



The Nature Center Stream



S P R I N G

The Seasonal Newsletter of the MK Nature Center

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Goodbye Atxitxa

*Susan Ziebarth, MKNC Wildlife Educator
and facilities manager*

During the night on March 17, at the age of 17, the Nature Center lost another beloved friend. Our American Kestrel, Atxitxa (pronounced ah-chee-cha) passed away from age-related natural illnesses. The name Atxitxa is the Basque word for Grandfather and we called him Txitx (pronounced “cheech”).

It’s been a tough year on us; our other male kestrel Houdini passed away at the age of 11 last fall.

When ten year old Txitx arrived at our facility he was already considered an old bird. The average lifespan of a kestrel in the wild is three to five years. We know his age because he was banded in 1995 as a fledgling and lived as a wild bird for six years. In 2001 he was found with a severely broken wing that deemed him un-releasable. Txitx lived at a raptor rehabilitation facility operated by Janet and Larry Crist until November of 2005 and then came to “live out his retirement” at the MK Nature Center.

Living to be 17 years old was more than any of us ever could have ever expected of Txitx. From what we could find in our research, the oldest captive kestrels on record lived to be 17. He not only exceeded the average lifespan in the wild, he also exceeded the average lifespan in captivity.

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THANK YOU TO EDWINA AND JOHN ALLEN

Dave Cannamela, MK Nature Center Superintendent

Last month we received a wonderful surprise financial donation from John and Edwina. Private donations like this help us tremendously. We have needs beyond what our budget allows. We called Edwina to thank her and ask her why she donated. "You guys do great work down there", she said. Thanks a million!

MK Nature Center-Your Face-to-Fish Connection

HAHN FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED!



Rebecca Wagner and Kal Wilson in a rare moment of standing still at the Nature Center. They are usually running around cleaning, taking care of the path and the animals and performing great customer service.

Rebecca Wagner and Kaleb (Kal) Wilson are this year's award winners. In December, Rebecca received her B.A. from BSU with a major in Environmental Studies and minors in Biology and Geographic Information Analysis. Rebecca started as an intern in December of 2011; we hired her in August of 2011. She's a "whiz kid" who we hope to keep as long as possible.

Kal will graduate from BSU this May with degree in Mechanical Engineering-he has strong environmental engineering leanings; as part of a school project, Kal and his team designed and built a vehicle that will attain an equivalency of 500 miles per gallon. Kal is a work-study student who has been with us since June of 2010. We are happy to see him leave-- as he heads to a "real" job with Micron. Congratulations Rebecca and Kal, and thanks once again to the Hahn Family and friends for their generosity.

LIVE MUSIC, DANCING BABIES AND WILD GLASSES



If you missed the 2012 winter volunteer potluck celebration, you missed a lot. Live music from Anthony and the Subprime Mortgages entertained us along with crazy glasses, Marti-Gras Beads and dancing babies. Thanks to all who came to celebrate and thanks to ALL who volunteer for MKNC.



Photos: Volunteers Ava and Tess Crier modeling the party favors at the Volunteer Potluck.

Music provided by Anthony and the Subprime Mortgages! They rocked the house!

STARBUCKS PARTNERSHIP RE-ESTABLISHED

Dave Cannamela, MK Nature Center Superintendent

Thanks to Scott and Martha Sliney, we've reconnected with Starbucks, who we lost touch with over the past few years. As some of you know, Starbucks partnered with us through their "Make Your Mark" program several years ago to paint the Nature Center visitor center- and they donated \$1000. They also provided coffee for several events. Well, Scott and Martha took the initiative to approach Cliff Starman, the district manager, to see if they would again be able to help. We got a very warm reception. Cliff and his team of local store managers and employees will once again supply coffee and manpower to the Nature Center. In fact, the coffee has already started flowing. We were pleased to provide the auditorium to Cliff and his troops for meetings on March 13th and 14th. Susan and I were in the right place at the right time as we got in on an official coffee tasting. A new experience for us.



NEW PROJECTOR SHEDS LIGHT

It pays to have friends! Due to the generosity of some of our friends who use our auditorium for meetings, we now have a new projector. The Idaho Photographic Workshop, The Golden Eagle Audubon, Idaho Mountain Recreation Club, the Pahove Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society, and Master Naturalist Tim Merrick all came to our rescue to replace the old cruddy projector. In addition, we also have a new laptop and a remote slide advancer, with a built in laser pointer. These upgrades make our place more professional and convenient for our current users, and more attractive for potential customers. Thanks all!

