



MK Nature Center

STREAM

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The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center FALL 2023

Booth Volunteers

Our annual summer booth program ran from May 29th– September 30th. We had a robust turn out both with volunteers and visitors. Seventeen volunteers staffed 61 booths, reaching over 6,400 visitors!



Pictured left to right and top to bottom: Barbara McGillivray, Violette and Jaimi Anghel, Judy Wojcicki, Christie Patterson, Todd and Krystell Finato, Eliza Schulz. Volunteers who staffed booths but are not pictured here include: Elizabeth Grosse, Crikky Simon, Martha McClay, Mike Frith, Eric Savadow, Claire Veseth, Patrice Davies, Marylee Hale, Al Straessle.



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

The nature center lost its longtime reptilian ambassador, George, the gopher snake late this summer. In his twenty-plus years at the nature center, George provided tens of thousands of visitors with the opportunity to learn about snakes, their important role in the environment and their many amazing adaptations. He helped turn mistaken impressions and misinformation into understanding and, hopefully, tolerance for a group of animals so often misunderstood.

George embodied all the values of animal ambassadors. He helped visitors learn about and connect with a wild animal in an up-close and personal way. Being able to see, sometimes touch or be in the close presence of a wild animal elevates experiences in a way that is hard to replicate without them.

But with this comes great responsibility for these wild ambassadors.

They are not pets. Instead, they are wild creatures, the “other nations” of Henry Beston’s famous quote from his book, *The Outermost House*. They find themselves living in captivity, usually because they are unable to survive in the wild due to previous injury. Many are unable to adapt to captivity, making them unsuited to the role of ambassador and the attempt to do so unfair to the animal. As stewards of these animals, we owe it to them to provide safety, appropriate food and housing, enrichment, veterinary treatment, and opportunities for privacy, away from visitors. Nature center staff works hard to provide these things for our education ambassadors, and we like to hope that George’s long life was testament to that care. It is taken seriously and is the least we can do for these invaluable creatures that enrich the educational opportunities we offer. Thank you, George. Slither on.



Above: MK Nature Center’s Susan Ziebarth showing George to a group of kids on a field trip. Susan was George’s primary caretaker and president of his fan club. Left: George showing of his unhinged jaw as he eats lunch. Right: Photos by MKNC.

Upcoming Events

October 24th-Evening lecture for adults-**Evening in the Owyhee**. Join Becky Reed from Friends of the Owyhee on a photographic tour of the mighty Owyhee region of Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada. Learn more about safe recreation this fall, grab a great winter reading list, and find out about stewardship and other volunteer opportunities available in the spring. <https://www.friendsoftheowyhee.org> 6:30 pm.

October 26th-Teacher training-**Teaching Turkeys**. Are you a public, private or homeschool teacher? Sign up for this event to come learn about how to bring interesting and age appropriate turkey themed activities to your students. Register by emailing lori.wilson@idfg.idaho.gov. 4:30-6:30 pm.

November 16th-Evening lecture for adults-**Wild Turkeys**. Wildlife Educator (IDFG) Lori Wilson will be preparing us for Thanksgiving with some amazing turkey trivia! Wild turkeys are not native to Idaho but are a deep part of our hunting culture here. Come gain an added appreciation for this amazing bird. 6:30 pm.

November 19th-**Weekend Family Program-Turkeys!** Come celebrate Thanksgiving by learning all about wild turkeys in Idaho. This event is free and open to the public, with an emphasis on kid’s activities. Free. 1-3pm.

December 1st-2nd-**Bird Seed Sale!** See page 5 for details

December 5th-Evening lecture for adults. **Wild Horse Management in the West**. Sam Mattise, retired BLM employee will tell us about the management challenges with wild mustangs. Find out where they live, their impacts on wildlife habitat and how they are managed. 6:30 pm.



Friends Membership Drive

Tom Allen, Board Member FOMKNC

With the fall season, it is once again membership time for Friends of the MK Nature Center! Please consider joining or renewing as a member of our team to help families get outside to enjoy, appreciate, learn about, and take care of our natural world!

With recent generous support of our membership and area foundations, we have enhanced the educational experiences for Nature Center visitors over the years.

