



Morrison Knudsen

# Nature Center

## STREAM

The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center Winter 2026

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## MKNC Seeks AmeriCorps

The MK Nature Center will be hosting an AmeriCorps member from March through August, 2026. This will be our ninth year hosting an Associate Wildlife Educator on our education team. AmeriCorps members will enjoy a wide variety of experiences at the nature center, including teaching classes, guiding tours, creating visual displays, planning educational events, working with live birds of prey, creating social media posts, recruiting volunteers, and designing educational booths.

AmeriCorps is brought to us by [Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute](#) and paid for by [Friends of MK Nature Center!](#) If someone you know is interested in this full time, part-year position, please contact Frankie Curet at [frankie.curet@idfg.idaho.gov](mailto:frankie.curet@idfg.idaho.gov).





# 19th Annual Bird Seed Sale

Sue Dudley, MKNC, IDFG

This year's bird seed sale was probably my very favorite out of the 19 years I have been putting on this event. There were so many touching moments where people in the community came together. Our wonderful volunteers, loyal supporters, and visitors stopped by and ran into old friends they hadn't seen in a long time. We also saw new faces that experienced the excitement during the event for the first time. And most importantly, families enjoying the beauty of the nature center.

This event wouldn't be possible without our amazing volunteers. They pour their heart into each task and they are a huge reason why I love my job so much. Thank you Susan Riley, Benita Putzier, Jan Egge, Cindy Clark, Jon Matthews, Carolyn King, Elizabeth Grosse, Bonnie Urresti, Larry Ridenhour and Mike Pond.



Photos clockwise starting in upper right: Mike Pond. Cindy Clark. Larry Ridenhour with Wilson. Sue Dudley, Jan Egge, Cindy Clark Susan Floriana-Riley, Benita Putzier. Elizabeth Grosse and Carolyn King. Jon Mathews and Bonnie Urresti. Photos by Sue Dudley.





# Volunteer of the Month

## October—Andy Meyers



Andy has been volunteering at Idaho Fish and Game MK Nature Center since May. His favorite task is to staff educational booths. Andy is an Idaho Master Naturalist and loves to share his knowledge of wildlife with others. Since mountain lions are Andy's passion, it's not surprising that his favorite education booth focused on the Wild Cats of Idaho. Andy staffed 27 booths this summer, educating 2,469 visitors. Thanks for being part of our team, Andy!

## November - Benita Putzier



Benita is a dedicated MKNC volunteer and received this award for her consistent work on the new sensory garden at the nature center. Benita volunteers regularly and independently, taking on the maintenance and care of the sensory garden. This includes planting, weeding, and watering. Benita has been volunteering for MK Nature Center for 7 years and so far in 2025, has volunteered 35 times for over 70 hours.

## December - Trevor Jensen



Trevor's weekly dedication to MKNC earned him this award. Trevor is a wildlife biologist by education and experience, but has a growing interest in conservation education and teaching others about wildlife and habitats. Trevor volunteers every Friday (and often other days of the week), performing all sorts of important functions at MK Nature Center including handling Wilson (our resident education bird), removing invasive trees and shrubs, teaching classes and tours, fixing pavers, and building fences. Just about anything we throw at him, he can handle! We are thankful for Trevor for joining our team.



# Fall Steelhead Stocked

Sara Focht, MKNC, IDFG

On November 21st, Oxbow Hatchery staff brought eight fall-run steelhead to MK Nature Center for viewing. Hatchery staff scooped them out of the truck and MK Nature Center staff and volunteers hauled them to their new waters! Stocking day is always exciting and celebratory. These steelhead were hatched at Oxbow, traveled to the Pacific Ocean and migrated back! They will spawn and die in the next several months. You still have a chance to see these amazing anadromous fish in our large outdoor viewing window.



Photos counterclockwise starting in upper left:

Oxbow and MK staff unloading fish. Hauling the fish to the pond. Releasing the steelhead. Steelhead enjoying their new waters. MK volunteers and staff after a successful stocking adventure. Photos by IDFG staff.





# Winter's Anna



Article and artwork by  
Alyssa Hansen, MKNC  
Volunteer

Unlike the other Idaho hummingbirds, Anna's hummingbirds are a winter visitor, arriving in October and leaving in May. During this time, they build up daily fat stores to keep them warm, especially at night. Anna's hummingbirds obtain their calories from tree sap, hummingbird feeders, and small sheltering insects. At night, when it gets very cold, they are able to enter a state similar to hibernation called torpor. This reduces

energy expenditure. When daylight arrives, the hummingbird rapidly arouses and begins its daily search for food.

Anna's Hummingbirds were originally found in California, but began to expand northward into the Pacific Northwest. The species was first sighted in Idaho in 1976. From then until 2003 only a few birds were sighted each year, but fast forward to today and that number nears 200 every winter. Hummingbird feeders and flowers planted by humans are believed to be contributing factors to this range expansion. Without these sources of calories, these hummingbirds would not be able to build up enough fat to survive Idaho's cold nights.