WINDOW BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT GATHERS STEAM

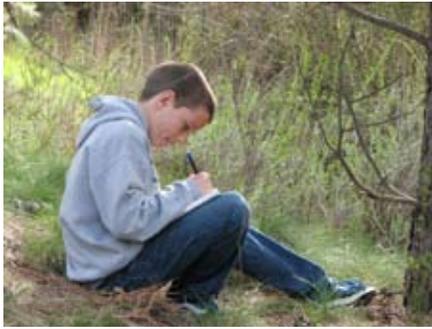
For several years now we have been trying to raise enough money to fund beautification of the concrete infrastructure supporting our viewing windows. Thanks to a host of co-contributors and a grant from the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation, we've got at least enough cash to do something great at the Alpine Lake window (the waterfall). Our goal is for something beautiful, educational and in fitting with the surroundings- something to compliment the fish viewing, not overshadow it.

Our co-contributors include:

Willlow Hahn, Mick and Joey Chase, the Schram/Prestel families, the Pierose-Leasure-Olson-Scantling-Shanafelt-Gleason conglomerate families. Now to find the right artist for the job!

JR. NATURALIST PROGRAM LAUNCHES AT MKNC

Sara Focht, MKNC Education Program Coordinator



Left: Ricky Retana writes in his journal. Middle: Simon Moore builds a beaver dam! Right: We found fungus!

Last fall, Joyce Harvey-Morgan, one of the Idaho Master Naturalists, told me she wanted to increase her volunteer commitment to the Nature Center and do something “big.” We sat down and I brainstormed some ideas for her...the Nature Center has a lot of needs and not enough time or staff. One of my ideas struck a chord with Joyce and off she went. The idea was to develop a “kid” version of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program. And so the Jr. Naturalist Certificate Program was born! Joyce offered to be the lead, and with my support and coleadership, she came up with a plan for putting a pilot program on during spring break 2012.

The activities were arranged, volunteers recruited, the program was advertised and supplies were gathered. The program attracted 18 bright and eager 4th, 5th and 6th graders from the Treasure Valley. We had a great group of kids! They studied fungus, mammals, trees, birds and much more. They even put in 3 hours of volunteer service picking up trash. In addition to Joyce, Master Naturalist Sandy Sweet helped teach. Ian Fawley also volunteered the whole week!

It was a huge success and I am proud to have been a part of it!

