



MK Nature Center

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center WINTER 2020

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If You Give a Moose a Muffin

Sara Focht,
Wildlife Educator, MKNC

The MK Nature Center receives many requests for our education programs at schools, daycares, STEM events, and community gatherings. Due to our limited staff and funding, we cannot accommodate all the requests. However, with the help of volunteers, we are able to attend some events! In November, Marble Front Head Start requested our services at their “Male Engagement” activity that would feature Moose. Male Engagement events are short events during the day that encourage dads to come to school and get involved with their child’s education. The kids love having their dad visit and they usually get to do something special...like hear a book read by a famous person (in this case, the reader was “Bob the Builder”).



Photo provided by Marble Front Head Start

Thanks to volunteers Alice and Alan Crockett, the kids and their dads were able to touch moose fur, see moose scat (a favorite item), and hold up moose antlers while looking at some other books about moose.

“The best part was the moose poop!” -Milo

“The best part was my daddy coming to my school!” -Bella



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor

As you will read in another section of this newsletter, the nature center lost a good friend recently. Frank Lundburg was a daily visitor, wandering around the grounds with camera in hand. He was a passionate advocate for snakes and other reptiles, dedicating much of his life to educating others about these all too often misunderstood creatures.

Frank's passing has made me reflect upon how the nature center gathers together those who care about the natural world. Touchstones might be birds, native plants, reptiles, or fishes, but no matter what the passion, the nature center draws these folks together. They become regular visitors, stopping by just to see what is going on. Some of them become volunteers, dedicating some of their precious time to making the nature center a better place for all of us. Others stop in to show off a photo they took on the grounds or share a story of something they just saw or maybe hope to see on another visit. They become part of the fabric of the nature center, comfortably embedding us even more in our broader community. To Frank and our many friends, we are deeply grateful for your friendship, support, and visits.

May you delight in the simple joys of the holiday season. See you in 2020.



Friends of MKNC

Membership Drive

Joyce Harvey-Morgan, Board Member, FOMKNC

It's membership time at the Friends of MK Nature Center! Please consider joining us, with as small a donation as \$25. What's in it for you? 10% off your purchases at the MKNC store, invitation to special members-only events, and most of all, knowing that your contribution helps us to make a wonderful organization—one that's so important for our community's kids and families—even better! If you'd like to join us, send a check to FOMKNC, PO Box 604, Boise 83701, or join online at www.friendsofmknc.org/donate.html

What have the Friends of MK Nature Center been up to? With the generous support of our members and area foundations, this past year we have

- supported the hiring of an AmeriCorps member for the 4th year, to assist with educational programs at the Nature Center (bottom photo)
- helped to create the Pollinator Project—an observation beehive and a beautiful painting highlighting the many interactions in the natural world related to pollination (top photo)
- created the *Play with a Purpose* project—where kids can climb into a huge and beautiful life-size eagle's nest, climb on and through a set of stepping stumps and hollow logs—to both have fun and learn about the movements of wild animals (middle photo)

We are currently finalizing plans to replace the educational kiosk on the grounds of the Nature Center with a much more interesting and more user-friendly structure. Please consider joining us and becoming a member of our team—to help kids and families get outside to enjoy, appreciate, learn about and take care of the natural world.

Photos by Sara Focht, IDFG

In Remembrance

Frank Lundburg

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

The nature center lost a long-time friend when Frank Lundburg passed away over the weekend of December 7. In his almost daily visits, Frank shared his knowledge, wry sense of humor, photographs, and friendship.

Frank grew up in Pocatello, earning his Bachelor's degree from Idaho State University and a Master's degree from the University of Oregon. He was a Vietnam veteran, serving in the U.S. Army. Along with working in several positions for the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game over the years, Frank also worked for Idaho Governor John Evans as an advisor and assistant to the governor.

A passionate advocate for reptiles, Frank worked to educate people about these misunderstood creatures since 1990. He was the founder and past-president of the Idaho Herpetological Society. From 1997 – 2018, Frank was an Adjunct Instructor in Herpetology at Boise State University. He brought his education reptiles and knowledge to countless organizations, all the while helping audiences understand the important role of these amazing creatures. His friends and the reptiles he championed mourn his passing.



Frank Lundburg, photo from Facebook profile.

Weekend Family Nature Activities



Sunday, January 12

Wild Canines of Idaho
1-4 pm Free

Sunday, February 9

Do you LOVE Wildlife?
1-4 pm. \$5/student. Register at
sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov

Sunday, March 8

Wildlife Scientist
1-4 pm Free

Sunday, April 5th

EGGS!
1-4 pm Free

Saturday, May 9

Migratory Bird Day
Tentative event. Check website
closer to date.