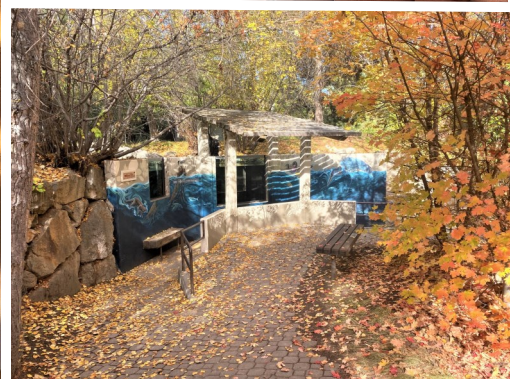
- 2023 Pollinator garden and sculpture
- 2023 Second observation bee hive
- 2022 New windows in auditorium
- 2022 Mural at the Shelter Window
- 2021 Kiosk building
- 2020 Stepping stumps and hollow log
- 2019 Birding mural in auditorium
- 2019 Pollinator exhibit
- 2018 Interpretive signs
- 2017 Mosaic art
- 2016-2023 Funding for an AmeriCorps Member

[CLICK to Donate and become a member!](#)

And for 2024, we are starting the planning and design to create a new outdoor classroom area where school groups and other visitors can gather and learn about all that the nature center has to offer through classes and hands-on experiences.

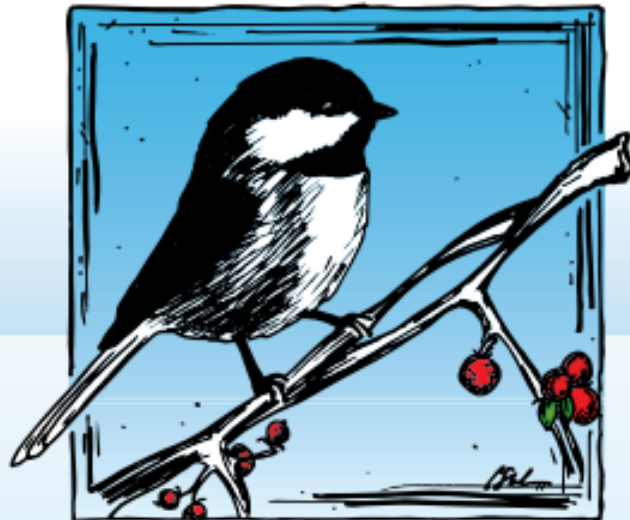
Please know that the Friends puts your membership dollars to work on specific projects such as these each year to ensure that the Nature Center will continue to offer wonderful outdoor educational experiences for our community!

The support of generous people like you is crucial to our efforts to support the MK Nature Center - you make things happen! You can renew or become a first-time member of the Friends of the MK Nature Center by sending a check by mail to FOMKNC, P.O Box 604, Boise, ID 83701, or donate online at www.friendsofmknc.org/donate.





Stock up on winter bird seed & Find that special gift



at the MK Nature Center's

HOLIDAY
BIRD SEED SALE

December 1st & 2nd

9 AM to 5 PM

600 S. Walnut St.

Boise, Idaho 83712

Premium Bird Seed

Several seed varieties to choose from!

Large selection of nature themed holiday gift items
birding guides, children books, toys, jewelry, and more.

Activities for the whole family!

Saturday December 2nd:

