



MK Nature Center

STREAM

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The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center SUMMER 2025

Susan Ziebarth

Some believe that people fear change. I understand this sentiment, but have come to conclude that people are not as much afraid of change as they are afraid of loss. Loss is something we have been contemplating here at the MK Nature Center for a few months, since we learned about Susan Ziebarth's retirement date of May 15th, 2025. People come and go from the Nature Center-supervisors, educators, volunteers, interns. Susan Ziebarth has seen them all, because she has worked at the nature center for 26.5 years, just a few years away from the *very beginning*. Susan has probably touched every paver, plant, tree, fence, blade of grass, rock, and board inside and outside the entire place.

As a fellow employee, it is hard to imagine what MK Nature Center will be like without her. Her memory and subsequent institutional knowledge is incredibly rich and deep. I find myself saying, "I am not sure about that, but I will ask Susan, she will know," several times a week!

As Susan's co-worker for 20 years, I have come to know her as a kind, compassionate soul, with respect for all people, animals and plants. The dedication she has poured into the Nature Center and the people who move through here is difficult to explain to someone who has not seen it themselves. She is a *caretaker* in the truest sense of the word, taking care of the MKNC property, animals, people, customers, family members, and ideas she holds dear.

Susan started her work at MK Nature Center in 1998 as a volunteer! She was hired on in a part time capacity that quickly shifted to full time. Susan's behind the scenes work at MK Nature Center made it possible for hundreds of thousands of visitors to safely view wildlife in the five acre habitat over the years. Enjoy a collage of photos on the next page that captures just a few things Susan has worked on over the years.







Idaho Power

Idaho Power brought the *power of community involvement* to the nature center on May 21. Donned in their matching t-shirts and bringing great attitudes, this group cleaned all MK Nature Center's murals during their day of community service. Thanks to Idaho Power for their continued commitment to the community and MK Nature Center.



Top Golf

On April 22nd, three employees from Top Golf came to work at MK Nature Center on their community work day. What a great day and group to help spruce up the eagle nest! The eagle nest is a favorite stop along the trail for visitors. Over time and a lot of touching, the structure starts to slump. This group gave the feature a much needed face-lift. Thanks, Top Golf! We look forward to working with you again in the future!





Welcome New Staff

MK Nature Center is proud to introduce our new full time Wildlife Educator, **Frankie Curet**. Frankie is teaching classes, creating displays, planning events, and sharing information about wildlife and wildlife management to all!

Frankie is a life-long outdoor enthusiast, hunter and angler. She brings extensive experience in environmental education and seasonal field work in habitat restoration, fisheries monitoring and water sampling with her as she joins the team. Frankie's dedication to customer service is one of her many strengths, as demonstrated by her experiences, communication, and style!

Spencer Zarran joins the MK Nature Center team as the new Maintenance Craftsman Senior. Spencer will be making sure the MK Nature Center grounds and visitor center is safe, functioning and repaired! This is no small task, as the Nature Center is 35 years old and time takes its toll. Spencer has a horticulture and woodworking background, along with customer service experience, and is a private business owner. We look forward to working with and learning from Spencer.



Allison Ady is joining the team to staff the front desk and work on daily grounds maintenance. She is "so excited to join the MK Nature Center team." Allison has lived in Idaho her entire life and visited the nature center for the first time when she was 10. In her spare time, she can be found fly fishing, skiing, camping, traveling, and spending time with her family. She is looking forward to learning more about Idaho's wildlife and nature.

Andrew Newburg is new to Idaho as he moved to Boise originally for college, where he was pursuing a degree path towards veterinary medicine. But he found that what he wanted to do more corresponds with the mission of Idaho Fish and Game. He is very excited to work at MK Nature Center to get experience in wildlife management, customer service, and habitat restoration.



