



FALL
2019

Windows to *Wildlife*

Your support at work in Idaho's landscapes



American Avocets
PHOTO BY: Ceredig Roberts

BIRDING THE FALL MIGRATION: Experiencing the best Southeast Idaho offers

by Hilary Turner*, Wildlife Technician
Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Summer wraps up, kids head back to school, and birders hit migrant traps! As a birder, there is almost nowhere I would rather be than southeastern Idaho in the fall. In the later summer, migrant birds begin their southward journeys, stopping over along the way to rest and refuel.

August brings excitement to birders, as shorebirds are among the first migrants to come through. Shorebird identification can be difficult, especially because many shorebirds breed in the Arctic and the only time we see them in southeastern Idaho is during

the fall when they are in non-breeding and juvenile plumages. Minute differences in shape, size, and feeding strategy can enable observers to correctly identify them. Shorebird habitat is ephemeral, as these migrating mud probers are drawn to exposed mudflats that can disappear in a matter of days. Any body of water has the ability to attract migrant shorebirds, if the water levels are appropriate, including the Snake River. In Idaho Falls, sandbars in the Snake draw hundreds of gulls along with shorebirds like Stilt Sandpiper and Sanderling, as well as more common species such as Least Sandpiper,

Spotted Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt and American Avocet. American Falls Reservoir, Camas National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and Market Lake Wildlife Management Area can also provide excellent shorebird habitat and viewing in early fall—find them on the [Idaho Birding Trail!](#)

As shorebird habitat dries out and they head toward their wintering grounds, birders in southeastern Idaho turn their attention to migrant songbirds. Late August and early September are heaven in southeastern Idaho

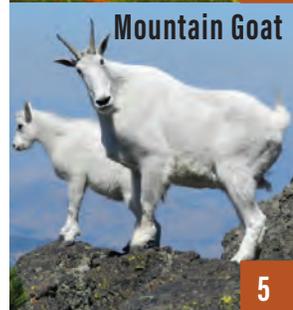
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PHOTO BY: Patty Pickett



PHOTO BY: Patty Pickett

Fall Movements
 Breeding in the north, neotropical migrants such as Wilson's Warblers (top) spend their winters in Mexico, Central America, and South America.

(middle) Mallard and Northern Pintail flock together near the Snake River.

Rough-legged Hawks (bottom) breed in the open country of the arctic and come to Idaho to spend their winters.



for birders and migrants alike. Shelterbelts amid vast expanses of sagebrush steppe provide critical habitat for migrating warblers, sparrows, tanagers, vireos, and a host of other songbirds. Often, rare species can be found in shelterbelts, such as the state's first Great Crested Flycatcher and a White-eyed Vireo that were both found at Camas NWR in fall of 2017, and a Black-and-white Warbler found in fall of 2018. Even if no rarities are present, Camas NWR's headquarters provides excellent birding in the fall. The cottonwood shelterbelts can harbor hundreds of birds, including massive numbers of Wilson's Warblers. It can be exhausting to pick through the Wilson's in search of something rarer, but it's also an opportunity to enjoy even the most common birds. It's never "just another Wilson's." Migrants also travel along riparian corridors such as the cottonwoods along the Snake River. Migrant songbirding in southeastern Idaho is great through the end of September and even into early October; you never know what you will find!

With migrant songbirds becoming scarce later into the fall, migrant raptors provide birders with something else to search for. Atop any ridge in the fall, be on the lookout for migrating raptors. From August to December, raptors move through southeastern Idaho on their way to southern wintering grounds. Raptors use updrafts and thermals to enable their long migrations. Although no designated "hawkwatch" (a place where humans congregate to watch hawks migrate) exists in southeastern Idaho, many raptors do move through the area. Large groups of Swainson's Hawks can be seen as they stage for migration, moving in kettles that sometimes contain hundreds of birds. These birds will travel all the way to Argentina before their journey is complete. Many Red-tailed and Ferruginous Hawks breed in southeastern Idaho, moving south in the early fall, to be replaced in the late fall by Rough-legged Hawks. A variety of exposed ridges exist in southeastern Idaho where humans can enjoy the beauty of migrating raptors, including Sawtelle Peak in Island Park. I like to hike to any peak in the Beaverhead or Lemhi mountains and search for migrating raptors from a windswept ridge.

When raptor migration dies down, birders can still search for waterbirds such as scoters, loons, jaegers, gulls, and others on any large body of water, as long as it remains ice-free!

Fall migration begins in August and wraps up in late November to early December and there is no better place to be birding than southeastern Idaho!

Bird IDAHO

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The Idaho Birding Trail is your guide to the best birding and wildlife viewing in Idaho!



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Spotlight Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Mountain Goat

Reprinted from the *Idaho State Wildlife Action Plan* and *Wildlife Express*

Mountain Goats are an iconic watchable wildlife species. They occur in the rugged mountain ranges of northwestern North America, from southeastern Alaska south to Washington and Idaho. In Idaho, populations are small and fragmented, with animals scattered throughout the central Idaho wilderness as well as in the Panhandle, Hells Canyon, and the Snake River Range. Several reintroductions have occurred into previously occupied habitat across the state as well as into new habitat such as the Palisades, which did not historically have Mountain Goats.

