



The Nature Center Stream



SPRING The Seasonal Newsletter of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game MK Nature Center 2016



INSIDE THIS

ISSUE:

Little Free Library	2
Volunteer Potluck	3
Great Horned Owls	4
Parkside School	5
Hummingbirds	6
Local Seeds	7
Spring Event	8
Bird Conservation Centennial	9
New Taxidermies	10
Perfect Penstemon	12



Don't Forget Idaho Gives-May 5th

Joyce Harvey-Morgan, FOMKNC Board Member



Did you know that the *Friends of MK Nature Center* was created to support and enhance the work of the Nature Center? The Nature Center provides amazing educational experiences and wildlife viewing opportunities for school groups, children, adults, and families. What an incredible resource we have, right in the heart of our community!

In this year's campaign, the Friends of MK Nature Center is raising funds for two projects:

- Hiring an AmeriCorps teacher to expand the MKNC educational capacity, particularly on weekends and for special events
- Creation of an artistic mosaic with interpretive signage surrounding one of the fish windows-using the power of art to educate

Please help support the Nature Center and its important work of teaching kids and adults to love, appreciate and protect our natural world. Please consider making a donation, of any amount, on May 5 through Idaho Gives. www.razoo.com/story/FOMKNC will take you directly to the Friends of MK Nature Center page. Thanks so much for your support.



FRIENDS OF MK NATURE CENTER

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection



Dave's Two Cents

I recently called Edwina Allen to thank her and John for another generous donation. As usual, our conversation swirled around the environment, education, politics, and how these things are intertwined. Naturally, these issues can and do carry with them a measure of anxiety, but Edwina is a hero and as heroes do, she manages to keep me hopeful, inspired, and able to carry on. Her words of inspiration were simple, genuine, on target, and so good to hear: “You do such good work down there. You do so much with so little. You have such a great staff” and “We can never give up, we have to stay here and fight.” And fought she has.

For those of you who don't know, Edwina has worked tirelessly for our environment. I'm willing to bet she's done this for the majority of her life.

Edwina and John have provided substantial financial and moral support for us over the years, as have many others. This kind of support, these kinds of friends, reflect the heart of our *raison d'être*. They believe in our mission, they believe in our work, and they believe that we make a difference. And that makes all the difference because sometimes the view from the ground floor isn't so rosy.

MN Builds Little Free Library

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG

Once again, Idaho Master Naturalist, Jerry Pugh has used his woodworking skills and interests to complete his Idaho Master Naturalist volunteer hours commitment. Because Jerry works full time for Boise City Parks and Recreation Department, projects that can be worked on at home help him fulfill his volunteer hours and provide valuable products to the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter partnering agencies. His latest contribution is a beautiful “Little Free Library” for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game MK Nature Center. The Nature Center is always looking for ways to diversify how visitors can interact with the habitat. This library will be filled with free books about nature, wildlife, habitat, and much more. Books can be borrowed, returned, and donated.



Jerry has also built an aviary for MK Nature Center's Peregrine Falcon, assembled insect hotel structures for the Idaho Botanical Garden, and designed educational carts for the Foothills Learning Center and Idaho Botanical Gardens! In addition, Jerry is the representative for the City of Boise, a partner of the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter. He is one of the few chapter leaders in the state who is also certified in the Master Naturalist program. Another big thanks to Jerry!

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

A Gathering of MK Supporters

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG



Left: Everything is ready! New water glasses from the Friends of MK Nature Center, decorations, flowers, tables set. Right: Bob and Lauri Foss are greeted by Jessica Gordon (IDFG) and her little girl.



Photos left to right: The crowd enjoying great food. Janet Conley gets a fish! Willow Hahn holding one of several antique wood carved decoys she supplied for party décor. BSU student Aislinn Johns brought out Wilson, the peregrine falcon, to meet the dinner attendees.

Good friends, great food, beautiful decorations, a baby, and a peregrine falcon...that makes for a pretty good evening. Our 2016 Volunteer and Supporter Appreciation Potluck was a great success. Just like everything here at the Nature Center, it takes a cadre of people to get it just right. Sue Dudley, Willow Hahn, Jessica Gordon, Scott Sliney, and Susan Ziebarth, along with other employees and volunteers orchestrated the lovely event.



Tony Sandor, president of the Friends of MK Nature Center introduced the board and shared a little about the new organization.

Our volunteers are essential and it is difficult to express how deeply we appreciate their participation and dedication in all aspects of the MK Nature Center.

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Raptor Connection

HOO Was Seen at the Nature Center?

Melissa Jannusch, Wildlife Education Technician, MKNC



Quite camouflaged even when sitting out on a branch in the sunlight! Photo by Celia Moreno, MKNC.

