



Morrison Knudsen

Nature Center

STREAM

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The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center SUMMER 2026

Osprey Camera

Emily Stellway, AmeriCorps Member, MKNC, IDFG

Recently, MK Nature Center (MKNC) staff observed an osprey dive into the large pond and catch a fish. This is a rare event at MK, as the tree canopy prevents most osprey from being interested in hunting here. Though you won't likely see an osprey when visiting MKNC, you can see an osprey live, online whenever you want. Idaho Fish and Game has a [live osprey camera](#) in Salmon, Idaho. The webcam gives the viewer 24 hour coverage of the birds and their young. Streaming began on April 7, 2026. Three eggs were laid on April 16 and they hatched on

May 28. Currently, there are two healthy chicks in the nest. A special thanks to Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Salmon Valley Stewardship, Idaho Power, CusterTel, SteamWorld, and K12.Tech for helping make this project happen.



Above: The livestream osprey camera captures high quality video at night. This photo shows one of the adults resting with the two chicks.

Right: One adult arrives with a fish. The other adult starts feeding the chicks.



Adopt a Garden

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG



The nature center has many gardens and it quite literally "takes a village" to care for them. Invasive weed species are constantly trying to swallow up native plants. It takes weekly or biweekly care to keep these weeds in check. If you are interested in adopting a garden email Sue Dudley at sue.dudley@idfig.idaho.gov.



Above: Jan Egge and Benita Putzier are the creators and weekly keepers of the lovely sensory garden.

Right: Katie Sheppa and Brandy Wood adopted the pollinator garden this year and it has never looked better.

Photos by Sue Dudley.

Scuba with a Sturgeon

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG

This past winter, out of the blue, David Ketchum reached out, asking if the nature center ever had a need for scuba divers. Little did he know that a week before he e-mailed, our staff was talking about how we hadn't seen all four sturgeon together in a long while. I had wondered if I could find any scuba diver volunteers to check on the health of our sturgeon. David's email is what you call perfect timing! David and his friend, Johnathan Dennis, came in May and spent a couple of hours swimming with the sturgeon, and took some amazing photos and videos. They were able to capture images of all four sturgeon (see page 5).



David Ketchum, (left) began scuba diving in 2021 and has explored underwater environments ranging from the cold waters of Puget Sound to the vibrant reefs of the Galapagos and Central America. Although he loves reefs, David is just as happy exploring local lakes and rivers, especially when he's helping out with community water cleanups.

Johnathan Dennis (right) is the owner of Dive Magic, which has served the Treasure Valley for 40 years. He is a certified PADI Divemaster and Instructor.

Conservation Legislation

Sara Focht, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG, MKNC

Nearly 90 years ago, a piece of legislation was adopted that changed the course of conservation in the United States. That same piece of legislation is what provides a large portion of the funding for MK Nature Center. The Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 (Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act) provides state fish and wildlife agencies with grants through federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. This 11% tax is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and divvied out to states for wildlife management though grants for conservation, habitat restoration and hunter education. It is allocated based on two things: the number of licensed hunters and the area (square miles) of the state.

Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds can be spent on conservation work for birds and mammals. What prompted Senator Pittman (D-NV) and Representative A. Willis Robertson (D-VA) to write this bill back in the 1930s? Expansion of farms and the Dust Bowl; extreme poverty during the Great Depression; overharvesting of wildlife; and predator extermination campaigns all played a role in significantly decreasing populations of wildlife at that time. Hunters and firearm enthusiasts of the era were concerned about these declining population levels of many wildlife species. Conservation efforts needed to be funded to bring populations back.

MK Nature Center receives 34% of the total annual budget from this source! Like all PR grants, states that receive them must come up with 25% of the total project funding in non-federal dollars as “match.” Here at MKNC, we provide match for our grant with the dollar value of volunteer time, cash donations, purchases from our Friends Group, and state funding sources. PR funds are an important part of making the MK Nature Center a safe, enjoyable, educational and wildlife-friendly place in the community.



Eagle Nest Access

Sara Focht, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG, MKNC

One of the most popular features at the nature center is the bald eagle nest replica that represents the largest eagle's nest found in the United States (Florida). Visitors love climbing in and getting their photo taken. My office sits adjacent to the eagle nest and all day long I hear chirping and squawking as visitors pretend to be eaglets in the nest.

Seven years later, the eagle nest looked like it might need a facelift, as branches inevitably slumped and sticks walked away. We thought this might be an opportunity to improve accessibility to the eagle nest for those who cannot climb stairs. A walk-in version has been created!

