



MK Nature Center

STREAM

The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center WINTER 2022

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A Holiday Surprise!

Sue Dudley, Gift Shop Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG

Each year, Erin Mercer’s family makes a donation to an organization in the community as a holiday gift. This year, their generous donation came to the MK Nature Center! Erin and her four year old daughter, Emma Rawlings, stopped by to surprise us with a heart-felt card and check! They live close by and explained that they come to the nature center quite often. Thank you to this caring family! Their donation and donations of any size make a real difference to the MK Nature Center!

Erin Mercer and Emma Rawlings in front of MKNC just after they delivered their holiday surprise. Photo by Sue Dudley.



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

The winter solstice has passed, leaving winter to claim the calendar along with the landscape. Brief snows bring a flurry of birds to the feeders and leave a canvas of meandering tracks for visitors to enjoy. Trail cameras pick up the usual seasonal parade of deer, the occasional raccoon, a western screech owl and, recently, three bobcats on a nocturnal prow. Such activity is a constant at the nature center as is the seasonal ebb and flow of visitors. It is a constant we enjoy and depend upon to anchor our activities and provide predictability.

But change is a given and the nature center certainly has experienced change this year. The first and most obvious is the completion of our agency's new headquarters. Our colleagues are moving into their new spaces and we are so glad to welcome them back! It has been heartening to hear from so many that they are glad to be close to the nature center once again. The sight of a bobcat taking a daytime stroll outside their windows simply added to their enthusiasm.

Another change includes regaining part of the property that was fenced off during construction. This provides exciting opportunities to do something different to enhance both wildlife habitat and visitor experiences. We are excited by new possibilities and are already brainstorming ideas. This is an exciting time at the nature center; we hope you stop by to see what changes are being made in the midst of what is familiar.

Happy Holidays



Teamwork

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG



On the hill left to right: MKNC volunteer Brent Davys, AmeriCorps Member Mariah Hilliard, MKNC volunteer Kevin Drews. On the ground left to right: MKNC employees Nicole Crandall and Maddy Saez.



Four steelhead were delivered to MKNC on November 24th. Employees and volunteers snapped into action to get the fish into the alpine lake.

The steelhead lived quite a life before they arrived at the Nature Center. These steelhead were the result of spawning at Oxbow Fish Hatchery in 2019 or 2020. Oxbow Hatchery is a mitigation hatchery owned by Idaho Power but operated by IDFG. As eggs, they were transported to Niagara Springs Fish Hatchery to hatch and be reared to smolts (juveniles). From there, they are transported back to Oxbow to be released for their migration to the ocean. Like salmon, these fish spend time in the ocean feeding and growing very large. They migrate back to where they were released....Oxbow Fish Hatchery, where they are trapped and most are overwintered for spring spawning. When there is a surplus, they are loaded onto a truck and driven to Boise to be released into the Boise River for sport fishing and MK Nature Center for viewing and admiring.

Did you know that rainbow trout and steelhead are the same species? Genetically identical, but behaviorally they are very different. Rainbow trout stay in fresh water for their whole lives. Steelhead go to the ocean (anadromous). Interestingly, these two fish can live in the same habitat and even interbreed; the offspring can adopt either adult behavior.

Any rainbow trout over 20 inches with a clipped adipose fin, caught during steelhead fishing season on designated rivers, is defined as a steelhead. During this same time, a fish described as above without a clipped fin, must be released, as it is a wild fish and are listed as “Threatened” under the Endangered Species Act.

Wild Fun Facts

- W** Wild turkeys have at least 28 different vocalizations for communicating.
- I** It's true that painted turtles survive the winter underwater by breathing through their...butts.
- L** Long ago (1948), 76 beavers were parachuted into the Idaho wilderness as a means to reintroduce them.
- D** Did you know, black bears eat mostly plants, despite their categorization into the Order carnivora?
- F** Feathers that are blue, contain no blue pigment. The color is produced by how light bounces off the feather's structure.
- U** Unlike most songbirds, the female belted kingfisher is more colorful than the male.
- N** No longer is Idaho the home of woodland caribou. The last few were helicoptered into Canada in May of 2019.
- F** Fifteen minutes is the amount of time an American beaver can hold its breath.
- A** Amazing—a snow goose poops 6-17 times per hour.
- C** Chickadee brain area devoted to memory gets bigger in the late fall to help them remember winter food caches.
- T** True! Grizzly bears can be black.
- S** Sturgeon have no bones or scales. They have cartilage and scutes.