Moira Young considers herself a dual Boise and northern Virginia native. She has a strong passion for biology and is planning on earning a master's degree here in the valley. She loves developing bonds with animals and immersing herself in the outdoors. Her greatest passion is her cats! She currently lives with her last living childhood cat Finn (who is about 9 years old), her boyfriend's 16-year-old cat Smudge, and their new kittens Sonny and Appa! While not caring for that feline bunch, Moira will be at the nature center, caring for customers and the habitat!



On May 19th, 15 IDFG Headquarters employees joined five IDFG MK Nature Center employees to tackle a big swath of English ivy. The whole crew dug, clipped, pulled, rolled, hauled, yanked, and trashed a lot of the invasive plant, clearing the way for native understory plants to be introduced. Though beautiful, English ivy is invasive, spreading and taking over native plants. The morning was beautiful and good cheer was all around. We appreciate all the folks who took the time out of their busy schedules to crawl around in the dirt and helping improve the wildlife habitat at MKNC!

Back row: Spencer Zarran, Will Bales, Eric Wagner, Adam Reichart, Doug Peterson, Kathy Blatchley, Tom Bassista, Grant Walden, Frank Edelmann, Ben Hardy, Alex Sorte, Emma Case, Dana Jo McGee, Jessa Gonzalez, Teresa Garrand. Front Row: Sara Focht, Frankie Current, Lori Wilson, Chase Cusack. Photo by Sue Dudley, crew leader.



Ben Hardy, Alex Sorte, Teresa Garrand work in the Admin Bureau. Kathy Blatchley works for the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Photo by Sue Dudley.



Sue Dudley from the Nature Center welcomes the group and shows them where to work and sets everyone up with tools. Photo by Sara Focht.



In early June we held a second IDFG workday to remove the beautiful but invasive vinca near the old frog pond. Back row: Christy Hooper, Jim Strickland, Dorian Curtain, Sue Dudley, Spencer Zarran. Front row: Riley Calhoun, Frankie Curet, Dana Jo McGee, Sara Focht.



Right: Jessa Gonzalez helps the nature center everyday as a Principal Financial Specialist at IDFG. Jessa helps us make sense of our complex budget!

Left: Eric Wagner and Alex Sorte (Admin Bureau), and Grant Walden (Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation) smile as they work. Photos by Sue Dudley.



Common Name: White Sturgeon Scientific Name: *Acipenser transmontanus*



Art and Nature

Life cycle/ reproduction:

EGG FERTILIZATION: Spawning occurs when the female sturgeon releases eggs and the male sturgeon fertilizes them.

EGG INCUBATION: The incubation period for white sturgeon eggs is about seven days.

LARVAE: Eggs that survive go through a process of cellular division that results in the formation of sturgeon larvae. Hatching occurs when the tiny sturgeon larvae break out of the egg and swim freely.

FRY: About 20-30 days after hatching, sturgeon larvae become fry.

JUVENILE: Juvenile sturgeon are sturgeon that have not developed to the stage where they can reproduce. The juvenile stage for white sturgeon starts during the first year of life after the fry stage.

ADULT: White sturgeon are considered to be adults when they are able to spawn. Male sturgeon are the first to reach maturity at about 12-18 years of age. Females take longer to reach maturity and will remain juveniles until approximately 25-30 years of age.

Diet:

Young sturgeon feed on small freshwater shrimp, insect larvae, fish eggs, as well as dead fish.

Larger sturgeon feed mostly on live fish, invertebrates, carcasses, and fish eggs.

Interesting Facts:

Sturgeon are the largest freshwater fish in North America and have lived on the planet for at least 200 million years!

White sturgeon can live to be over 100 years old, and grow continuously their whole life.

The largest white sturgeon caught in the Snake River weighed 1,500 pounds and was caught in 1928.

A female sturgeon that is two meters in length can release 400,000 eggs and larger females can release upwards of 4 million eggs.

Sturgeon lack scales. Instead, they have skin with a sandpaper-like texture and covered in five rows of bony plates called scutes.

Sturgeon have four whisker-like sensory organs near their mouth called barbels. These help them locate food in murky waters.