Check website [EVENTS](#) section
for details.

Community Partners 2019

Susan Ziebarth, Wildlife Educator, MKNC



June 7th

Nicole Brown organized the Deloitte Impact Day team to complete a number of much needed “sprucing up” projects. The “sprucing” included washing the Marcus Pierce Mural at the Alpine Lake, trimming limbs and brush hanging over the path and prepping the trim on the building for re-painting.

June 27th

Lisa Smith organized another Community Advocate Team project on a beautiful June day. The team completed construction-debris clean-up around our new Eagle Nest display, and trimmed back unruly vegetation along the path. Lisa and Sadie cleared vegetation and rebuilt the “brushpile” in the bird viewing display area.



Sadie Larsen has been volunteering all summer at the Nature Center, mostly working in the native plant gardens. She joined her Aunt Lisa and the Amerisource Bergen team to help out on this day.

July 27th, September 9, 13, 14

Aubrey Smith organized another annual Micron Work Day and Weenie roast. This year the Micron team deconstructed the aviary that housed the kestrel and burrowing owl by removing perches, giving everything a thorough cleaning, sanding the tired redwood for future staining and tearing out part of the existing roof. Other team members were on the grounds cutting back overgrown vegetation.



Photos by Suzan Ziebarth, IDFG

Thank
You!

Deloitte

Nicole Brown
Kelly Russ
Alyssa Hein
Cassie Runyan
Brian McKeever
Victoria Cary
Kaitlin Carlson
Tyler Akins
Brent Mills
Stewart Trouric

Amerisource Bergen MWI Health Community Advocate Team

Lisa Smith
Sadie Larsen
Richard Clemens
Joseph Caufield
Dan Greitzer

Micron

Aubrey Smith
Bobbie Smith
Tina Bennett
Kassi Heringer
Mick Klein
Sharon Klein
Lowell Wood
Lydia Wildman
Stephen Parker
Charly Goettsche
Heinrik Goettshe
Josh Thompson
Mike Medellna

Composting at MKNC

Maddy Bigelow, Bio Aide, MKNC

My name is Maddy Bigelow and I'm the new Biological Aide at the Nature Center. Getting my first big outdoor job comes with its challenges and learning opportunities, like caring for a falcon or maintaining a clean environment for the wildlife in the park. The newest task I've learned to

do is maintaining the compost pile. My family used to keep a compost box, but after the summer ended we stopped using it. Here at the Nature Center, raking really never stops, so we nurture the compost pile all year long. I have learned how to help this big pile of leaves decompose faster. I always

knew coffee grounds were one way to speed up the composting process, but I never knew why or how. I've come to think of them as the activator, spurring the bacteria and fungi to work faster...and thus raising the temperature. Whenever we receive a load of coffee grounds from Starbucks I get really excited to go out and turn the compost and add to it. It is a relatively easy task that kept me busy on the days we don't have many extra chores to do. I like going out and checking on the compost pile temperature! The higher it is, the faster things are breaking down and the sooner it will be ready to put back out onto the habitat!



Maddy Bigelow working at the compost pile.
Photo by Susan Ziebarth, IDFG

Images of Winter

Visitation is low in the winter months at the Nature Center, but natural wonders still abound. Heron tracks can be seen in freshly fallen snow (photo by Austin Reich). Frost clings to the last green leaves (photo by Vicky Runnoe). Rainbow trout actively dig underwater nests in the pond gravel, lay eggs and guard their eggs (photo by Sara Focht).





Happy New Year
From Your
MKNC Staff



Winter Evening Lectures

January 8th-*Short-eared owls!* Heather Hayes from Intermountain Bird Observatory will come share information about these owls, where they live, why they are a “species of greatest conservation need” and how you can help. 6:30-8 pm. Free and open to the public.

January 22nd-*Sage Grouse Biology and Volunteerism.* IDFG Biologist, Ann Moser will tell us about the exciting lives of the Sage Grouse and their current conservation status. Opportunities to help count sage grouse will also be presented. 6:30-8 pm. Free and open to the public.

February 12th-*A day in the life of a Conservation Officer.* Idaho Fish and Game C.O. Charlie Justice will come share his experiences as a Conservation Officer. Interesting stories and Charlie’s special interest in reptiles and amphibians will surely abound. 6:30-8 pm. Free and open to the public.

Lobby Changes

The nature center will be hosting the IDFG Licensing Desk beginning in the spring. However, preparations will begin in February. Much of the front display room will be remodeled to accommodate this change. Construction should take three weeks. We will host the license desk for the duration of the construction of Fish and Game’s new Headquarters building, a project that will take approximately two years. We are looking forward to welcoming some new visitors as well as giving our regular visitors an opportunity to purchase their hunting and fishing licenses right here at the nature center.