Mountain Goats inhabit rugged landscapes characterized by steep, rocky cliffs, talus slopes, grassy ledges, and alpine meadows. They can pull themselves up from ledge to ledge with just their front feet, have been known to leap 10 feet from one rock ledge to another, and can turn around on a platform that is only inches wide!

They are generalists with a diet that includes grasses, sedges, rushes, forbs, low growing shrubs, woody shrubs, conifers, mosses, and lichens depending on the season. Winter ranges can be lower elevation cliff complexes with south and west aspects where snow is less abundant and persistent. Migration to these wintering areas occurs along well-traveled corridors with the first heavy snowfall. Other populations winter in alpine habitats where wind and steep southern exposures create areas of reduced snow depth.

This species has relatively low reproductive potential. Breeding in late fall and early winter, males (billies) compete for females (nannies). They do not fight head-to-head like bighorn sheep. Billies fight side-to-side and stab each other in the flanks. Thick skin in this area protects them from most serious injuries, but sometimes wounds to the chest, neck or abdomen can cause deaths. Nannies give birth to their kids in May or June on very steep cliffs to avoid predators. Usually one kid is born, but sometimes mountain goats have twins.

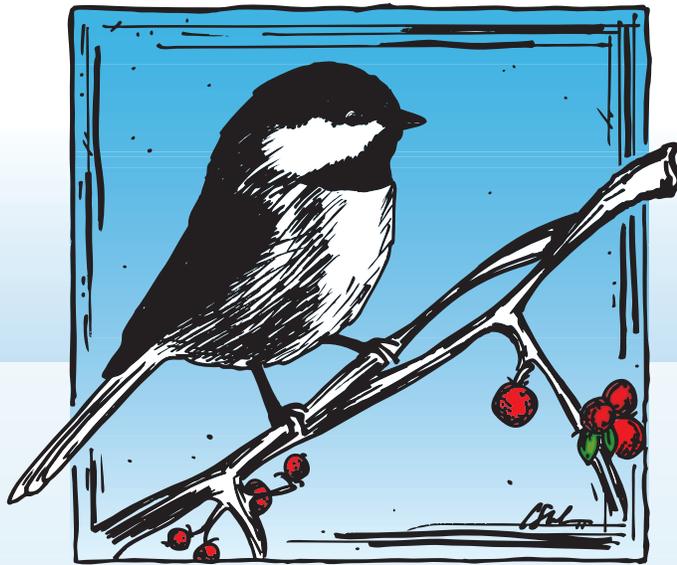
Statewide, populations appear to be declining slightly, although data are limited. Survey data indicate that while some populations are stable (e.g., Palisades), others are extremely low or have been lost from previously occupied range (e.g., Selway, southern Lemhi mountain range, southern Beaverhead mountain range).

Human encroachment into Mountain Goat habitat is a threat, particularly from road development, backcountry recreation, and aircraft. It is possible that disease could also be impacting populations. In addition, the effects of climate change on alpine and subalpine habitats will likely affect the conservation of this species, particularly from road development, backcountry recreation, and aircraft. It is possible that disease could also be impacting populations. In addition, the effects of climate change on alpine and subalpine habitats will likely affect the conservation of this species.

(If you want to learn more about Mountain Goats in Idaho, read the new *Idaho Mountain Goat Management Plan* at <https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/plan-mountain-goat-2019.pdf>)



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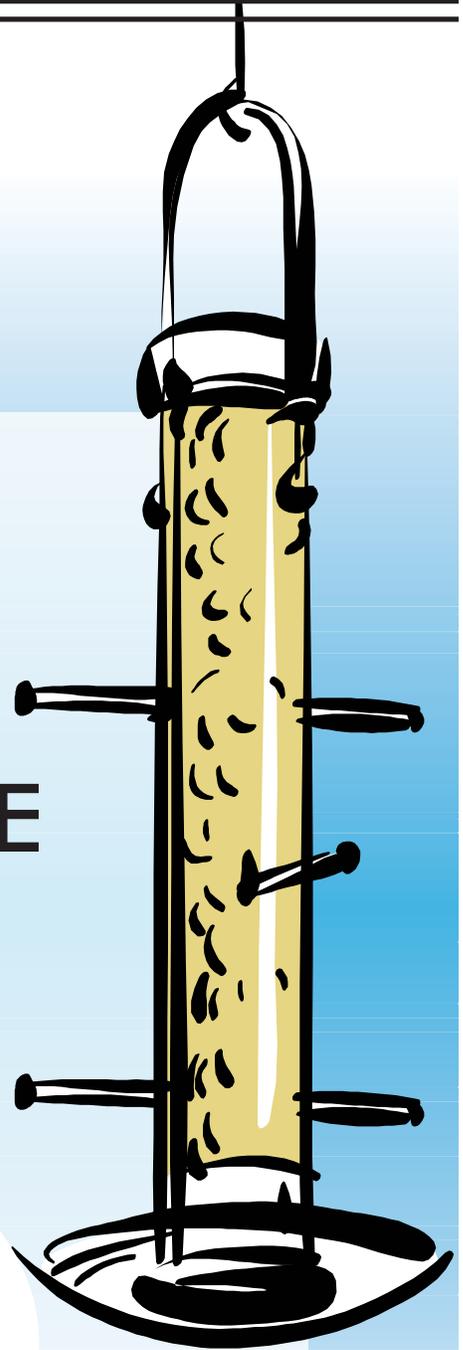
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Questions? Call 208-287-2900
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BOISE, IDAHO