In early March, Celia Moreno (MKNC) heard the hooting of an owl while making her rounds at the Nature Center. She was able to identify the owl as a Great Horned Owl by its unique fog horn-like sound. Unable to see the elusive owl at first, Celia followed the sound up a hill, and spotted the huge owl in the branches of a Douglas fir tree. The owl has been spotted and heard several more times since the first sighting. The nature center’s captive American Kestrel, Fiona, even saw the owl and told us about it by squawking loudly.

The Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) is a large aggressive Idaho native. Great Horned Owls can grow to be about two feet tall with an impressive five foot wing span. They are the only owl species known to dine on skunks regularly. Occasionally, Great Horned Owls will eat fish, which makes the Nature Center a great spot for them to find food. They have the ability to wade into shallow water and grab their prey. Matching their large size and the large size of their prey, this bird can produce pellets up to 4 inches long!

Generally nocturnal, these owls are rarely seen during the day, but are sometimes out on cloudy days. Their name comes from the most distinctive feature; their “horns,” which are actually just feathers to aid with camouflage. The dark brown mottled with black and grey color of their feathers helps these owls blend in with the cottonwood trees they frequent. When it is time to nest, they will steal a magpie or hawk nest, because they are unable to make their own.

Keep your ears and eyes open while enjoying the Nature Center’s streamwalk and you may be lucky enough to hear the Great Horned Owl’s hoot or even spot him up in a tree searching the ground below for prey.



Left: A Great Horned Owl pellet that contains crayfish parts.

Parkside School-Giving to Their Community



March 8th was a beautiful, sunny spring day. A perfect day for 15 four and five year old Parkside students to come to MK Nature Center for an hour of work. They arrived promptly with parent volunteers, rubber boots, rakes, and shovels in hand.

For the month of March, the kids are learning about “community helpers.” Many parents



are visiting the classroom to tell them what they do in the community. Preschool teacher, Whitney Rodriguez, contacted MKNC with the idea of the kids coming in to volunteer and practice giving back to their community.

After arrival, they were divided into two groups. Half went to the river to collect river rocks for landscaping, and the other half raked leaves and collected sticks. After each group got to do both tasks, Susan Ziebarth (MKNC) helped the kids beautify the butterfly garden by planting flowers. The kids worked hard and had fun. They were excited to work and help out.

Parkside school is located across the street from MK Nature Center. For over 10 years, Parkside students have come to the Nature Center at least once a month to learn about animals, plants, and fungus. We know them well and we are happy to have them as our community helpers and friends.

Coming Soon! Hummingbirds.

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

Hummingbirds will soon be returning to Idaho. Treasure Valley residents often begin to see these feathered jewels around May 1, but its best to put your feeders out in mid-April. This will help any early migrants passing through. Four parts water to one part sugar is the magic formula for hummingbird food. Another important way to attract hummingbirds, is to plant hummingbird-friendly native flowers like penstemon (see page 12). Idaho hosts four different species of hummingbirds in the summer. The following three are most commonly seen in southwestern Idaho.

Black-chinned Hummingbird---This hummer commonly nests in the Treasure Valley. The velvet-black gorget or “chin” of the male is bordered underneath by a purple band. Both the male and female often pump their tails when hovering.

Rufous Hummingbird---The overall rufous-orange color of the male gives this bird its name. Females also have rufous coloring along their sides and at the base of their tails. This species is quite pugnacious and vocal. Males will actively defend feeders, chasing away other hummingbirds.



Calliope Hummingbird---This is North America’s smallest bird. This tiny sprite zips through the Treasure Valley in spring. Their small size and the peppermint candy striping on the male’s throat are good field marks.



Top photos: Rufous Hummingbird in flight and rest by Catherine Zinsky. Bottom photos: Calliope Hummingbird at rest (Mike Morrison) and in flight (Catherine Zinsky).

Plant a Seed, Watch it Grow.

Melissa Jannusch, Wildlife Education Technician, MKNC

As Boise begins to thaw out we are all getting eager to dust off our gardening tools, start turning up the soil, and get outside to plant our gardens!

As backyard gardeners, most of us hope to produce delicious, high quality, and safe to eat veggies. The plants we grow in our backyards should be considered local, right? But how often do we consider the origin of the plant? Seeds are often produced and packaged thousands of miles away from Boise! Buying local seeds has more benefits than just helping your local community. Local seeds will also improve your garden!



Locally produced seeds are specifically developed in Idaho; meaning they will thrive in the local climate, soils, seasons, and other environmental conditions much better than seeds produced in other regions. Locally adapted seeds will create better quality veggies and give you a more successful garden with less work. “If a seed company is good and really engaged in plant breeding, you really stand to prosper in your garden since it's adapted from regionally grown seed,” says John Navazio, senior scientist with the Organic Seed Alliance.