Live Bird Presentations at

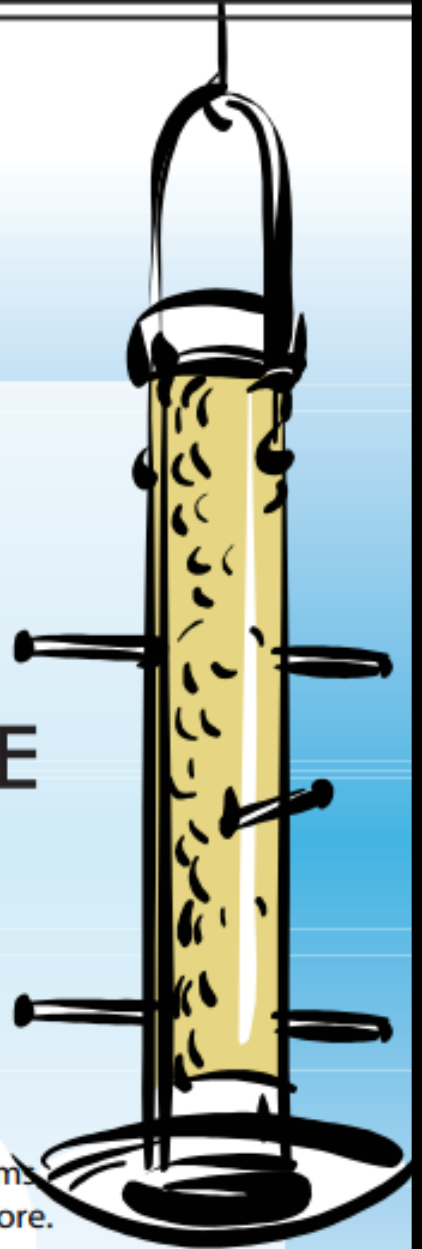
11:30am, 12:30pm, & 1:30pm

Kid's Craft 11am to 2pm

Questions? Call 208-287-2900 or
sue.dudley@idfg.idaho.gov

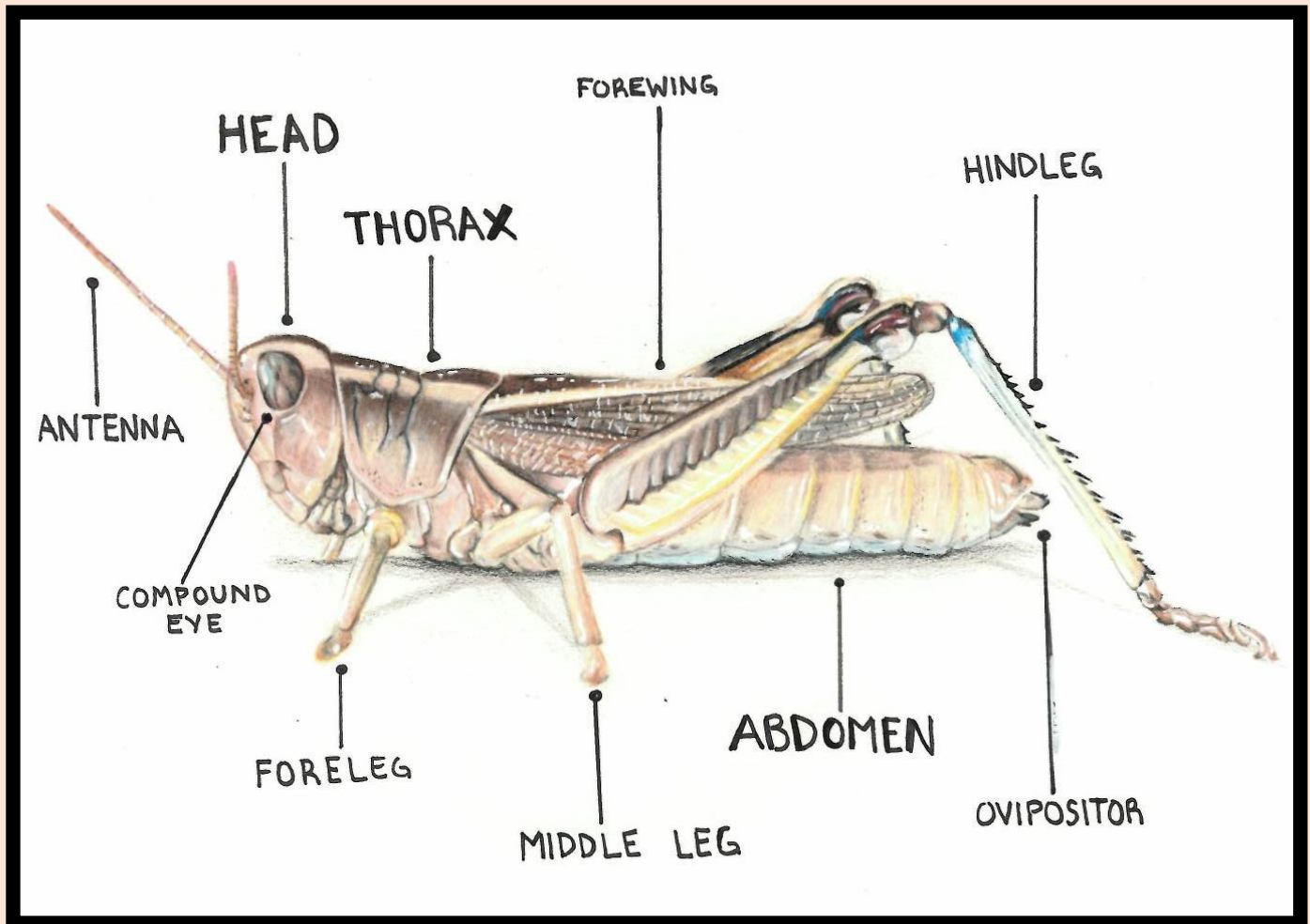
All Proceeds Support MK Nature Center

Presented by:



Art and Nature

Artwork and information by Erica O'Neal, MKNC



Species: *Melanoplus bivittatus*- Two Striped Grasshopper (also called yellow striped grasshopper)
This species is native to Idaho and can be found year-round at different stages of development.

Life Cycle:

It has a one-year life cycle.

Lays eggs in fall (July-September).

Eggs overwinter underground. (October-March).