In order to obtain these population numbers, the Intermountain Bird Observatory banded Anna's hummingbirds and color-marked them with white correction fluid on the forehead and a marker line on the chest. This way individual hummingbirds could be tracked and their population estimates more accurate with fewer duplicates. This method revealed that the population of Anna's hummingbirds was higher than what was thought based only on homeowner reports.

The increasing wintering population of Anna's hummingbirds may be the precursor to a year-round population. Some instances of Anna's hummingbirds during the spring and summer have been recorded. In 2020 a nest was found in Boise with two chicks that successfully made it to adulthood. The Intermountain Bird Observatory found six individuals returning to the area over multiple years, which may be a further indication of a regular summer population of Anna's hummingbirds in Boise in the future. In addition, in 2022 two juvenile Anna's hummingbirds were seen at MK Nature Center in May, indicating a successful nest on the property.

In order to help Anna's hummingbirds in the winter, you can purchase heated hummingbird feeders. Anna's hummingbirds also eat small insects, so avoid using pesticides because that will result in fewer insects for the hummingbirds to eat and may poison the birds. If you come across an Anna's hummingbird, please report your observation to the [Intermountain Bird Observatory](#) or an app such as iNaturalist or eBird.



# Paver Project

Sara Focht, MKNC, IDFG

Visitors at MKNC can expect smooth walkways thanks to a large path repair project that took place in November and December. Five large swaths of the paved path and several areas of the gravel path were graded and resurfaced. The problem? Tree roots! [Habiscapes](#) took advantage of the balmy fall weather and completed most of the path repair, leaving only one section for February. [Ada Tree and Shrub](#) helped remove five large cottonwoods that were growing right next to the pavers. This project will help visitors who walk, use a wheelchair, or get pushed in a stroller enjoy the viewing windows, ponds and wildlife habitat.





# 2nd Annual Whitefish Rodeo

Sara Focht, MKNC, IDFG



November 18th marked the 2nd annual “Whitefish Rodeo” where Trout Unlimited members and MK Nature Center volunteers fished for mountain whitefish in the Boise River to stock at MKNC. With proper permission and permits, eight healthy mountain whitefish were stocked in the large viewing window at the nature center, adding some silver-shimmering diversity to the habitat. A special thanks to Howard Sheppa for organizing the event.



Photos top to bottom:

Volunteers fishing for whitefish along the Boise River. Photo by Howard Sheppa.

Whitefish waiting to be transported to the nature center. Photo by Howard Sheppa.

Howard Sheppa and Bethany Tennant stock the fish in the Alpine Lake. Photo by IDFG.

Below: Mountain whitefish. Photo by Spencer Zarran.





# Images of Fall and Winter

Top Row: Trevor Jensen, Frankie Curet and Lori Wilson enjoying Trevor's stash of slugs found under a tarp. American Mink.

Middle row: Sunrise over the sturgeon pond. Wilson in the fall. Young scouts after their community service day building a brush pile for habitat.

Bottom Row: Joan Dodd and Rylee Bierman volunteering to rake leaves. Leaves floating in the pond.

All photos by IDFG.





# Wilson's New Threads

Sue Dudley, MKNC, IDFG

MKNC volunteers and experienced falconers Deno Newbold and Mike Garets helped MK Nature Center staff replace Wilson's old jesses with new ones. So what are jesses, anyway? Jesses are thin strips of leather that are loosely attached to a captive bird of prey's ankles. This allows the bird to be tethered to a glove or perch for safe handling and training. We appreciate the partnership and support from these two experts.



Upper left: Deno Newbold attaches the new jesses as MKNC staff member Bethany Tennant holds Wilson steady.

Upper right: Bethany Tennant holds Wilson after jesses are put on. Wilson is hooded for this adventure to keep her calm.

Bottom: Mike Garets, Bethany Tennant, and Deno Newbold pose with Wilson when everything is complete.

Photos by Sue Dudley.