The self-named GRAY BEARD volunteer group (who used to consist of men with gray beards and now consists of men and women with and without beards) tackled this project. With the help of Deloitte (see page 9) the nest was dismantled, rebuilt with choice sticks and retrofitted with a step up.

This summer, further work on the nest will yield a ramp so visiting eagles can fly, walk or roll into the nest!



Above left: The eagle nest when it was first installed. Middle: Kevin Drews and Madeline Rosa dismantle the stairs. Right: Kevin Drews and Howard Sheppa begin weaving new sticks to build the nest. Bottom right: the remodel is complete. Bottom left: step up!



Name That Fish

Frankie Curet, Wildlife Educator, IDFG, MKNC

This spring we dove headfirst into the sturgeon pond at the MK Nature Center to pin down the history and identity of the 4 prehistoric fish that call these waters home. After reviewing underwater footage and interviewing the folks most familiar with the history of the fish, this is what we learned:



The smallest sturgeon arrived in 2004 from the College of Southern Idaho's Aquaculture Program. This fish initially swam behind the glass of the Alpine Lake viewing window but was relocated to the big pond due to fear of predation by mink. Noticeable damage to both pectoral and anal fins and its

small size (about twice as long as the trout) make this fish easily identifiable as **"Oafer."** The name Oafer is a nod to the year they were delivered (04) and because Midwesterners can't help but declare "oh fer cute!" when they lay eyes on this little fellah.

Steeped in pond water and mystery, the oldest sturgeon is believed to have been here since shortly after the opening of the nature center in 1991. To identify the 35+ year old giant, look for an approximately 7' fish with a right pectoral fin resembling a pocketknife can opener. This funky fin inspired the name **"Can-can."**



Since the day they were delivered in 2022 from the USFWS Hagerman Fish Hatchery, **"Tortilla"** has been the most active sturgeon in the pond. It is named for the very small, round left pectoral fin, resembling a corn tortilla. This fish was retired to the nature center when the sturgeon was discovered to have 12 sets of chromosomes, instead of the typical 8 sets, which would likely result in sterile offspring.

The most elusive, and largest sturgeon in the pond was delivered in 2009 from the IDFG Hagerman Hatchery when it outgrew the raceway. Aptly named **"Beast"** this mammoth of the deep is said to have been raised from an egg by retired IDFG employee Don Chapman. You will recognize Beast when your heart is in your throat as this wide-headed fish, believed to be pushing 9', looms in the water below you. The Beast is the only sturgeon in the pond with fully intact pectoral and anal fins.



Clean up Days

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG



Back row left to right: Susan Riley, Claire Vesth, Julie Houston, Jenny Kelly, Brandy Wood, Julia Zarbnsky, Randy Langseth, Marilyn Eagleton. Front row left to right: Lauren Studley, Jo Ann Lafferty, Gail Robb (standing).



Brandy Wood, Mike Pond, Joan Dodd, Katie Sheppa, Jennifer Vogel, Michael Bradshaw.



Randy Langseth.



IDFG Workdays

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG

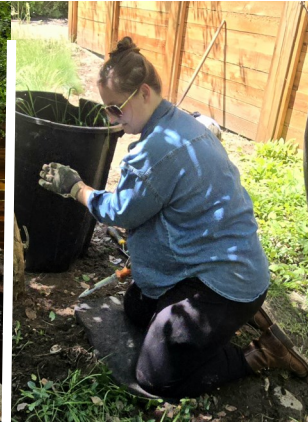
On May 18 and June 8, our fellow IDFG headquarters employees joined the IDFG nature center crew for invasive weed removal and fence painting. It is always a fun time bonding over hard work with other IDFG employees. Huge thank you to Rita Dixon (State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator), Christy Hooper (Program Systems Specialist), Megan Merkley (GIS Analyst III), Deniz Aygen (Idaho Watchable Wildlife Coordinator), Michelle Kemmner (Biodiversity Wildlife Ecologist), Joe Hightower (Budget Analyst), Eric Wagner (Purchasing Agent), and Dana Jo McGee (Buyer) for taking the time away from their projects to help us out!



Left to right: Deniz Aygen Michelle Kemner. Megan Merkley, Christy Hooper, Rita Dixon, Sara Focht.



Ricardo Jimenez, Joe Hightower, Sara Focht, Dana Jo McGee, Eric Wagner.



Megan Merkley.
Photos by Sue Dudley.

Welcome New Staff

Sara Focht, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG, MKNC

Idaho Fish and Game MK Nature Center is thrilled to introduce our newest staff member, Ricardo Jimenez. Ricardo started at the beginning of May as the new Maintenance Technician. Each and every day since he started he has been hustling about organizing, taking inventory, repairing, troubleshooting, and generally making the place better, cleaner, safer and more functional!