But where in Boise can we buy local seeds? Luckily for you, we have them right here at the MK Nature Center! Our own plant expert, Susan Ziebarth, arranged for a variety of local seeds from the Snake River Seed Cooperative to be sold in the gift shop. The Snake River Seed Cooperative produces high quality seeds bred by local growers without the use pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides, ensuring your garden plants will have a safe, chemical –free start.

The Snake River Seed Cooperative is a proponent of the Open Source Seed Initiative that strives to keep seeds a part of the public commons. This allows growers (including you!) to harvest seeds from the plants they grow. Saving your seeds will prevent you from having to buy new seeds each year, reducing the annual cost of your garden.

Because seeds come after flowers, harvesting your seeds will stimulate the flower production in your garden making your backyard a beautiful oasis. This also benefits our pollinator friends—honeybees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

So next time you're in the area, stop by the MKNC, pick up some local seeds, and get to gardening!

Two Great Events-One Day!

Mark your calendars for APRIL 23, 2016! Boise ♥ Birds is a new event, a blend of International Migratory Bird Day and a 100 year celebration of Bird Conservation in our country. By design, this is also the date of Idaho Native Plant Society Native Plant Sale. There will be something for everyone!

From 10 am to 4 pm, the MK Nature Center invites you to come enjoy birds, learn why Boise is a great place for birds, and how you can make it even better. There will be live bird presentations, art projects, learning stations, native plants, and more! The event is FREE!



The Pahove Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society will be selling Idaho’s native plants for your yard! These plants need less water, attract local pollinators, help wildlife, and add beauty to our world. Experts will be on hand to help you choose the best native plants for your yard’s conditions or help you choose colorful blooms for hummingbirds. INPS members can shop Friday, April 22nd from 5pm to 7 pm (you can buy your annual membership that night). The public is invited Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm.



go to www.idahonativeplants.org in mid-April for a plant availability list. Questions? Call Susan 867-6188

* sorry, we can only accept cash and checks!



MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

100 Years Ago, 100 Years From Now.

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG MK Nature Center



One hundred years ago, the United States and Great Britain (for Canada) signed the Migratory Bird Treaty, the first of three important international treaties to protect migratory birds. Before this, migratory birds were declining at a rapid rate due to massive overharvesting for food, feather collecting for women's hats, and scientific collections. Several common species went extinct.

The state of migratory bird populations is much better than it was 100 years ago, because citizens and the government had the foresight to make changes before it was too late. However, new times have brought new challenges to birds, that current laws cannot necessarily address.

We celebrate migratory birds and how they enhance our lives. They add color and sound to our world. They contribute environmental benefits such as pollination, insect and rodent control, and seed dispersal. Birding and bird related tourism contribute significantly to local and state economies.

As we look back on the history of how migratory birds have been appreciated and protected in the world, it is an opportunity to look forward and inward. How do our actions affect birds? How can we make a difference?

Prevent window strikes.

Keep cats indoors.

Support agencies and organizations that create, maintain, and protect wildlife habitat.

Plant native plants!

Visit www.fws.gov/birds/MBTreaty100 for more information about the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial of 2016. Click on the TIMELINE feature to view how bird conservation has played out in the last 100 years.

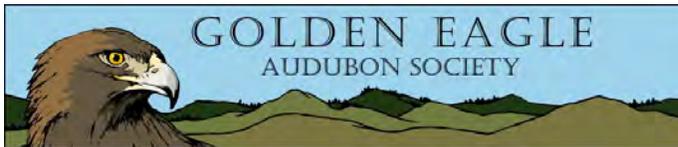
MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

Golden Eagle Audubon Grant Brings Birds

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG MK Nature Center



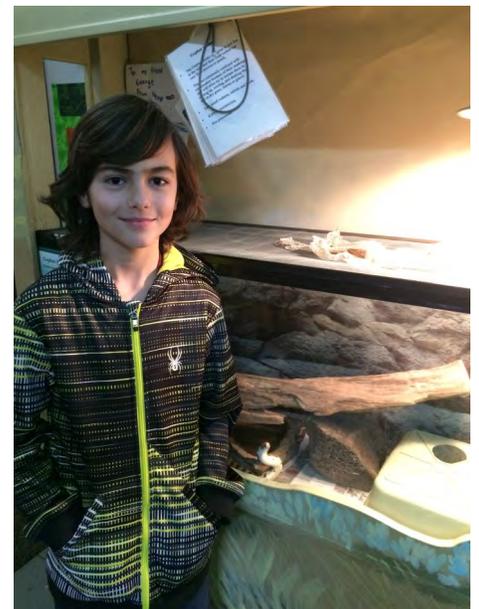
Great Horned Owl and Burrowing Owl taxidermies.