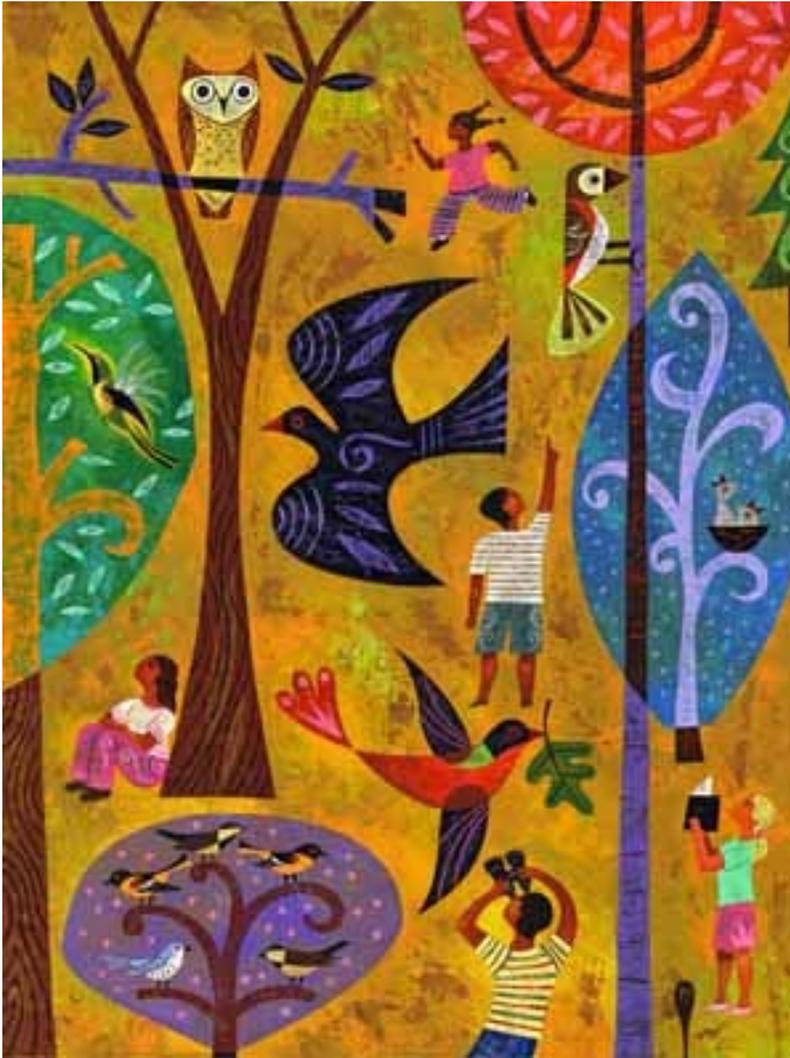


From left to right: Volunteer instructor Ian Fawley is led, with eyes closed, to the nearest tree. Master Naturalist Sandy Sweet teaches geology. Master Naturalist Joyce Harvey-Morgan shows off a handful of dead moss. GK-12 Fellow, Keith Carter helps the kids interpret their research findings.

MK Nature Center-Your Face-to-Fish Connection

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

MAY 12TH



Join us once again for this wonderful family day at the nature center. Come and observe bird banding, live bird presentations, bird games, face painting, nature arts and activities for everyone. Learn about migratory birds and celebrate with us. Picnicking and concessions available.

Bird Walks: 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Live bird presentations:

11:00 a.m.

12:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m.

2:00 p.m.

Live Bird Banding: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (weather permitting)

Games and activity stations: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Cost: \$ 3.00 per person (ages 3 and over)



Volunteers needed! Contact Cass Meissner at cass.meissner.idfg.idaho.gov or 287-2901

FOOD TRUCK RALLY COMING TO THE MK NATURE CENTER



Superstition has it that Friday the 13th is unlucky, but in keeping with Nature Center attitude, we're bucking conventional thinking once more. Thanks to Payette Brewing Company, the MKNC will be the sight of this increasingly popular event. Several vendors will participate in this family-friendly, locavore-focused, gathering of folks looking for a few hours of refreshment and relaxation at the end of the work week. The rally will be held from 5-9pm. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy the Nature Center while they're here, and Nature Center staff will be on hand to provide information and education. In keeping with the atmosphere and our attempts to be carbon neutral, we encourage you to come by bicycle: Our friends at the Boise Bike Project are donating the use of their bike valet, and Nature Center volunteers will be working the bike check. We look forward to seeing you at our newest adventure!



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Since Txitx came to us as a “retired” senior citizen, he never served as an education bird as Houdini did. Both birds served as ambassadors in teaching the public about their species. Over the years, thousands of children and adults came to know these endearing and colorful little falcons at the Nature Center.

The aviary is quiet now, housing only our shy, little Burrowing Owl. This will be the first spring in more than ten years that we will not be hearing “The Boys” (Houdini and Txitx) calling out to the female kestrels flying overhead, squabbling over their food, or signaling danger when a larger raptor flies by. With sadness and awe we say goodbye to our little friends and welcome the signs, sounds and rebirth of another spring.

GO NATIVE! IT'S TIME FOR 2012 NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, April 28th 10 am to 1 pm

The Pahove Chapter of INPS invites you to Celebrate Arbor Day and Native Plant Appreciation Week by planting wildlife friendly vegetation that is well adapted to the Treasure Valley's soil and climate.

There will be no waiting line for entering the sale this year giving buyers more time to browse. Choose from a wide selection of native plants and talk to knowledgeable botanists about the best fit for your yard. Your purchases help support the Idaho Native Plant Society and the MK Nature Center. A plant availability list is posted on the INPS website: www.idahonativeplants.org

Are you an INPS Member? If so, you get a chance to shop early! Join us for the "Members-Only Sale" on Friday, April 27th, 5-7pm

If you don't already belong to INPS or your membership has lapsed, you may renew or become a member at the Friday sale.

We only accept cash and checks.

Questions? Call Susan 867-6188



Lynn Kinter stands with a barrow full of native plants. Photo by Cyndi Coulter.

Rocky Mountain maple *Acer glabrum*

In celebration of Arbor Day, the 2012 sale will offer Rocky Mountain maple as its featured tree, which may also be grown as a large shrub. Widely adaptable, Rocky Mountain maple is native to open slopes and woodland understory throughout Idaho. With an airy, graceful form, it grows to about 20 feet in height and is ideal for vertical character in urban landscaping.

Tolerant of full sun to light shade, it requires average to well-drained soils and moderate to low moisture.