Ricardo has a strong and impressive maintenance background. He owns his own local handyman business and has extensive educational training in maintenance trades. The nature center has unique maintenance challenges! I have yet to see Ricardo encounter a maintenance puzzle here that he has not either seen before or is confident he can tackle.



Images of Summer

Clockwise starting in upper left: mallard hen and ducklings by Sara Focht. White Sturgeon by David Ketchum. Largescale sucker by Sara Focht. Penstemon by Sara Focht. Mule deer fawn by Bethany Tennant. Swallowtail butterfly by Moira Young. Peregrine falcon egg by Moira Young. Western toad by Frankie Current. Dragonfly by Sara Focht.



Community Workdays

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG



Thanks to these local businesses and organizations who give back to this community by volunteering at MK Nature Center.



Happy Hippo April 21

Micron June 10



Idaho Power May13

Deloitte June 5



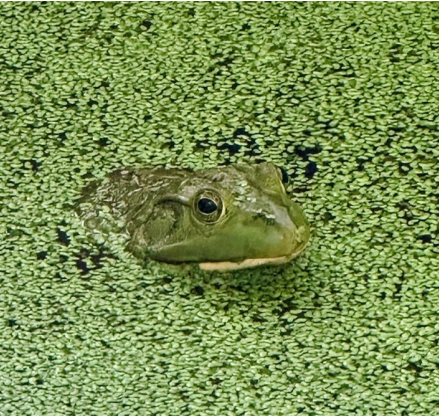
Idaho Women's Charitable Foundation April 18

Visitors Naming Nature

Bethany Tennant, BioAide, MKNC, IDFG



During my time working at MKNC as a BioAide, I've had the pleasure of meeting a wide variety of people who visit the nature center to enjoy the greenery and to learn about habitat and our local wildlife. Some of these visitors become regulars, and I get to see them frequently. Two of these regular visitors are Ash and Brit! Ash first discovered MKNC while biking along the Greenbelt, surprised to find a little nature haven tucked away in the middle of the city. Brit's introduction to MKNC came through a 2015 episode of *Mysteries of the Museum* featuring MKNC on the Travel Channel.



Years later in 2023, Ash and Brit became coworkers at a local retail business. They began taking walks at the nature center to decompress after long, stressful shifts. They lovingly dubbed these outings as "hot girl walks." Coincidentally, 2023 was also the year I started working at MKNC as a BioAide! I met Ash and Brit on the trails while I was working, and over the course of many hot girl walks, we struck up conversations about their sightings of the local wildlife. Over time, Ash and Brit developed a tradition of naming the animals they encountered during their walks at MKNC. In 2023, the theme for deer names was nuts: Pistachio for a buck, Walnut for a doe, and her fawn was Almond Joy. The following year, the theme shifted to berries, with names like Holly, Huckleberry, and Marionberry. In 2025, their deer sightings became less frequent, but the chosen theme was spices, and one deer earned the name Nutmeg.



I always look forward to hearing their latest names for the wildlife. One day, they spotted a pair of young screech owls and pointed them out to me, introducing me to Bernice and Clarence. Another memorable wildlife resident was a bullfrog they named Goliath after witnessing him devour a garter snake. Goliath eventually became a recurring side character in their Dungeons & Dragons campaign!

Their regular visits to MKNC eventually inspired them to create a shared Instagram account where they document their nature adventures and wildlife observations. If you'd like to follow along on their nature adventures, check out their instagram account, @Deerhoofinit. It all started here at MKNC!



Photos top to bottom: Almond Joy, Goliath, Clarence, and Brit.



Summer Intern

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG

Summers are filled with endless projects at the nature center and having some extra help is a real boost! Hannah Roth is our summer intern for 2026, and she is an extremely hard working individual. She helps with removal of invasive weed species in our gardens; feeds our sturgeon and trout; helps with planting native shrubs and trees; prunes, weeds, and waters.

Hannah is an wildlife biology and ecology student at Northwest Nazarene University. In the fall, she will be in her junior year and is passionate about nature and wildlife conservation. She wanted to intern at MK Nature Center to gain hands-on experience, build professional connections, and learn more about her chosen field. In the future, she wants to work in wildlife conservation and help protect and manage wildlife resources. She is so excited about the IDFG mission and how it gets carried out at MK Nature Center.

Thank you Hannah; we are grateful for all your hard work.



Idaho Gives-So Did You!