Wood frog in winter. Photo by Evelyn Davidson, National Park Service

How Wood Frogs Deal With Winter

Austin Reich, AmeriCorps Member, MKNC

“These frogs freeze completely in the winter, then reawaken from the ice like Captain America.”

We all know that many animals will change their behavior when winter arrives. We know that bears find their dens, bison will use their fur and size to simply deal with the cold, and some birds will just up and leave to warmer weather. However, there is one creature here in Idaho who’s strategy for surviving winter is... well really, really cool.

The wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*) is one of the most ubiquitous frogs in North America. Their range extends from the most Northern tip of Alaska all the way to Alabama. They belong to the family Ranidae, or the “true frogs.” This means that the wood frog is one of the most common and froggiest frogs out there. One of the reasons of their immense success as a species is their ability to adapt to very variable environments, whereas other frogs may not be able to withstand a temperature change of a few degrees.

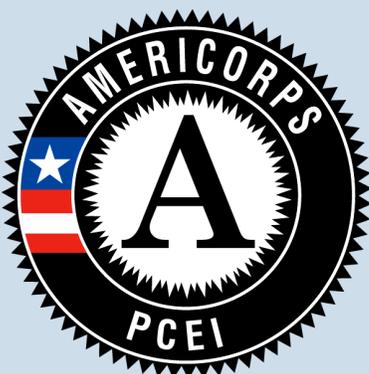
When winter approaches in the northern part of their range, where temperatures have been recorded as low as -80°F , these pretty ordinary frogs do something extraordinary. Temperature and daylight changes signal a shift in the frog’s physiology. Their body begins to concentrate glucose (a type of simple sugar) into its cells. The glucose at high concentrations will dehydrate organs, stabilize macromolecule and cellular membranes, and depress the freezing temperature of bodily fluids. In other words, it lowers the freezing point of the frog and minimizes ice damage to the cells of the frog. These frogs freeze completely in the winter, then reawaken from the ice like Captain America.

Other amphibians will typically dig below the frost line or hibernate deep underwater. This method of surviving winter is much less risky and requires much less effort from them. However, once they are able to realize it is now spring and awaken from their slumber. The wood frog will have already laid their eggs in the best ponds, giving their progeny a heads up on the rest of the competition.

Next time you feel like winter is getting the best of you, or you are just always too darn cold. Take a page out of the wood frog’s book and get some sugar in your blood.



Wood Frog. Photo by Dave Huth (CC BY 2.0) Flickr



Bird Seed Sale

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator and Gift Shop Manager, MKNC

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We had such a great fundraiser! This was our best year yet since starting this event in 2006. Thank you so much for all of you who came out and supported our fundraiser.

A special thanks goes to Julie and Boyd Steele of Wild Birds Unlimited who donate the seed at cost, so we can raise money for the Nature Center.

THANK YOU

Bird Seed Sale Volunteers

Amanda Richael
Crikky Simon
Linda Jarsky
Sandy Sweet
Suzanne Troje
Tom Curren



Clockwise starting at top left: Suzanne Troje, Tom Curren, and Amanda Richael carry bags of seed for customers. Linda Jarsky and Sandy Sweet help at the craft table. Susan Ziebarth and Maddy Bigelow presenting Wilson to visitors. Crikky Simon helping carry seed. Boyd Steele from Wild Birds Unlimited helping visitors learn about seed and feeders. Photos by Sue Dudley, IDFG.



Volunteers Donors

October
November
December
2019

Hilda Packard
Sharon & Russ Kiefer
Wild Birds Unlimited

- Pam Bly
- Susie Carlson
- Kim Chmura
- Alan Crockett
- Alice Crockett
- Tom Curren
- Patrice Davies
- Kevin Drews
- Kristin Gnojewski
- Janna Gray
- Linda Jarsky
- Gail Kirkpatrick
- Kevin Laughlin
- Ron Lopez
- Cindy Marlow
- Nanette McGrath
- Diane Merryman
- Terri Muse
- Bronwyn Myers
- Karing Nial
- Damon Noller
- Neva Olson
- Cody Parker
- Jael Prin
- Benita Putzier
- Amanda Richael
- Arleen Schaeffer
- Howard Sheppa
- Crikky Simon
- Boyd Steele
- Sandy Sweet
- Terry Thomas
- Suzanne Troje
- Bonnie Urresti
- Roger Wallace
- Kevin Wilson
- Tess Wolfenson



Top: Tom Curren helped us re-route a few of our fences around our new signs. Photo by Susan Ziebarth, IDFG. Bottom: Terri Muse teaches Riverside Elementary students about arthropods! Photo by Ron Lopez.

10/10/2019