Idaho has two distinct populations of white sturgeon, the Kootenai River and Snake River populations.

Idaho's sturgeon are land-locked and can no longer make the migration to the Pacific Ocean.

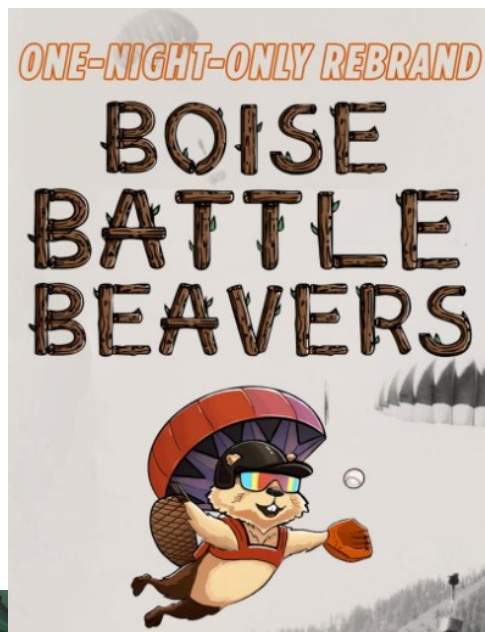
In the Community

Sara Focht, Conservation Education Supervisor, MK Nature Center, IDFG



MK Nature Center is a proud member of [Boise Museum Association](#). This group is comprised of 16 local organizations that promote the historical, cultural, natural, and artistic resources of Boise! Each year the group hosts a free community event, International Museum Day. This year, it was hosted at the Peregrine Fund World Center for Birds of Prey. Dedicated volunteers Bronwyn Myers and Susie Carlson represented MK Nature Center with the ever popular wildlife identification fur/antler booth.

McKenna Hoelscher and David Shropshire, MK Nature Center volunteers, staff a booth at the Going Wild Barber Pools Celebration on April 27th.



IDFG MK Nature Center volunteer Julia Zarbnisky (pictured right) and Susie Carlson (not pictured) joined Coe Brown and Jamie Utz (IDFG) at the Hawks Baseball Game where the theme was Boise Battle Beavers! June 16th was the night of the event to commemorate Idaho's unique [parachuting beaver history](#). Photo by IDFG. Boise Hawks rebranding image provided by Boise Hawks.

Volunteer Work Days

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



Jan Egge and Benita Putzier.



Katie Sheppa and Dane Driscoll.



Susan Riley and Claire Veseth.



Dane Driscoll.



Vince Horner and Mackenzie Kapral.



Mike Pond. Photos by Sue Dudley.



The nature center wouldn't be able to function if it wasn't for our amazing volunteers! This spring we had a large, hard-working crew help clean up the garden beds!

Volunteers are at MK Nature Center daily, helping with nearly every aspect of the work, including teaching, beehive maintenance, weeding, pruning, and cleaning. You name it, they come help do it! A big shout out to all our volunteers!

Crayfish Display

Lori Wilson, Wildlife Educator, IDFG, MKNC

Whether you call them crayfish, crawdad, or mudbug, you probably agree that these freshwater crustaceans are interesting, to say the least. Idaho has several species of crayfish. They can be found in waterways ranging from small mountain streams to big rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. In freshwater, crayfish are an important species. They are generalist consumers and eat a wide variety of debris, water bugs, and even smaller crayfish. Many animals eat crayfish, including mink, sturgeon, raccoon and heron.

The most common species of crayfish you see at the nature center is the signal crayfish; it has a distinctive white band on its claws. You often see them in the stream windows digging for food. They are mostly nocturnal but are often busy in the windows during the day.

A new display has been added to our building. Brenda Beckley, a long-time IDFG employee, donated a beautiful fish tank and we've decided to add crayfish for a more lighted viewing. Come see the new display to watch the crayfish. At the display, you will be able to suggest names for these captive critters. Come visit and submit your names by July 20).