Eggs begin to hatch, and nymphs emerge in spring (April-May).

They eat and grow until they are adults then mate and reproduce in the summer (June-July).

Facts:

Causes major crop damage to small grains, alfalfa, and corn.

One of the largest species in its genus.

Females are larger than males.

Can resort to cannibalism when food is scarce.

Have a hearing organ called a tympanum in their abdomen.

Population can reach densities as high as 500 grasshoppers per square yard.

Can fly with the assistance of the wind at heights of 600-1400 feet above ground level.

Are an important food source for birds, lizards, and even some rodents.

New Team Members



Hi, I'm Erica! I grew up near Seattle, WA and just graduated from Washington State University in Pullman, WA with my bachelor's degree in landscape architecture. GO COUGS! I love everything outdoors and creative. Some of my favorite hobbies are hiking, fishing, rockhounding, drawing, and collage making. I also enjoy playing video games and snuggling with my dog Scooby on my chill days. My long-term goals are to help others get out and into nature and bring more nature back into our urban areas. See you around!



Hi I'm Hannah, I worked in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks for 7 years guiding trail rides and park trips, combining two of my favorite things; nature and horses. I am a huge bird lover and proud mama to six very spoiled ducks. When I'm not at MKNC, I am silversmithing or creating art with shed antlers.

New MKNC employees Erica O'Neal (top) and Hannah Myers (bottom) are in the full swing of things at MKNC. Our part-time employees do a wide range of work. Washing windows (pictured left) is just one of many important tasks they complete each day.

Dark-eyed Juncos

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

The autumnal changing of the avian guard has begun. Gone are the flashy songbirds of summer, leaving silence in places once filled with their song. Kettles of turkey vultures circle overhead, southbound to warmer winter quarters. And soon a dapper gray sparrow will arrive, bustling under feeders and skulking through shrubby tangles in yards and parks.

Dark-eyed juncos, fondly called snowbirds, are formally attired in black, grey and white. Their pink bill contrasts with their dark heads and their white outer tail feathers flash as the birds fly. Fifteen races of this species have been described in North America. Three of them are common residents in Idaho. These include the slate-colored junco, Oregon junco and pink-sided junco. Juncos spend the nesting season at higher elevations, descending into warmer valleys for the winter.

Juncos are easily attracted to backyard habitats that offer food, cover and water. According to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch, dark-eyed juncos are the most common feeder bird reported in Idaho as well as neighboring northwestern states. With 75 percent of a junco's diet being made up of seeds, their place as top feeder visitor is not surprising. While millet is a favorite food, juncos also eat hulled sunflower seeds.

Dark-eyed junco by Todd Petit on Flickr
CC BY-NC 2.0 DEED

Juncos are sociable birds, joining a flock for the winter season. Each flock has a dominance hierarchy with adult males on top followed by young males, adult females and young females. The pecking order, so-to-speak, can be seen in interactions amongst the birds as they feed. Dominant birds feed where food is most abundant and spend less time watching for predators than their flock-mates of lesser social status. However, watching for predators is important; juncos are a favorite prey of sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks.

Watch for these subtly beautiful sparrows at your feeders. Each is slightly different, yet similar enough for you to know that the juncos have arrived, signaling the turn toward winter.



DONORS

Hilda Packard
Trout Unlimited
Wild Birds Unlimited

Donors listed above do not include Friends of MK Nature Center members and donations.

VOLUNTEERS

Glenn Anders
Pam Bly
Patrice Davies
Joan Dodd
Kevin Drews
Danae Fails
Todd Finato
Krystell Finato
Mike Frith
Steve Getlein
Patti Gregor
Marylee Hale
Helen Harrington
Pauline Irish
Linda Jarsky
Eric Keren
Carolyn King
Madonna Lengerich
Jon Mathews

Tricia Matthews
Martha McClay
Barbara McGillivary
Andrea Nardi
Tom Neale
Lyla Olson
Linus Pfeffer
Susan Riley
Eric Savadow
Arleen Schaeffer
Eliza Schulz
Katie Sewell
Howard Sheppa
Al Straessle
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Kevin Wilson
Judy Wojcicki
Julia Zarbnisky



Linus Pfeffer (right) and Andrea Nardi (left) are part of the CBYX Program, Congress Bundestag Youth exchange program with Boise High School. They spent some time volunteering after school to help us maintain the Nature Center's paths. Linus is from Germany and Andrea is from Italy.

July
August
September



Shout out to Arleen Schaeffer, who spent hours helping Sue Dudley put bar code labels on boxes and boxes of gift shop products! If it wasn't for her the gift shop shelves would be bare.



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