

Wildlife Express!

Volume 27/Issue 3

75th Anniversary

November 2013



75

Years

Who Cares About Wildlife – Idahoans!

Idahoans have always cared about their wildlife. In fact, we did something a long time ago to help wildlife.

When Idaho became a state in 1890, an Office of Game Warden was created. In these early days, the State Game Warden was often a person the Governor knew. Sometimes he was given the job because he was a friend of the Governor; not because he knew about wildlife.

There were laws saying when a person could hunt, but no limits on how many animals a person could kill. The State Game Warden and his deputies were supposed to enforce the laws, but they had no money to do their job.

Many people ignored the laws that did exist. By the early 1900s, bighorn sheep in Idaho's deserts were gone. Elk were hard to find in some parts of Idaho. To increase elk numbers, elk were trapped in 1915 in Yellowstone National Park and brought to Idaho.

People, especially hunters that cared about wildlife, started to worry. They noticed fewer animals in the wild. They also noticed that the people looking after wildlife often didn't know what they were doing.

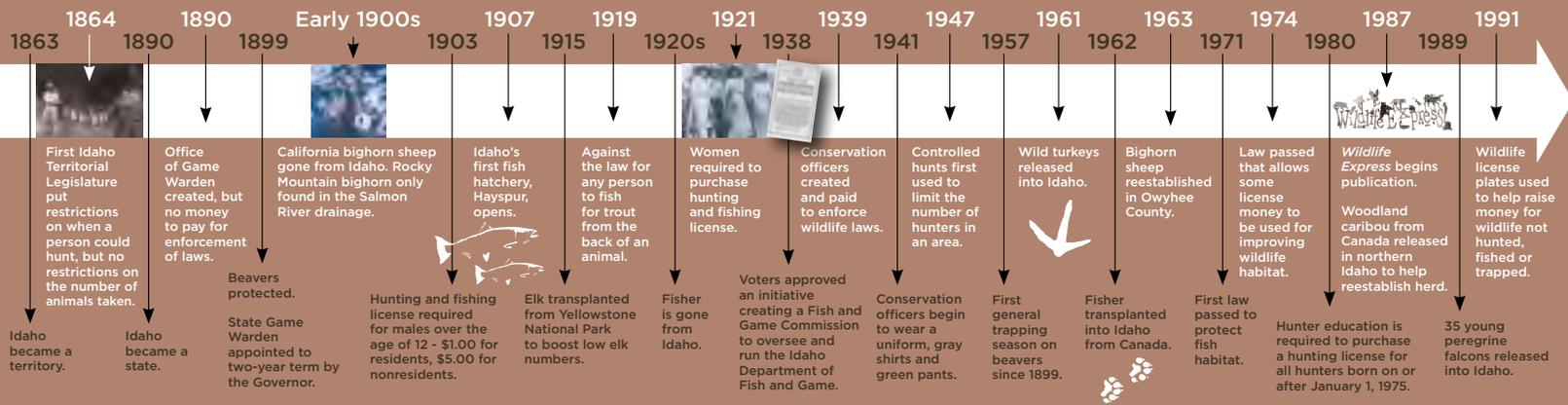
People in Idaho wanted things to change. They wanted wildlife cared for by trained professionals. They also wanted people to get the job based on their skills. These people thought the citizens of Idaho should vote on how they wanted their wildlife

to be managed. A voter's initiative was put on the 1938 ballot. The initiative would create a group of citizens called the Commission to manage Idaho Fish and Game. The Commission would supervise wildlife management, set laws, and hire a director to oversee everything.

The people of Idaho voted for change. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game that we have today was created. Now decisions about wildlife are based upon science and research. Our wildlife is much healthier today thanks to the efforts of some caring Idahoans in 1938.



Dates of Interest for Idaho Wildlife



Let's Talk Turkey!

It's November, and that means turkey! More people eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day than for any other holiday meal. Turkey has always been an important food for people. Our domesticated turkey came from wild turkeys that lived in Mexico. Explorers took some of these wild turkeys back to Europe in the late 1500s and raised them on farms. Years later, other explorers and settlers brought their domesticated turkeys back to North America. While all this was going on, wild turkeys still lived in North America. Wild turkeys were eaten by early settlers and Native Americans.

