



MK Nature Center

STREAM

The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center

FALL 2020

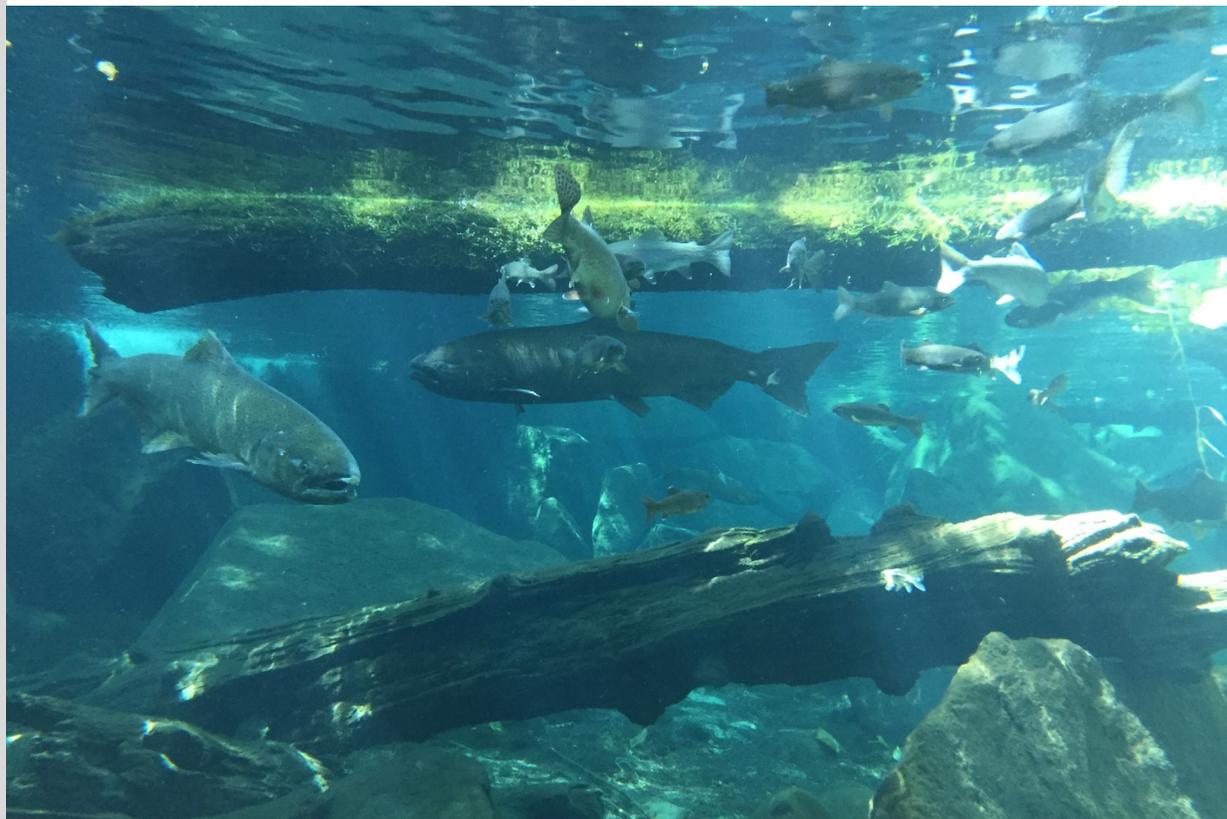
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Return of the King!

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG

Two adult Chinook Salmon (four year old males) and nine “Jacks” (males who return to Idaho early) were delivered to MKNC from Rapid River Hatchery on August 6th. This is one of our main annual attractions. Visitors love to see these giants live out their last few weeks at the Nature Center. These fish were born at Rapid River hatchery then they traveled to the ocean via spring runoff currents. They spent one to three years in the ocean before returning to their birth site. This year, we were not able to secure any females so the usual spawning activity was absent, but is always a privilege to see these fish up close and personal.