# Which Deer?

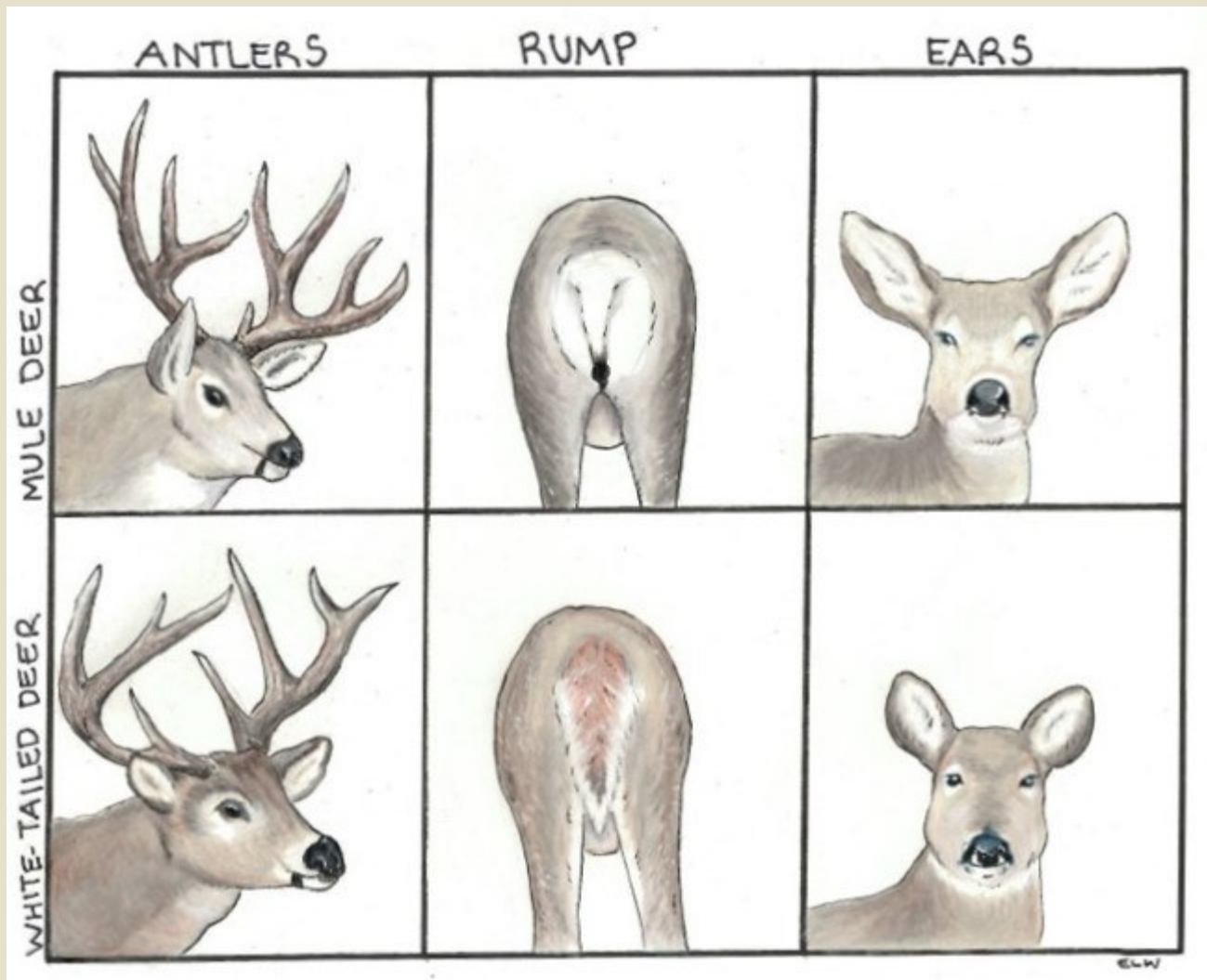
Erica Wilson, MKNC Volunteer

## White-tailed Deer

- Ears are smaller in proportion to the head.
- Brown rump.
- The tail is brown with white fringe; bottom of the erect tail is all white.
- Antlers (of older males) consist of main beams with 3 to 5 tines projecting upward.
- Winter color is more tan.
- Whitetails run fast, sometimes with a bounding leap to escape predators.
- Smaller than mule deer (bucks - 200lbs).

## Mule Deer

- Large ears in proportion to the head give mule deer their name.
- White rump.
- Rope-like tail with black tip.
- Antlers (of older males) fork and fork again.
- Winter color is more gray.
- Mule deer trot or gallop more slowly when alarmed, and then stot to escape. Stotting is a stiff-legged, high bouncing gait.
- Larger than white-tailed deer (bucks - 250lbs).





# DONORS ➔

**Edwina Allen  
Laura Glomb  
Ann & Bob Hay  
Sharon & Russ Kiefer  
Caroline Morris**

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

# VOLUNTEERS

Ty Akers  
Angie Baker  
Dan Baker  
Izzy Baker  
Doug Baker  
Tucker Bates  
Bret Beck  
Ceci Bennett  
Steve Berg  
Rylee Bierman  
Pam Bly  
Richard Christensen  
Taylor Church  
Cindy Clark  
Patrice Davies  
Joan Dodd  
Kevin Drews  
Maximus Durant

Jan Egge  
Cooper Ellis  
Kaleb Enterman  
Susan Floriana-Riley  
Dave Fotsch  
Anja Fredericks  
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Bronwyn Myers  
Dino Newbold  
Hayden Newton  
Yaki Otti-Maas  
Travis Parker  
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Sandy Sweet  
Bonnie Urresti  
Claire Veseth  
Chris Waldel  
Roger Wallace  
Erica Wilson  
Brandy Wood  
Julia Zarbnisky  
Susan Ziebarth

## October

## November

## December

## Carmax Contributes

Sue Dudley, MKNC, IDFG

It is always fun when companies pick the nature center to do their community volunteer service. Carmax had a great bunch of volunteers that helped plant several species of native plants around the grounds. *Thank you Carmax employees. We appreciate all your hard work.*

**CARmax**



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