Wild turkeys are one of our largest wild birds. They stand 43 to 45 inches tall and can weigh up to 24 pounds. They have long, powerful legs. Their wings seem short for such a large bird, but turkeys can quickly burst into flight. These quick bursts allow them to glide for up to a mile to get away from danger. Scientists have clocked turkeys flying at 60 miles per hour! Because turkeys are heavy, they cannot fly far. Instead, they rely on their legs to get where they need to go.

Turkeys are brownish over most of their bodies. The males, called "toms," have a bronze sheen to their feathers. The wing feathers are barred with black and white. Females, called "hens," have a few feathers on their heads, but the toms have no feathers. The tom's bare skin is colorful, with a white forehead, blue face and red neck. In the spring, these colors become very bright, and are part of the male's breeding display. Tom turkeys try to impress the hens by fanning their large tails and drooping their wings. They also gobble. You can hear a gobbling turkey more than one mile away!

Turkeys can live in many kinds of habitats. You can find turkeys in forested openings, grasslands, and even swamps. Their diet is made up of acorns, seeds, nuts, fruits, buds, insects and small animals like frogs, salamanders, and snakes. Family groups of hens and young turkeys spend the day looking for food. At sundown, the flock will fly into large trees where they will roost for the night.

Turkeys are not native to Idaho. Beginning in 1961, wildlife managers brought turkeys to Idaho from other states. Turkeys adapted well to living in Idaho and did not cause trouble with other wildlife. Between 1961 and 2008, thousands of turkeys were released. Four different kinds of turkeys were brought to Idaho for people to enjoy. People across Idaho like to watch turkeys and hunt turkeys. They make a delicious Thanksgiving dinner. Happy Thanksgiving!



Time for Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving's here! It's time to eat and stuff our stomachs with yummy food. Thanksgiving and Pilgrims seem to go together like bread and butter, but the Pilgrims never really held a Thanksgiving feast. Now, before you cancel dinner, read on and learn how our Thanksgiving came to be.



The Pilgrims did have a feast in 1621 after their first harvest of crops. This is the feast people often refer to as "The First Thanksgiving." This feast never happened again, and the Pilgrims would not have called it a "Thanksgiving." To the Pilgrims, a day of thanksgiving was a day of prayer and fasting, not eating!

The first harvest feast was held around the first of October and lasted three days! The pilgrims didn't have a building large enough to hold 140 people, 50 pilgrims and 90 Native Americans, so the feast was held outside.

Do you think the pilgrims and Native Americans ate the same foods we eat today? Some were the same. They ate white-tailed deer, fish, wild turkeys, ducks, geese and other birds. They also ate Indian corn, wheat and berries. Do you think they ate corn of the cob? No, corn on the cob

was not eaten. Indian corn was only good for making cornmeal. What about ham or sweet potatoes? Nope, the Pilgrims didn't have pigs, and sweet potatoes hadn't been brought to New England yet. They did have cranberries, but they did not have sugar to make cranberry sauce. Do you think they ate pumpkin pie? Pilgrims did have pumpkins. They most likely made a pumpkin pudding sweetened with honey or maple syrup, but their pudding would not have had a crust. If the Pilgrims had landed in the Pacific Northwest, they may have eaten Pacific lamprey during their feast.

The Pilgrim's feast was different from ours, but it became the model for our Thanksgiving of today. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln made the last Thursday in November a national holiday of Thanksgiving. Up to that time, no permanent holiday had been set. President Roosevelt changed the day of Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday in November in 1941, and this is when we celebrate Thanksgiving today.

Wow! Who would have thought all this could have evolved out of a harvest feast?

Aldo Leopold

The Father of Wildlife Management

Aldo Leopold was born in Iowa in 1887. He grew up exploring the woodlands and marshes around the Mississippi River. He listened to the whistling of ducks' wings, investigated mink dens and became skillful at reading animal sign.

When Aldo Leopold was a boy and young man, there really was no such thing as wildlife management. There were few laws on when people could hunt or how many animals people were allowed to harvest. Aldo Leopold's father thought there should be some restrictions on hunting. He believed that it was wrong to hunt birds during the nesting season, and this was passed on to his son.

