



*MK Nature Center*

# STREAM

The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center    SUMMER 2022

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## Images of Summer



Front page photos by  
Vicky Runnoe



# Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

It's the time of year when I spend a great deal of time perusing volunteer timesheets. At its most basic level, such work provides the documentation we need for the in-kind match required by several of our funding sources. This is important because improper documentation can unleash a cascade of unpleasant consequences and understandably so. As a recipient of public funds, we need to uphold our end of the bargain, so-to-speak. Everyone, staff and volunteers alike, works hard to make sure the proverbial i's are dotted and t's are crossed.

On a deeper level, the timesheets tell stories of many people, their dedication to and love for the nature center. The first few months of the new fiscal year yielded a trickle of timesheets, a reminder of the lingering pandemic. Winter had its typical lull and we anxiously waited for spring. Suddenly, the trickle became a deluge as schools resumed field trips and volunteers felt more comfortable, gathering together. A handful of timesheets became stacks upon stacks, representing the volunteers we have missed.

Seeing familiar names and faces reminded all of us of what has been missing over the past two years---volunteers guiding gaggles of students; the comfortable murmur of a group of volunteers focused on a project; a familiar face coming through the door ready to re-engage. But even more important is the renewal and resumption of friendships, the relationships that our volunteers bring to us. Some of these relationships have developed over years of dedicated service to the nature center while others are of newer vintage. No matter how long you have been a nature center volunteer we are SO glad that you are back!!



Above from left to right: Sharon Kiefer, Benita Putzier, Lynn Kelly, and Karen McLaughlin volunteer to maintain the butterfly garden area with an early morning start to avoid the heat!

Top: Helen Harrington sweeps the path, a never ending job! Middle: Youth volunteer, Lyla Olson, helps younger kids find and hold worms during an educational program. Bottom: Booth volunteer, Bhavana Padiyath shows off owl adaptations.

# Cats and Dogs

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG



Canines and felines! It's easy to connect visitors to Idaho's wild dogs and cats because so many of us have their relatives as beloved pets! Idaho is home to three species of wild dogs and three species of wild cats. We recently received three beautiful taxidermies from Terry Bennett at [Bennett Taxidermy](#). We thought we would show them off in the lobby by creating this display. From left to right: new bobcat, new red fox, grey wolf, new coyote, and lynx. Only the mountain lion is missing and that mount was just too big to squeeze in. A big thanks to Terry for his great work!

## Sturgeon Viewing



Summer is the best time of year to view sturgeon at MKNC. Though visible nearly all year long, the sunny long days provide almost crystal clear conditions on most days. Watch for all three sturgeon as they make lazy circles under the bridge.

Photo by MKNC.

# Ant Lions

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG



Above: Ant lion adult. Photo by Robert Larson on Flickr (CC BY0SA 3.0).



Left: Ant lion larvae. Photo by Scott Robinson on Flickr (CC-BY 2.0).

Ant lion pit trap at the Idaho Botanical Garden. Photo by Sara Focht.

My favorite thing about nature study is that you will never know it all. No matter how old, seasoned, or experienced you might be, there is more to learn! I learn something new about nature almost every day and recently I learned about the ant lion. How could I have lived this long without knowing what made those conical pits in the sand? I have seen them for years, and always assumed (without researching) that they were caused by birds digging for insects or collecting dirt for nest making!

Ant lions hatch from eggs and start life in their larvae stage, which is quite small (up to 1/2 inch), but fierce looking. They dig pit traps in dry, sheltered, sandy soil. Pits look like inverted cones about 1-2 inches deep and 1-2 inches across the top. There is an art to making the trap wide enough to catch more prey but steep to ensure they cannot escape the slope! The larvae then burry themselves at the bottom of the pit to wait for prey. Huge sharp mandibles don their heads and are used to grab prey after it falls into the trap. Ant lion larvae inject their prey with poison and suck out their contents, discarding the empty shells out of their pit.

Eventually, these aggressive larvae will pupate and emerge as adults (1-3 inches long), looking completely different, more like a damselfly. Turning from carnivore to herbivore, adults dine on pollen and nectar and are delicate and beautiful. Rarely seen, adults hide during the day and are active in the evening.

If you like horror movies and want to learn more about ant lions, click on [this link](#).

# Stripes and Spots

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG

Idaho is home to two species of skunks, the western spotted and the striped. When I teach classes at MK nature Center, I often use furs, pelts and taxidermies as examples to the concepts I am discussing. When I use the owl taxidermy or wolf pelt, I often find that even the youngest kids know quite a bit about these two animals. When I pull out the skunk pelt, I see contorted faces and hands fanning noses. Most people only know two things about a skunk: 1) They are black and white. 2) They stink!

There is so much more to know about these adorable and illusive mammals! Skunks are true omnivores, despite their “carnivora” order designation. They hunt at night for insects, grubs, mice, eggs, berries and plants. They are solitary animals, except the female and young. Skunks used to be categorized with the weasels (Mustelid), until DNA sequencing told scientists that skunks were not related and needed to be in their own family (Mephitidae).

Skunks are inactive in winter, but do not practice *true* hibernation, but do deep sleep through most of the winter months, using fat reserves to survive.

As you already know, they have highly specialized and developed scent glands they use to fight off predators. Making the smelly mixture and storing it for a time of need is an expensive enterprise for a skunk. They don't spray liberally-waiting for true times of need to expend their defense.

Their specialized predator deterrent works! Very few animals will hunt and kill a skunk, but occasionally a great horned owl or golden eagle will do just that.

Through the years we have seen (and more often smelled) skunks, but this spring, we seem to have more evidence and sightings than ever before. As an educator, I love the morning tours where we are walking along the path and almost at once, everyone is commenting about the smell!