Trout Talk

Lori Wilson, Wildlife Educator, IDFG, MKNC

On May 16th, we released trout raised from eggs we received back in January. They were released into the nature center stream where they are enjoying their new habitat. To add to the fun, we involved our visitors in the release process. We can't be sure that they all survived, but we see many of them regularly, darting between the larger fish!

A new batch of eggs was delivered and added to the inside tank on June 18th. We look forward to watching them grow and being able to release them into the stream in three to four months. Next time you visit MK Nature Center, check out the eggs and developing trout inside, then go outside to play a challenging game of "I SPY" in the creek to find the juveniles.



Top Left: Dana Jo McGee (Technical Records Specialist and Mailroom Coordinator) looks pretty happy to release trout at the end of participation in the IDFG workday (see page 5).

Bottom right and above: No, these visitors are not having a drink at MKNC. They happened to be at the right place, at the right time and got to release little trout into the stream. Above: a 1.5 inch rainbow trout enjoys its new natural habitat after being raised inside.

Friends Connecting the Dots



Knowing how your donation impacts an organization is important. A new display on the nature center kiosk shows exactly how the Friends of MK Nature Center puts YOUR donations to work. This engaging sign features some, but not all of the Friends' significant contributions to the nature center's educational efforts. Stop by and check it out!

You can [become a Friend](#) of MK Nature Center with any size donation at any time of time of the year!

Photo: Volunteer Andy Meyer staffs an education booth in front of the new FOMKNC sign– a perfect backdrop for education! Photo by MKNC.



Awards

Sara Focht, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG, MKNC



The Sagebrush-steppe Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program is co-sponsored by Idaho Fish and Game MK Nature Center, Golden Eagle Audubon, and Bogus Basin. This chapter is full of dedicated volunteers who work toward conservation in Idaho. Since the MK Nature Center is the physical hub of the chapter, many members choose to volunteer here!

At the chapter's spring social and awards ceremony in May, Benita Putzier and Jon Mathews were honored with lifetime milestone awards of 500 and 1000 hours, respectively. Though both of these folks volunteer at other locations around the valley, they spend a significant amount of time at the nature center. Benita is a devoted habitat steward here and Jon can be found teaching kids and guiding tours.

Congratulations to both of these committed conservationists!

An Immense World

Book Review by Vicky Runnoe, MKNC Volunteer

As an avid reader, it is always a pleasure to come upon a wonderful book quite by accident. Thus has been my experience with An Immense World by Ed Yong. It is an eye-opening, pun intended, exploration of the senses of animals. However, unlike similar works, this one explores the lives of a variety of creatures through *their* perceptual world; their umwelt. The author seeks to set aside our all too human tendency to apply how we see the world to other creatures. Instead, he reveals to the reader the incredible diversity of how creatures large and small interact with their world using their own unique sensory bubble. It truly is a celebration of the astonishing ways non-human animals thrive in their environments.



From sight to sound to pressure waves to magnetic fields to vibrations and much more, the reader is introduced to specific animals and their amazing adaptations for sensing the world. The soulful eyes of jumping spiders stare out at you, illustrating an astounding complexity of vision. Birds glow in patterns we cannot see but they can, thanks to their ability to see UV light. Ticks use heat sensors at the tips of their first set of legs to detect body heat from 13 feet away, a tidbit that I did not find amusing! Seals use their whiskers to detect and interpret the hydrodynamic waves produced by fish. And the list goes on. Each chapter is a revelation, full of fascinating information that will make you want to rush outdoors to take a closer look at a familiar wild neighbor. Yong explores the words of writer Henry Beston: "For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear." Thanks to Ed Yong, we can begin to hear those voices and be awed by the sound.

Praying mantis photo by MKNC.

Volunteer Spotlight:

Terri Muse



Terri joined the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program in 2018. Since then, Terri has donated over 700 hours of volunteer time toward conservation in this community, much of which was done at the MK Nature Center. Terri has been a steady and strong force in our education program, working every year, year-round as an education program guide, staffing outreach booths, working stations at wildlife events, serving on the Friends of MK Nature Center Board and most recently, stepping into the Chairperson role for the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter.