While at college, Aldo Leopold studied ornithology (the study of birds) and natural history. He earned a Master's Degree in Forestry. He worked for the Forest Service for the first part of his career. He didn't stay with the Forest Service very long. He wanted a job in wildlife and conservation.



Photo courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation www.aldoleopold.org

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

—Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold believed that science and technology could be used to improve and restore wildlife and their habitat. He began researching wildlife and became the expert. His work was published in the textbook *Game Management*. The University of Wisconsin hired Leopold to teach the first wildlife management class in 1933. Wildlife management was born, and Aldo Leopold became known as the “father” of wildlife management.

Aldo Leopold's goal in his wildlife ecology class was “to teach the student to see the land, to understand what he sees, and enjoy what he understands.” He believed that “the land” included everything – soil, plants and animals. Many of Aldo Leopold's ideas are still taught today.

Want to Help Wildlife in the Future? Become a Wildlife Biologist!

Would you like to help wildlife in the future? Working with animals can be fun and rewarding. At times, it also can be cold, hot, wet, dirty, stinky, and tricky.

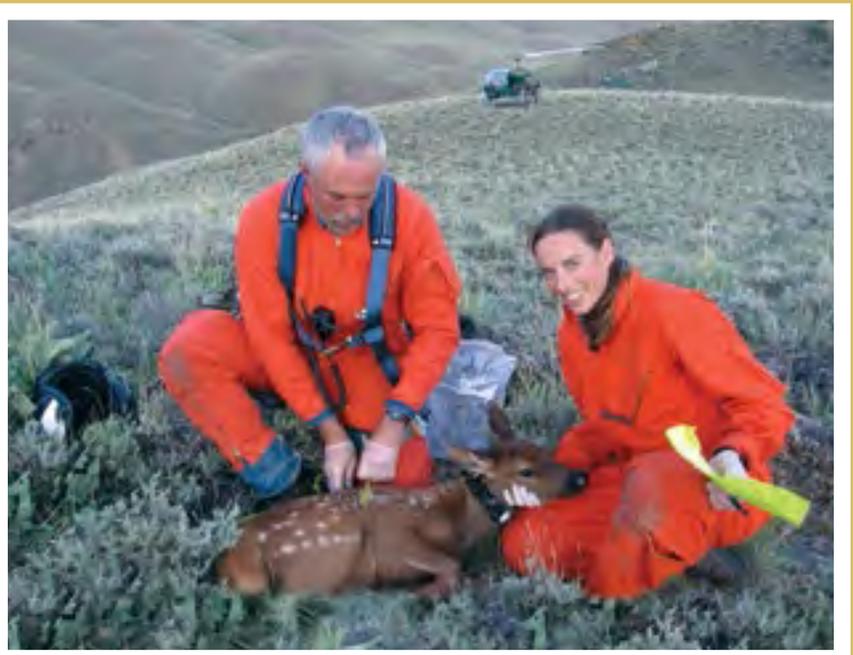
People that study and manage wild animals are called wildlife biologists. They need to know a lot about wildlife and what they need to survive. All animals need four things to survive – food, water, shelter and space. These things make up an animal’s home or habitat. Wild animals cannot tell us what they need. How do wildlife biologists learn about wildlife? They watch wildlife, sometimes catch them or look for wildlife signs. Wildlife biologists are a bit like detectives.

Signs are clues that animals leave behind as they go about their lives. Signs are things like tracks, holes, stored food, nests, or scat. Scat is a fancy word for poop. Looking at animal poop might sound gross, but scat can give us many important clues about an animal’s life. If you want to be a wildlife biologist, you will most likely look at animal scat. Scat tells us what an animal has been eating. We may be able to tell if the animal is sick or healthy. Even the size and shape of scat are important clues.

Another way biologists learn about wildlife is by grabbing hairs with hair snares. A hair snare is made of strong cardboard folded into a triangle. At each end of the triangle, are stiff brushes. Bait, usually meat, is placed in the middle. As an animal reaches in to grab the meat, it rubs against the brushes and leaves some hair behind. Sometimes barbed wire fences are put around a stinky bait to snag hairs. Many things can be learned from hair. Biologists can tell the species of the animal and tell if it is male or female. By looking at the DNA in hairs, scientists are able to find relations between animals and make family trees.