Photos left to right: A pair of grizzly brothers captured on a trail camera in eastern Idaho. Photo from IDFG video. A belted kingfisher female. Photo by Austin Reich. Mountain bluebird showing off “blue” feathers. Photo by IDFG. Woodland caribou by IDFG.

Bird Seed Sale 2021

Sue Dudley, Gift Shop Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG



Bird seed sale volunteers pictured left to right: Cindy Marlow, Tom Curren, Cricky Simon, Cheryl Minckler, Debbie Wiggins, Travis Kaepfner, Claire Veseth, Cindy Clark, and Jan Egge.

This year's sale went perfectly! The seed arrived on time, and we had great publicity coverage resulting in selling all of our seed. And to top it all off, we had the best volunteers helping our customers with their seed.

I want to thank everyone who came out and supported our fundraiser!

Volunteer Spotlight

Sue Dudley, Gift Shop Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG

Jan Egge



Jan Egge is one of the sweetest people you could ever meet and it has been really great getting to know her over the last couple of years. She has personally helped me with garden work days and the bird seed sale and what I found is that she is hard working, meticulous and understands what needs to be done. Most importantly, she brings her positive attitude.

Jan joined the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program in 2020 and has volunteered well over 100 hours since. Not only does she volunteer at MK Nature Center several times annually, she also volunteers at the Idaho Botanical Garden, participates in the City of Boise's insect surveys, and conducts crayfish surveys and cottonwood seed collecting for the Boise River Enhancement Network.

When Jan is working on a project with you, no matter how hard or tedious the job is, before you know it you are having fun and being filled with her sunny and upbeat personality. Thank you Jan for all you do for us and the conservation community!

Volunteers Bring Coffee

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG

Fall is over and all the leaves have been raked off the path at the Nature Center. Though we don't rake much off the path, we collect a *LOT* of leaves. Thanks to a few dedicated volunteers, our leaves will be composted throughout the winter, hopefully producing a beautiful pile of soil by summertime. Claire Veseth, Jon Mathews, and Brent Davy have committed to transporting coffee grounds from local coffee shops to MK Nature Center this winter. The coffee is then layered in between thin layers of leaves to maximize the speed of decomposition. These three deliver approximately 100 lbs. of coffee grounds per week!



Coffee grounds are being regularly delivered by Claire Veseth, Jon Mathews and Brent Davy. By mixing leaves with the coffee grounds, the decomposition process is speeded up and heat is the byproduct.



Trail Cameras Capture Visitors

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG



Top left: Western screech owl rests on a rock. Top right: Female and male mule deer meet. Left: Mule deer gets close to camera. Below: Bobcat nestles in willow branches.

Motion activated cameras strategically placed around the MK Nature Center grounds this fall have given us some interesting insight into what happens here when we are not. We always knew nighttime was full of action, but this just proves it. Keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram pages for any new trail camera captures.

A special thanks to our AmeriCorps Member, Mariah Hilliard, who positions and checks the cameras biweekly. She also sorts the photos and deletes all the photos of wind moving branches!



VOLUNTEERS

Cindy Clark
Tom Curren
Brent Davy
Kevin Drews
Jon Dudley
Nina Dutton
Eva Dutton
Bella Dutton

Marci Eads
Jan Egge
Lynn Kelley
Cindy Marlow
Jon Mathews
Cheryl Minckler
Eliza Schulz
Howard Sheppa

Christine Simon
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Debbie Wiggins
Kevin Wilson

D O N O R S

Colleen Moulton
Hilda Packard
Sharon & Russ Kiefer
Susan Floriana-Riley
Wild Birds Unlimited

Donors listed here do not include donors who gave to [Friends of MK Nature Center](#) (the Nature Center's 501c3 nonprofit organization).

October November December

Short Education Videos

Our Instagram video series, "Today at MK" continues to be a fun way to stay connected to MK Nature Center, even when you cannot visit. Click on the photos below to watch the 1 minute video about conifer trees, spiders, crepuscular animals, or to see all the things for which we are thankful for!

Connect with us on Facebook and Instagram



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