Terri had taught every lesson we offer multiple times, logging just over 75 programs for PreK-adults. Each of our volunteers brings something special to the team. Terri brings a calm, steady presence and adaptability. No amount of chaos or pivoting seems to rattle her. She is skilled both with the content we deliver but also the group control while guiding. She has amazing organizational skills which create successes on the boards she served.

Recently, Terri announced she would be moving out of state to live closer to family. We are so happy for her in this new adventure but will greatly miss her volunteer work, friendship and leadership.



Photos from top to bottom: Terri staffing a welcome table at an event. Terri teaching kids about habitat. Terri teaching at the viewing window about animal classification. Above: Terri and a fellow volunteer await kids arriving for an educational program. Photos by IDFG.



DONORS



Alexis Bailey
Michael Anglin
Edwina & John Allen

Donors listed here do not include Friends of MK Nature Center members

VOLUNTEERS

April

Mary Arnold
Cole Baker
Matt Baker
Kris Barrash
Pam Bly
Allison Boldridge
Susie Carlson
Daniel Ciulla
Peter Ciulla
Beth Corbin
Ray Corbin
Cyndi Coulter
Peter Crilb
Patrice Davies
Kevin Drews
Dane Driscoll
Jan Egge
Helen Faith
Pegge Faith
Krystell Finato
Jack Fisce
Bob Foss
Anja Fredericks
Steve Getlein

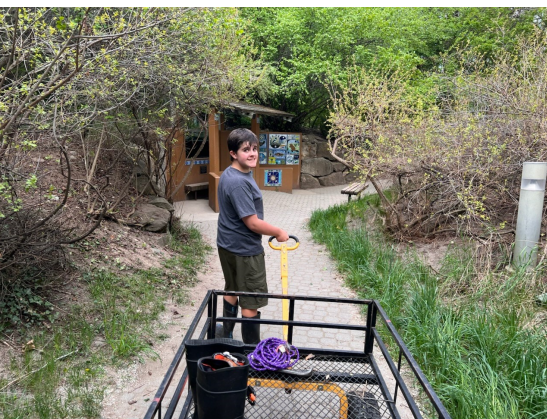
Dave Godfrey
Trevor Greenfield
Whitney Greer
Elizabeth Grosse
Marylee Hale
Anne Halford
Mckenna Hoelscher
Vinee Horner
Justin Hutchinson
Rebecca Irwin
Jim Jameson
Trevor Jenson
Makenzie Kapral
Lynne Kelley
Carolyn King
Susan King
Randy Langseth
Kevin Laughlin
Lily Linton
Cindy Marlow
Jon Mathews
Linda Mazzu
Nan McGrath
Kevin McLaughlin

May

Sadie Melendez
Andy Meyer
Michelle Meyers
Bronwyn Myers
Caroline Morris
Renee Mullen
Teri Muse
Karrie Pappani
Megan Parsley
Marc Patterson
Dakota Pfaff
Mike Pond
Erin Pratt
Benita Putzier
Jenna Raino
Susan Riley
Madeline Rosa
Mitch Ross
Vicky Runnoe
Jordyn Schmidt
Kirsten Severud
Amy Shaw
Howard Sheppa
Katie Sheppa

June

John Showalter
David Shropshire
Andrea Simonser
Cristine Simon
Laura Speerhart
Julie Steele
Lauren Studley
Sandy Sweet
Macky Syavideth
Jackson Taylor
Nikki Tran
Shawn Tuchsep
Bonnie Urresti
Quinn Vale
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Cynthia Wallesz
Ella White
Judy Wojcicki
Tina Yonan
Julia Zarbnisky
Zailey Zarran
Leighlou Zarran
Susan Ziebarth



Cole Baker (pictured) and his dad Matt spent several hours wrestling with and removing an old waterlogged floating island in the sturgeon pond one spring night. We appreciate their sweat and persistence in helping clean up the pond!