Friday & Saturday December 4th & 5th 2020, 9 AM-5 PM

MK Nature Center

Holiday Bird Seed Sale



600 S. Walnut Street Boise, ID 83712



Wild Birds Unlimited of Boise has been our faithful partner and supporter from the beginning. They continue to supply high quality seed for what is one of our most successful and popular fundraisers.

As usual, several varieties of seed will be available to feed your favorite birds, WBU will have the latest in bird feeding supplies available.



Large selection of holiday gift items, children's books, toys, jewelry and t-shirts.

All Proceeds Support MK Nature Center

Contact Sue.dudley@idfg.idaho.gov or 208 287 2900

COVID PRECAUTIONS! Please comply with all safety measures in place during this event. See our website for details closer to event day.

Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

My favorite season is nearly upon us. Gone is the oppressive heat of summer. Warm afternoons are now moderated by the cool air of morning and evening. While I will miss the bickering of the hummingbirds at my feeders, I look forward to the quiet formality of dark-eyed juncos as they bustle about, scratching the ground for seeds.

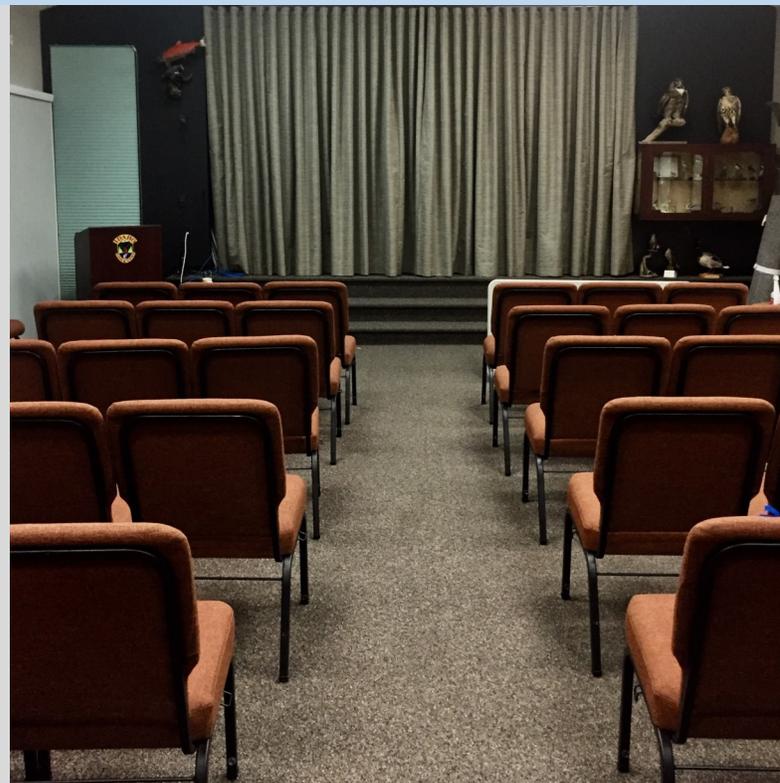
As the natural season changes in expected ways, the on-going pandemic will insure that things at the nature center will continue to be unexpected and different. However, different is not negative! While public school field trips are cancelled, we are meeting new homeschool groups. Behind their masks, these small groups of students are excited about exploring the nature center, observing, discovering, and learning. We are developing new ways of supporting online learning via short videos that teachers and parents can use with their students. Dedicated volunteers are staffing education tables into the fall this year, continuing to provide walk-on visitors with opportunities to learn about all sorts of critters and concepts. Other equally wonderful volunteers gather in physically distanced groups to assist with on-the-ground projects, helping to get much needed habitat improvement work done.

While what we are doing may be done differently right now, our focus on helping our visitors enjoy and learn about Idaho's wildlife and habitats remains. We appreciate our visitors and volunteers for your continued support of and appreciation for the nature center. As the temperatures drop and the leaves blaze into their riot of autumn colors, come visit to see what is different and what has stayed comfortably the same.

New Chairs!