With information about animals, people can manage wildlife. We need wildlife populations that are in the best interests of wildlife and people. We need enough animals but not too many. If there are too many animals, they may starve to death or make each other sick. This is one reason why we have hunting seasons. By hunting, people help control the number of wild animals and feed their families.

If you are interested in becoming a wildlife biologist, you should love wildlife, nature and science. You need many different skills. Wildlife biologists do many jobs. You might trap a deer, build a fence, take an animal’s blood, plant shrubs, pull weeds, or even talk to school kids. You will need a college degree in wildlife management, ecology or zoology. To get your “dream job,” you will probably need a Master’s Degree. That means at least six years of college, but the rewards are great. You will be working in beautiful places with amazing wildlife. You will also be helping to ensure that Idaho always has healthy wild animals for years to come.



BE OUTSIDE: *Helping Wildlife*



As you have learned from reading this issue of Wildlife Express, Fish and Game was formed by people who cared about wildlife. Seventy-five years later, Idahoans still care about their wildlife. It belongs to all of us. By taking care of it, we can make sure that your children and grandchildren can still enjoy wildlife in Idaho. But you might be thinking, “Wait—I’m just a kid! What can I do?” Don’t worry - you do not need to be a grown up to help wildlife! You can do many things. Here is a list of 10 things that you and your family can do to help wildlife. Look for more ideas on the Fish and Game website. Have fun and thanks for caring about our wildlife!

Volunteer for wildlife

Fish and Game has many projects that need volunteers. Volunteers do many important things. You can volunteer with your family, scout troop, church group, 4H club, or school.

Learn about wildlife

Have you ever noticed that when you learn a little bit about something, you want to know more? Spending time learning about wildlife will definitely leave you wanting to find out more!

Pick up litter

Besides being ugly, litter can be deadly for wildlife. Animals can become tangled and trapped in litter and die. Sometimes animals eat litter and that can make them sick. Picking up litter is an important way to help wildlife.

Put up a bird feeder

Watching birds is a great way to enjoy wildlife. Bird

watching is a very popular hobby, and you can do it in your backyard. A feeder will help attract different birds for you to observe and identify.

Plant native plants in your yard

Native plants are beautiful and will attract many interesting animals. Native plants also need less water to survive in the summer. This means that your family will not need to water as often.

Go hunting, fishing or wildlife watching

Enjoying outdoor activities that involve wildlife is fun. You might bring home a stringer of fish or a grouse for a delicious dinner. Maybe you will take a beautiful wildlife photograph. One thing you are sure to bring home are great memories.

Take a hunter education class

Hunter education is a fun class that will help prepare you to become a hunter. Hunters have

always been important to wildlife conservation. Taking hunter education is your first step to joining this important group of conservationists.

Build a brush pile

Brush piles are important shelters for small animals and birds. Pile dead branches and limbs in a crisscross pattern. This will make small spaces for animals to hide.

Recycle

Recycling helps make new things out of old ones. This saves energy, water, trees and other natural resources that wildlife and people depend upon.

Turn the water off when you brush your teeth

You can save five gallons of water each day if you do not let the water run while you brush your teeth. If you have a family of four people, that’s 20 gallons each day and 140 gallons a week!

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Volume 27 • Issue 3 • 75th Anniversary • November 2013

Wildlife Express is published nine times a year (September-May) by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Classroom subscriptions and an Educator’s Guide are available for \$45.00 per year and includes a classroom set of 30 copies mailed to your school each month. Subscriptions of 10 copies or less are available for \$25.00.

This publication is made possible through the sale of wildlife license plates.

For more information, call or write: Wildlife Express, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, 600 South Walnut, PO Box 25, Boise, Idaho, 83707 (208) 287-2890.

Lead Writers: Adare Evans Layout: Kelly Kennedy Yokoyama Contributors: Lori Adams, Vicky Runnoe
WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have a letter, poem or question for Wildlife Express, it may be included in a future issue! Send it to the address printed above!
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