events, fundraising, volunteer/friend/supporter recruitment, and retention. She brought a lot of fire to this place. Fortunately, she's not far away, so we'll still see her smiling face from time to time.

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## Donor Recognition Plaque Placed at Alpine Lake

Wayne Larson (left) and Fred Schmidt stand by the new Alpine Lake Mural dedication sign, which they installed.



- Build and install wooden frame for trailer.
- Repair and set up fishing gear for rod loaner program.
  - Repair displays in the Visitor Center (i.e. fish I.D and stream simulator instructions).
- Reconstruct metal bench at the Spawning Window.
- Repair door mechanisms for storage area.

## Felt Board Comes Alive Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC



I have more ideas than I have time and skills to complete. Some of my ideas can come to fruition by making purchases. That is easy, but when the budget is tight, I sometimes need to call on volunteers for their time and expertise. Over the summer, I sent a request to the local Idaho Master Naturalist group for someone crafty to help me make felt board pieces. Considering how many preschool programs I do annually, it seems only natural to have a felt board. Susan Floriana-Riley (Master Naturalist since 2011) answered my call.

Wow, even if I had the money to buy felt board pieces, they would not be this good and would not be Idaho native species. When she brought them in, I was so happy! The photo here only shows a few of the amazing pieces she created to help me teach about the fish life cycle, habitat, and ecology. Thank you to Susan for her time and beautiful felt creations!

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# Fun with Fungus Prints

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC



Fall mushrooms seem to be popping up everywhere during the last few weeks. Before the snow falls, my family loves to make spore prints. Spore prints are a way to see the mushroom spores without a microscope.



Spores of a mushroom are, of course, lodged up inside the gills of the underside of the mushroom. These are their “seeds” and are microscopic and lighter than air. Spore prints are easy, fun, and make lovely artwork. Here is how it works.

**1.** Find a fresh mushroom, pick it, remove the stem and expose the gills if necessary (using a knife slice away parts of the mushroom until gills are exposed).



gills

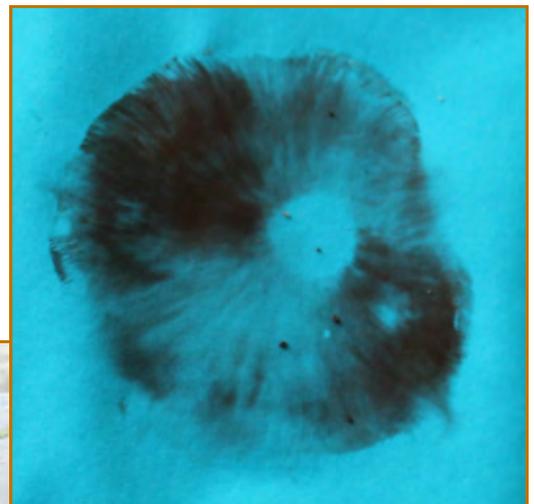
**2.** Place the mushroom gill-side-down on a piece of paper. Some spores are white and some are brown, so using colored paper usually works for both spore colors.



**3.** Place a bowl over the mushroom and place a rock on the bowl. This prevents wind drafts from blowing away spores.



**4.** Wait overnight or over 2 nights. Your set up can be inside or outside, just be sure it won't get bumped.



**5.** Lift the bowl and enjoy the print. Cover the print with clear tape so spores don't blow away.

MK Nature Center Friend's Group Member, Lyla Olson demonstrates spore prints for these photos. Photos by Sara Focht.

# Micron Workday-April 12, 2014

*Susan Ziebarth, Wonderwoman, MK Nature Center*

## *Honoring the Memory of Susan Greer*

Nestled in the native plant demonstration garden, lovingly referred to as “The Vacant Lot” because of its former condition, is a group of three basalt sitting rocks. Among those rocks is a memorial plaque that reads, “IN LOVING MEMORY OF SUSAN K. GREER FOR HER DEDICATION TO MAKING THE WORLD A SAFE, HAPPY, AND BEAUTIFUL PLACE FOR ALL.” Upon her passing in in April of 2004, Susan’s family and co-workers at Micron requested that the Nature Center be the place for her memorial.