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG

After 30 years of rear ends, muddy feet, coffee, juice, paint, gum, glue, and ground up food, we have retired the auditorium benches and replaced them with new padded chairs. Those good old benches served us well and were sturdy as heck! Those of us who work in the auditorium a lot became pretty efficient at swinging them into various configurations quickly. Admittedly, none of us were that sad to see them go. The new chairs are gorgeous, versatile and we just cannot wait to use them.



Fall Lectures

MKNC will be hosting some evening lectures for adults later in the fall and winter months. Subjects and format are yet to be determined. Keep your eye on the **EVENTS** section of our website for details.



AUSTIN RETURNS!

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG

Finding a job is not easy during a global pandemic. We opened our AmeriCorps Member position this summer and 17 applications arrived in no time-more than we have ever received in previous years. Unfortunately for those applicants, but fortunately for us, our very own AmeriCorps member decided to stay for a second term!

Looking at the bleak job market around him, Austin excitedly jumped at the chance to continue working at the Nature Center. We are pleased to have Austin stay with us. We have greatly enjoyed working with him and we won't have any trouble keeping him busy until next summer.

We appreciate the continued support of the Friends of MK Nature Center for making participation in the AmeriCorps Program possible!

Austin instantly captivates preschoolers from Parkside School during one of his first classes in 2019. Photo by Sara Focht



Moving On

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG

After four years of working as a part-time employee at MK Nature Center, Tara Jennings is moving on to take a full time position for another company. Tara was a great team player. The part time jobs at the MK Nature Center demand a wide variety of skills including cleaning, maintenance, outside labor, customer service, and office/computer skills. Tara covered all that and more! Tara suited up to tend the bees, jumped in when education programs were understaffed, tended our trail cameras and counter data, and was in charge of creating animal care logs. She had a special knack for noticing things that needed to be done, and doing it. We will miss her good humor, having her on staff and seeing her daily. We wish Tara the best of luck in her new position!



Tara takes Wilson, the Peregrine Falcon out for a walk to greet visitors. Photo by IDFG.

Swimming with DINOSAURS

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, MKNC

On August 18th, the nature center sent someone to swim with the fishes---but in a good way! Animal Nights Live animal expert, Corbin Maxey, arrived to take underwater video of the white sturgeon in the pond.

Corbin, his wife, Samantha, and fellow videographer Elias, first got footage of the sturgeon from the bridge before taking the plunge. Both Corbin and Elias found the water bracing to say the least. To minimize disturbance, Corbin and Elias came equipped with a GoPro and other underwater equipment mounted on poles. This allowed them to get close-up footage without bothering the sturgeon. Nature center staff and visitors enjoyed watching the swim and hearing Corbin's periodic exclamations of excitement as he made his way around the pond. At the end, Corbin said that the experience was one of the most amazing things he has ever done.

Please remember that visitors are not allowed in the pond. Corbin received special permission from the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game for this video work. But you can watch the program that Corbin produced at

www.corbinmaxey.com/webisodes.

Check for the *Swimming with Dinosaurs!* video. Corbin shared his video footage with the nature center so students can get up-close looks at sturgeon and learn more about these amazing fish.



Programs for Small Groups Available



To schedule a program:
287-2906
sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov

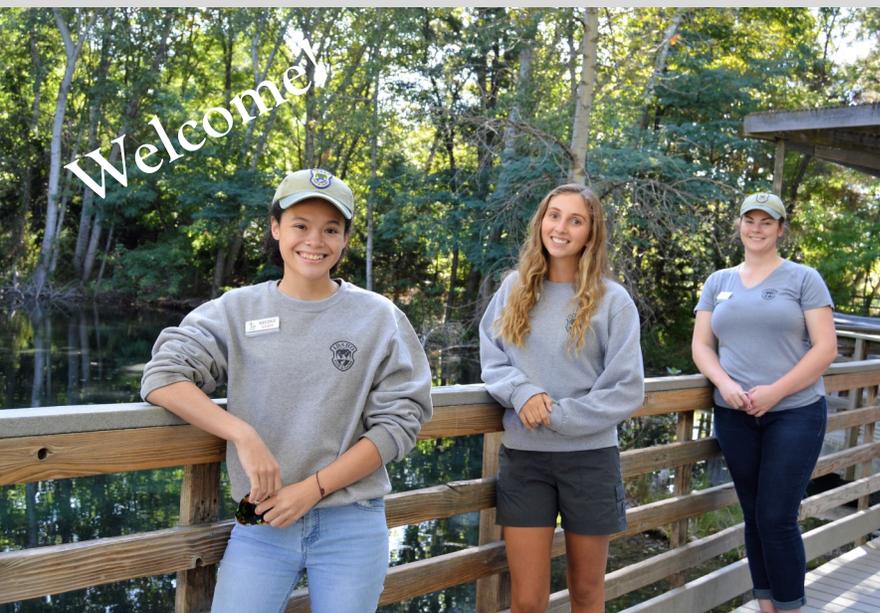


The MK Nature Center is offering guided programs and tours for groups up to 20 people. Our programs have been modified to ensure the safety of our visitors and instructors. Programs include an inside introduction (~20-40 minutes) with participants wearing masks and sitting 6 feet apart. Touring the grounds will be unguided and the activity or craft will be sent home with participants. Several of our most popular programs are still available, such as the Streamwalk, Falcons of Idaho, Hoo Lives in Idaho (owls), Anadromous Fish, Wild Canines, Scat and Tracks, Beaver Chew and more!

Click the photo to the left to link to our program brochure.

New Faces at MKNC

Nicole Crandall (left) is a junior in Boise State University working on her bachelor's degree in Biology. Growing up as a military child has led her all around the states, but she claims Idaho as her true home. In her freetime, she likes to go biking on the Greenbelt and hiking in the foothills. Her favorite animals are salamanders and frogs. She is excited to start work at the MK Nature Center and as always, enjoy Idaho's natural beauty.



Josie Meyer (middle) is a biology student at Boise State with an emphasis in ecology. She has always loved spending time outside and her favorite activities include rock climbing, paddle boarding, hiking, camping, and scuba diving. While studying abroad her junior year she met incredible conservationists from around the world and was inspired to follow their lead. She plans to continue her education in conservation and environmental education. Josie expressed, "The MKNC is a great place to explore my interests because conservation must be addressed on a local scale and every day at work I get to see children excited and eager to learn about the environment."

Chloe Watt (right) recently graduated from Boise State with a B.S. in Biology. She has always loved animals and caring for them. Wildlife conservation is very important to Chloe and she loves having the opportunity to work at a place where she can feel close to nature and see different species everyday. Chloe is, "...excited to work at the MK Nature Center because I get to care for animals, see them in their natural habitats, and help educate people about them!"

The Stowaway

Austin Reich, AmeriCorps Member, MKNC



As fall approaches and the weather gets colder, reptiles and amphibians become less active and prepare to sleep till warmer weather. I was starting to worry I wouldn't be able to write another story on the scaly and the slimy for you all. But worry not! Fate had other plans...

On the 22nd of September a visitor came in with a small terrarium in hand. She was looking for someone to identify a frog she had found on her Snake Plant she recently bought from Fred Meyer. Taking a close look at the frog I could immediately tell this was not a native Idaho frog. It was tiny! It measured about 13mm from snout to vent, but I was fairly certain it was a mature adult. The plant came from Utah so I assumed that maybe I was simply unfamiliar with the amphibians there. I measured all of its physical traits I could, sent an email to my old herpetology advisor, and prepared my mental scuba gear to dive into the literature and find the identity of this frog.

Luckily before my hubris could get the best of me, my co-worker, Ana simply looked into the nearest amphibian guide and found a similar looking frog. She hypothesized that the Greenhouse frog, *Eleutherodactylus planirostris*, could be the identity of this frog.

In order to check if this was true I hatched a plan. In my studies I've learned that frogs have **species-specific advertisement calls**. In other words, each species of frog produces its own unique call, and therefore each species will only react to its own call. So by playing the Greenhouse frog's call, we could watch and see if our new friend would have a positive reaction to hearing the call. Think of it like playing "Sweet Caroline" or "Don't Stop Believing" in a crowd to see who is from the United States.