Fall Wildlife Events

Boise WaterShed

11818 West Joplin Rd., Boise; (208) 489-1284

bee.cityofboise.org/watershed/events/calendar-of-events

WATERSHED WEEKEND SERIES: 3rd Saturdays, 10AM to 1PM

Join us for hands-on activities, interactive exhibits, public art, and presentations the whole family can enjoy! A Water Renewal Facility tour starts at 11:30AM. FREE admission! No pre-registration required for families/individuals but groups of ten or more must call in advance.

October 19 - Fall Festival

Come celebrate the beautiful fall colors in the City of Trees at the Boise WaterShed! Create festive fall-themed arts and crafts, explore the exhibit hall and take a silly harvest photo! Meet some live reptiles in the theater with Reptile Adventures! Finally, take a fun hay ride tour on the outskirts of the water renewal facility at 10:15, 11:00, 11:45 and 12:30! Tours limited to first 25 people, weather-permitting.

November 16 - MapMania: Around the World in Under an Hour

No need to pack! Join us as we explore the four corners of the world. While you circumnavigate the globe, you will learn how mapping and geography help us understand our world. Participate in robot races, go on safari, learn about geocaching (modern day treasure hunting), map watersheds, and create your own maps. A water renewal facility tour will be held, weather permitting, at 11:30 a.m., ages 4 and up, closed-toed shoes required, no strollers please.

Jim Hall Foothills Learning Center

3188 Sunset Peak Rd., Boise; (208) 493-2530

bee.cityofboise.org/foothills/events/calendar-of-events

BOISE BIRDING SERIES: 1st Wednesdays, 9AM to 10AM

Our free birding program is great for experienced and novice birders alike. Terry Rich, our local ornithologist, provides information and tips on birds in the Boise area and beyond! Come to one or all sessions! Bird books and binoculars are available to borrow. No registration necessary.

October 2 - Bird Basics

We'll look at how birds evolved, how they are different from other vertebrates, and some "fun facts" from the world of birds. Then we'll explore some basics of ecology, behavior, and morphology. This leads us to the first steps in bird identification – where you are on earth, what habitat you are in, how big it is, what it was doing, and a look at the all-important concept of field marks.

November 6 - Feeding and Identifying Common Feeder Birds

November is the time to get ready for the winter bird feeding season. We will cover types of feeders and seeds, the value of water in winter, and other features that make a backyard attractive to birds. We'll also talk about how to identify the most common birds coming to feeders in the Boise area. This will allow us to increase the details in our advancing identification discussions. Finally, we'll look at Project FeederWatch, one of the easiest bird data collection programs out there.

December 4 - Bird Counts and Population Monitoring

Birding should be both enjoyable and contribute to the conservation of all those birds we enjoy. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) has been conducted since 1900. It's the oldest citizen science project for birds in the U.S. We will look at how the CBC works, what we've learned from well over 100 years of data collected by citizens, and how you can participate. There are several other programs for tracking how birds are doing, including the Breeding Bird Survey and eBird. We'll touch on each of those.

MK Nature Center

600 S. Walnut Street, Boise; (208) 334-2225

idfg.idaho.gov/site/mk-nature-center

EVENING LECTURE SERIES: 6:30PM to 8PM

Free and open to the public (donations encouraged).

November 6 - Wiggly Composters

Wiggly Composters will be here to share with us what they do and why and to show you how to convert your kitchen waste and paper into a valuable resource for your yard and wildlife habitat.

December 9 - Treasure Valley Canopy Network

Lance Davisson will tell us about the Treasure Valley Canopy Network and show us how regional public-private partnerships are building collaborations that are having a lasting impact on the health and vitality of our urban forests and people. He will share information about the mission, current programs, and discuss how you can engage and support sustainable growth and improved environmental and human health throughout the Treasure Valley.

Thank You for Your Support!



Thank you to those who made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of a tax check-off donation between July 1 – September 30, 2019.

Your contribution provides important funding for wildlife and habitat conservation in Idaho.



Windows to Wildlife

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- Idaho Department of Commerce & Labor
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- Idaho Power
- Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service