Gregarious and dynamic, Susan spear-headed a volunteer group called “Single Volunteers,” of which I was a member. Single Volunteers participated in many community projects including Paint the Town, staffing of the Ruth Melichar Bird Center and assisting many elderly people with yard clean-up and general maintenance chores. My relationship with the group resulted in good things for the Nature Center. Over a seven month period in 1999, the “Single Volunteers” came to the Nature Center to assist with the hard labor of re-building the Nature Center stream and viewing windows which were leaking due to vandalism and age. The following year, the group came as part of a garden and grounds Spring Clean-up Day.

In keeping with the tradition of volunteerism and to honor the memory and spirit of Susan, Aubrey Smith, one of her former co-workers contacted me last year about having a 2013 Susan Greer Spring Cleanup Day in the native plant garden. Despite the cold weather, a large group of Micron employees along with Susan’s daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren, all participated in a much needed and extremely helpful garden clean-up. They weeded, pruned and spread bark in the native plant garden *and* in our pollinator garden- a bonus! After a day of working with our dwindling supply of duct-tape-maintained garden tools, the Micron employees were moved to take up a \$285.00 collection to buy us some new tools.



*The 2014 Micron Volunteer Team posing with the donated tools in front of the Susan Greer Memorial basalt rocks. From left to right, Lori Atkins, Jack Frans, Aubrey Smith, Megan Smith, Joe Jenkins (Susan’s Son in law), Kiarra Jenkins (Susan’s granddaughter) and George Steiler.*

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Again this year, Aubrey organized a 2014 Spring Cleanup Day. This April marked the 10th anniversary of Susan's passing. The "Vacant Lot" was spruced up again, and the Nature Center received a new supply of gardening tools. The Micron group weeded and pruned some out-of-control shrubs and gnarly rose bushes. They even built a deer enclosure over one section to allow some spring native plants to reach maturity for migrating hummingbirds without being munched by deer. 2015 will tell us if it worked for the hummingbirds or not. To add more icing to the cake, Aubrey's daughter Megan returned two weeks later to volunteer for International Migratory Bird Day. She demonstrated her artistic talents and skills of working with children by painting bird images on kid's faces during the event. Through the years these people have become strong Nature Center supporters and very good friends.

*Thank you Micron employees & friends and family of Susan Greer!*

*Grandaughter Kiarra wearing a pin with a photo of her grandmother Susan*



## Take a Virtual Tour



At first glance, you might think Sara (MKNC Education Coordinator) is showing a visitor the details of the petroglyph rock near the Nature Center stream. And in one sense, this is true. But what is really happening in this photo is MK Nature Center's first virtual tour! The class on the other side of the iPhone is Jefferson Elementary School's second graders from Mr. Redmon and Mrs. O'Meara's classes. They are all seated on the floor looking at their large screen in the classroom and what do they see? Sara, the fish, the Nature Center water, and petroglyphs. Brandon O'Meara is an Albertsons' employee and volunteer at Jefferson Elementary. He brought the idea of a Skype tour to us after he successfully Skyped a tour of the Boise Zoo for the kids. It might have been the strangest tour Sara ever gave, but it was fun!

*MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection*

# 10 Years Ago, a Gopher Comes out of a Hole...

*MK Nature Center Staff*

Ten years ago, a gopher darted out of a hole in the butterfly garden next to where Susan Ziebarth (MKNC) was working. It was springtime, and the gopher was busily dragging *Coreopsis* plants down into his hole. This is the beginning of a story: can you tell? It's the beginning of a wonderful story that we just want to share. So there is Susan, not the typical gardener, with anger toward the gopher, but admiring the little critter, especially for its efforts to help thin the *Coreopsis*. At that moment, a couple sauntered into the Nature Center grounds from Municipal Park and joined her appreciation of the gopher. Well, they all started chatting and the woman of the couple (Cheryl) promised Susan she was going to come back and do some volunteer work.

Internally, Susan probably rolled her eyes because a LOT of people say they will come volunteer and we see only a fraction of those faces again. Well, the gopher went about his business and so did Susan and the couple. Not even a week later, in walks Cheryl with her gardening clothes and work gloves.