Sara Focht, Conservation Education Supervisor, MKNC, IDFG

Idaho Gives, Idaho's annual week of giving, yielded great results thanks to over 100 donors to Friends of MK Nature Center. The Friend's Group was aiming for \$10,000 and donations surpassed that by nearly \$3,000!

Thank you to all who donated during Idaho Gives! These funds move directly from the Friend's Group to "on-the-grounds projects" at the nature center.

Thank you!



IDAHO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Volunteer of the Month

April

Bronwyn Myers



As April began, so did our busy tour season at MK Nature Center. Nature center tours are taught by staff, and the nature walk is led by volunteers. **Bronwyn Myers** joined us for her 14th spring season as a tour guide. Tour guiding is not all Bronwyn has done for us! She staffs outreach events and helps us staff on-site educational booths. Bronwyn has volunteered over 375 days at MK Nature Center, racking up nearly 900 hours of volunteer time. Bronwyn is on time and ready to meet her student group each and every day she commits to helping. Bronwyn is a dedicated regular at MK Nature Center. We depend on her and are so thankful for her time and energy. Congratulations, Bronwyn!!

May

Chris Monell



Chris started volunteering at MK Nature Center in October of 2025. He is a student at Oregon State University in wildlife biology and needed an internship for 150 hours. Did we have 150 hours of work for Chris? Yes we did! On top of being a student and dedicated volunteer at MK Nature Center, Chris spends five days a week in the clouds-actually! He is a commercial airline pilot. On his two days per week on the ground, he is on the grounds of MK doing just about anything and everything or in the field collecting seeds or planting habitat for Idaho Fish and Game Region 3. Chris is a true “Renaissance person” with skills in areas such as fixing pavers, building things out of wood, refurbishing beaver dams, cutting trees, setting up for events, working on software platforms, sorting trail camera footage and too many other things to name here. We appreciate Chris as a dependable, regular and talented volunteer.

June

Roger Wallace



Roger Wallace was MK Nature Center’s volunteer of the month for June! Roger started volunteering at MK Nature Center in 2018 when he joined the Idaho Master Naturalist Program. Roger is a steadfast member of the self-named “GRAY BEARDS,” a work group that has put several large projects on the ground at MK Nature Center. Roger was part of the team that built the eagle nest and animal silhouettes along with other maintenance work. Roger has served as lead beekeeper at MK Nature Center since the observation hive was established. He has assembled a team of people to work on hive maintenance. Roger put together a beekeeping manual for the nature center, which serves as a guide for care of the hive. Roger has donated almost 700 hours of volunteer time. It is true to say we could not do it without Roger!

DONORS

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

Levi Baguley
Jean Campbell
Jason Rose
Thompson Family
Ronald Waddell

VOLUNTEERS

Kris Barrash
Jon Bergset
Pam Bly
Nick Brokaw
Giovannina Caminade
Ashlyn Cheo
Peter Ciulla
Beth Corbin
Ray Corbin
Cyndi Coulter
Alan Crockett
Alice Crockett
Christine Cuilla
Roberta Damico
Ann DeBolt
Roberta Doering
Roberta Domico

Kevin Drews
Jan Egge
Don Essig
Pegge Faith
Susan Floriana-Riley
Todd Finato
Jack Fiser
Steve Getlein
Janeil Gilbert
Mary Hacking
Andrew Hacking
Anne Halford
Katie Haller
Vicky Henderson
Jody Hull
Jim James
Trevor Jensen

Sophie Joinnides
Rebecca Killeen
Susan King
Randy Langseth
Kevin Laughlin
Jon Mathews
Linda Mazza
Martha McClay
Nan McGrath
Andy Meyers
Joanne Michaels
Chris Monell
Caroline Moris
Renee Mullen
Bronwyn Myers
Tom Neale
Naomi Obere

Eileen Oldag
Josh Olson
Karie Pappani
Carol Prentice
Jael Prin
Benita Putzier
Angela Pyell
Jenna Raino
Gail Robb
Jon Rocha
Jane Rohling
Madeline Rosa
Hannah Roth
Lori Ruman
Vicky Runnoe
Arleen Schaeffer
Kirsten Severud

Howard Sheppa
Katie Sheppa
David Shropshire
Sandy Sweet
Bethany Tennant
Destiny Turner
Laura Ultis
Bonnie Urresti
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Brandy Wood
Julia Zarbnisky
Zach Zent
Susan Ziebarth

April

May

June

TIMBER!



On May 25th, a wind storm brought a huge pine tree down across the path. Volunteers and staff jumped into action that night and next morning. Thanks to Josh Olson, Sara Focht, Sue Dudley, Alan Crockett, Andy Meyers, Hannah Roth, David Shropshire, and Randy Langseth.

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