I put on the latest Greenhouse frog hits of 2020 and watched intently to see my friend's reaction (the frog, not Ana). After one playback of the call, a still small voice replied back or specifically a repeated call-back. This, as well as a response from my advisor, corroborated the idea that we indeed had a Greenhouse frog in our care; a direct-developing frog native to **Cuba**. Although this frog likely could not survive to reproduce in Idaho due to the cold and dry climate, it is a great example of just how easily invasive species can sneak into a place.

The frog will be transported to the NNU herpetology lab to be put under the care of Dr. Cossel and his students, being fed a diet of fruit flies and springtails.

Summer Booths Come to a Close

Summer educational booths started late this year-July 1, due to Covid. A total of 16 volunteers and two IDFG employees hosted 75 booths and contacted 5,053 people! Booth themes included Animal Adaptations, Bird Beaks, Bears, Beavers, Bioblitz, Chinook Salmon, Canines of Idaho, Eagles, Horns and Antlers, Insects, Kokanee, Mule Deer, Weasels, and Scat and Tracks.

Thank you to Barbara McGillivray, Bronwyn Myers, Carolyn King (pictured), Cindy Marlow, Claire Veseth, Eliza Schultz, Elizabeth Grosse, Jenny Kuykendoll, Jon Mathews, Keely Vatcher, Kevin Drews, Kevin Laughlin, Lori Adams, Marylee Hale, Michele Andrew, Sara Focht, Teri Muse and Terry Thomas.



Unusual Visitor

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

Beginning early this spring, the nature center has hosted occasional visits from a barred owl (*Strix varia*). A woodland species familiar to residents of the Midwest and eastern U.S., barred owls are found in Idaho mainly in the northern part of the state. Here in southwestern Idaho, they are considered transient and quite uncommon. Our guess is that this bird is traveling up and down the Boise River corridor. The nature center has become one of its routine haunts.



Barred owls eat a wide variety of prey. Small rodents, birds, reptiles, and amphibians are all on the menu. This species also eats invertebrates such as large insects, slugs, and even the occasional crayfish.

During the past century, habitat changes have allowed barred owls to spread into the Pacific Northwest and northern California. This has, unfortunately, put them in competition with northern spotted owls (*Strix occidentalis*). Spotted owls are a threatened species, and barred owls are competing with them for food, nest sites, and habitat. Barred owls will occasionally prey on spotted owls as well. This has created a dilemma for wildlife biologists tasked with managing native species. Protection of existing habitat along with habitat restoration will be important to helping these two species co-exist without negatively affecting spotted owl populations.

Watch for the barred owl on your next visit. They are one of the few North American owls with brown eyes. In addition, they do not have feather tufts on their head like the more common great horned owl. Instead of hooting, barred owl calls sound like “who cooks for you, who cooks for you, all-l-l-l.” We have not heard our visitor calling, but maybe you might be the lucky visitor who does.

Top photo: barred owl by Austin Reich. Below left: kokanee salmon by Vicky Runnoe. Below middle: cat-face spider by Austin Reich. Below right: changing leaves by Austin Reich.



Garden Work Days



Our viewing windows have never looked better! Thanks Steve Berg, Jon Mathews and Debbi Erwin for all your hard work.



Fierce hunters holding up their prey. What is the prey you ask? Massive root wads that were clogging one of our streams. Jan Egge, Michele Andrews, Sonya Janson and Keely Vatcher worked tirelessly on this project.



These ladies made the area by the eagle's nest look amazing. Thanks Michele Andrews, Kristin Haustveit, Keely Vatcher, Debbi Erwin, Sonya Janson.

All photos by Sue Dudley, IDFG.



Got Weeds? Not any more! Katie Sheppa, Sonya Janson, and Kristin Haustveit made this flower bed look beautiful.



July
August
September



Jan Egge (above left) and Tom Neale (left) prune and smile like pros! Gary Hundt (above) helps work on tree removal. Volunteers are asked to wear masks while working. Some volunteers chose to remove their masks for photos. Photos by Sue Dudley, IDFG

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This list of donors does not include donations made to Friends of MK Nature Center
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