Turns out, Susan's internal eye roll was unwarranted this time. Cheryl has been coming ever since; nearly once a week for the last 10 years. Cheryl Minckler almost single handedly maintains the butterfly garden and helps with a lot of other grounds maintenance too. Over the years, she and her husband Fred have also come to nearly all of our public educational events to staff education tables, set up canopies, and haul tables and anything else needing done at the time.



Cheryl gardens for us, bakes us zucchini bread, brings in Christmas cookies, and gives Dave a hard time each and every time she comes to work (equally as valuable as the cookies in our opinion). She is a joyous person to have around and Fred ain't bad either, and he makes a mean salsa!

A decade later we have some great friends and wonderful volunteers. And lots of *Coreopsis*, thanks to Cheryl's hard work. No more gophers, though; maybe because of our resident gopher snake?



*Fred and Cheryl Minckler at an MKNC volunteer appreciation dinner as they usually are... Cheryl smiling and Fred eating.*

Thank you, Cheryl and Fred, for your many years of dedication and friendship!

# Thank You For Supporting What We Do!

These individuals and businesses supported the MK Nature Center between July 1 and September 30th. Donations come in the form of cash or in-kind material donations.

Barbara Balance	Blue Sky Bagels (Mark Hansen)	Donna Bostard
Dallas Burkhalter	Mick and Joey Chase	Fred Meyer
Amanda Gailbreath	Hilda Packard	Sally Hughes
Parkside School	Rocky Canyon Sailtoads (Race to Robie)	
Amanda Spence	Starbucks (Eileen Potter and staff)	

## Volunteer Spotlight



Travis Evanow is a sportsman tried and true! Maybe this is why he enjoys volunteering at the MK Nature Center. Travis first came to volunteer with us in April. Whenever we get a new volunteer, it often takes a while for them to find their niche here. But with Travis, it was pretty clear that he was going to help us with fishing! Travis jumped on any opportunity to help with fishing clinics. He happily would meet school groups at fishing ponds and helped teach kids (and even adults) how to fish.

Travis grew up in a small fishing town in northern California, where his father had two commercial fishing boats. In 1997, his family moved to Idaho. Travis loves all things outdoors. He is an avid hunter and angler. He is also happy hiking, picking mushrooms, gold panning, and rock hunting. With all those

interests, he still finds time to work a full time job (with Boars Head deli meats and cheeses) and does taxidermy on the side. In fact taxidermy is another niche Travis is filling here at the Nature Center. He recently donated American Widgeon (pictured right) to us, and it is one of our best specimens. We plan on taking Travis up on his offer to taxidermy more animals, as some of our taxidermied animals are getting pretty ragged.

More important than the skills Travis brings, is his polite and pleasant demeanor. We enjoy his friendship and we are happy he has joined our team here at the Nature Center.



*MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection*



*Fall colors come and go. During the first couple of weeks in September, MK Nature Center gets 200-300 kokanee salmon. These fish liven up the viewing windows, but they don't last long. They spawn and die here with the Chinook. If you missed it this year, be sure to come next September to see the brilliant red and green salmon.*

To Donate to the MK Nature Center, fill out the form below, enclose your check, and mail to  
MK Nature Center, PO Box 25, Boise, ID 83707.

## F R I E N D S   O F   T H E M O R R I S O N   K N U D S E N   N A T U R E   C E N T E R

Individual Memberships:	
<b>\$10</b>	Mayfly
<b>\$25</b>	Sagebrush
<b>\$50</b>	Gopher Snake
Family Memberships:	
<b>\$100</b>	Mink
<b>\$250</b>	Mule Deer
<b>\$500</b>	Great Blue Heron
<b>\$1,000</b>	Chinook Salmon
<b>\$10,000</b>	White Sturgeon

Name(s)		
Address		
City	State	Zip
E-mail Address		
Phone Number		

**Members receive\*:**

- “The Stream” E-newsletter
- Invitations to Nature Center events
- Invitations to “Friends Group Days”
- On-site birthday party options
- Free souvenir penny
- **Sagebrush Level and above:**  
15% discount at MKNC gift shop

*\* Fees/restrictions may apply.*



Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- New Membership (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)
- Renewal Membership (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)
- Check here to receive a donation receipt.

**Make checks payable to MK Nature Center**



[fishandgame.idaho.gov/MKNC](http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/MKNC)

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