Two new taxidermies have arrived courtesy of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society. Nearly two years ago, we applied for and received a grant to get these owls mounted. The grant proposal was prompted by an unfortunate event; our great horned owl mount being stolen! Our “HOO Lives in Idaho Program (owl program) which is very popular, is enhanced by having taxidermies in the classroom so kids can get up close and look at all the neat adaptations owls have. Thanks to the Golden Eagle Audubon Society chapter, we are back in business and ready to use these taxidermies to connect visitors and students with our local birds.

Young Donor Makes a Difference.

Canyon Buschbacher (age 10) donated forty dollars that he earned selling birdseed feeders that he made from all organic materials. Canyon loves the Nature Center and visits regularly to check in on the fish and the snake. We appreciate all our donors, but when a donation comes from a young person who worked for the money, the meaning really touches our hearts. We are planning a new habitat for George and Canyon will be pleased his that donation will help with this.



MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

Penstemons-A Perfect Perennial

Mary Ann Newcomer, Idaho Master Naturalist

There are so many perennials that work well in gardens in the Rocky Mountain region that it would be foolhardy to single out one particular family. But, the penstemons truly stand out. They work well in Firewise plantings, Waterwise and Xeric gardens, rock gardens, and any perennial border. More than 250 different penstemons have been identified world-wide. They even have their own society, The American Penstemon Society. Find them on the web at www.apsdev.org, and they have their own Facebook page!



Why have a human-made hummingbird feeder that you have to fill, clean, disinfect, and worry about getting fermented when you can have a penstemon! Hummingbirds love them, you don't have to scrub them, and they are beautiful.

If you plant certain native penstemons in your yard, you can ensure beautiful blooms from early spring to late fall, keeping the color and nectar for the whole season.



*There are so many great Penstemons, far too many to list here. Several varieties will be offered at the Native Plant sale at the MK Nature Center on April 23rd (see poster on page 8). Red penstemon pictured above is *Penstemon attenuates*.*

*On the bottom row, from left to right, *Penstemon venustus* (Venus Penstemon), *Penstemon strictus* (Rocky Mountain Beardtounge or Rocky Mountain Penstemons), *Penstemon attenuates* (sulphur penstemon). Photos by Susan Ziebarth, MKNC.*

Thank You For Supporting What We Do!

These individuals and businesses supported the MK Nature Center between January 1 and March 31, 2016 in the form of cash, in-kind materials, or FOMKNC membership.

Hilda Packard
Boise at Its Best
Scott and Susan Prestel
Albertsons store # 193
Dallas Burkhalter
Linda Jarsky
Sara Focht and Josh Olson

Jim Ryan
Bronwyn Myers
Exxon Mobil
Elizabeth Burtner
Ron & Vickki Evans
Steven Kahn
Fred and Cheryl Minckler

Sandra Sweet
Timothy and Holly Syreen
Belinda Ann Knochel
Chuck & Kay Hervey
Margit Donhowe
Edwinna & John Allen

The following people volunteered their time to the MK Nature Center between January 1 and March 31, 2016. MK Nature Center receives an average of nearly 500 volunteer hours monthly. Thank you!!

Brandy Atsinger
Anna Autilio
Emilio Bengoeche
Brian Brooks
Athena Brown
Anna Brueck
Janet Caron
Mason Caron
Corrine Christ
Patrice Davies

Seth Davis
Nancy DeWitt
Jessi Ekmark
Nathaniel Fisher
Bob Foss
Josh Gummingsall
Willow Hahn
Joyce Harvey-Morgan
Raymond Heady
Dave Hopkins

Randall Howell
Aislinn Johns
Mack Leith
Abby Moone
Holly Moss
Bronwyn Myers
Jerry Pugh
Barb Recla
Arleen Schaeffer
Inna Smith

Weeding on Grandpa's Farm

David Cannamela, MKNC Superintendent

It's a good thing I said yes! Ben McFarland called me on March 29th and said he had to do 20 hours of volunteer work for school (I love it- mandatory volunteering!) Naturally I didn't remember or connect that he is Janet and Jerry Conley's grandson. Jerry Conley was the IDFG Director when the MK Nature Center was built and was instrumental in its formation. Janet has been a supporter all along. Maybe I was in a good mood or off my game, but I said sure, let me see what we have. Then I called him back and said come on in we've got some exotic weeds you can pull. Well, Ben came in and I recognized him (with a little prompting)- as the kid who rubbed his whitetail buck photo in my face a year or so ago. His grandmother (Janet) had done it previously- boasting about the hunting prowess of her grandsons. Thanks a lot!