Though nobody wants to get too close to a skunk, next time you see or smell one, remember how amazing and adaptive these shy little guys are!



Above: Juvenile spotted skunk. Photo by vladeb on Flickr (CC BY-ND 2.0).



Right: Stripped skunk. Photo by MKNC

# Thank You, Friends!



Our new kiosk looks amazing! We are so thrilled to have it and start using it. Thank you members of Friends of MK Nature Center! This educational kiosk was the center of fundraising for Idaho gives 2020! The project took a little longer than expected, but in the end, we have a beautiful new shed to store tools and supplies for grounds-keeping and a huge display window to tell our story and share information with visitors. Photo by MKNC.



# New Map!



We have a new trail map, and isn't it the cutest? Local designer, Stephanie Inman, upgraded our old single color map to this interesting, colorful, and playful design to help our visitors navigate the grounds. Our brochure with this map and descriptions of major features, can be found on our [website](#), at the front desk, and outside the front door of the building. We hope you enjoy the map and the grounds this summer.

# Celebrating Pollinators

Sue Dudley, Gift Shop Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC

It felt so good to finally have a spring event again after three years of being on hold. The event went well thanks to all of our amazing volunteers! I couldn't put these events on without the help of the Nature Center's hard working and talented volunteers.

Thanks to all who helped with the event! Al Straessle, Arleen Schaeffer, Cheryl Minckler, Amy Dolan, Sandy Sweet, Brody Tomlinson, Emily Houk, Elizabeth Martin, Gail Osborne, Marc von Huene, Alan Herzfeld, James Smith, Judy Wojcicki, Susie Carlson, Kim Baar, Laurie Hansen, Susan Riley, Lynn Kinter, Jennifer Miller, Jon Mathews, Maddy Saez, Nicole Crandall, Patrice Davies, Bronwyn Myers, Vicky Runnoe, Tara Jennings, Roger Wallace, Forrest Green, Howard Sheppa, Kevin Wilson, Sue Dudley.



# New Faces

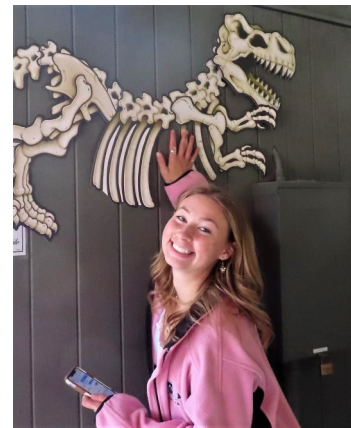


STAFF: Becky is a naturalist at heart. She has lived in Idaho since 2015 & is happy for the opportunity to work at the Nature Center. She has a BS degree from Montana State University in Fish and Wildlife Management and greatly enjoys spending time in her vegetable garden. We welcome Becky to our staff!



STAFF: Paris is currently attending Boise State University, pursuing a degree in Environmental Studies. He has loved the outdoors and working with animals for as long as he can remember. In his free time, he loves playing music, reading, writing, and exploring the national parks. Welcome to the crew, Paris!

INTERN: Hi! I am Keely, the summer intern at MK Nature Center. I just graduated from Eagle High School and will be moving to Alaska after this summer to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I will be majoring in wildlife biology and conservation with plans of going into the field of research. I currently also work at Zoo Boise as a Data Analyst where I record animal behavioral observations and conduct surveys. In my free time I enjoy hiking, bird (or really any animal) watching, concerts and hanging out with friends!



## Caught on Camera



According to American Bird Conservancy (ABC), domestic cats kill 2.4 billion birds every year in the United States. A video of a domestic cat eating a juvenile cottontail rabbit was captured on our trail cameras on June 18th, just after midnight. The cottontail was from a litter we had been watching and enjoying, as rabbits are not common at MK Nature Center. This encounter is not so different (in theory) from when a bobcat comes and hunts squirrels and birds at the Nature Center, but in reality, we view it quite differently.

If you would like more information on ABC's CAT INDOORS Program, [click here!](#)



# DONORS

Edwina & John Allen  
 Hilda Packard  
 Ron Lopez  
 Wild Birds Unlimited

*This donor list does not include donors to Friends of MK Nature Center.*

April  
 May  
 June

# VOLUNTEERS

Glenn Anders	Kay Hummel	Barb Recla
Michele Andrew	Gary Hundt	Susan Riley
Kim Baar	Sonya Janson	Molly Rogers
Kay Beall	Linda Jarsky	Lori Ruman
Steve Berg	Tara Jennings	Arleen Schaeffer
Pam Bly	Lynn Kelley	Kirsten Severud
James Bonstrom	Sharon Kiefer	Howard Sheppa
Dave Bronell	Susan King	Katie Sheppa
Lori Chacartegui	Sandy Kurka	James Smith
Beth Corbin	Ed Lee	Patrick Stoll
Ray Corbin	Madonna Lengerich	Al Straessle
Cyndi Coulter	Mike Mancuso	Sandra Sweet
Patrice Davies	Elizabeth Martin	Bill Terry
Ann DeBolt	Jon Mathews	Brody Tomlinson
Nancy DeWitt	Martha McClay	Steve Tornga
Joan Dodd	Nan McGrath	Bonnie Urresti
Amy Dolan	Karen McLaughlin	Keeley Vatcher
Kevin Drews	JoAnne Michaels	Claire Veseth
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Laurie Hansen	Josh Olson	Julia Zarbnisky
Helen Harrington	Lyla Olson	
Vicki Henderson	Gail Osborne	
Alan Herzfeld	Bhavana Padiyath	
Emily Houk	Karie Pappani	



## BRIDGE CLOSED

The main bridge over the large sturgeon pond will be closed for repair July 5-8. For safety, the grounds will be open 9 am-5 pm only and will close to the public in the evening and early mornings.

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