

Windows to Wildlife



A gentle giant, the Idaho Giant Salamander © (CC-BY-SA) Andy Kramer on Flickr CC

Idaho Giant Salamander

Written by Joel Sauder*

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In the forests of Idaho there lurks a rarely seen giant. Cryptically colored and slow moving, it can be found in and around streams and rivers. It is cold-blooded and hairless (so that rules out Bigfoot!), and it has a voracious appetite. Luckily for us, this giant eats mainly invertebrates and reaches only about 13 inches in length. The giant in question is the Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon aterrimus*), and most people have never heard of it, let alone seen it.

In general, the natural history and conservation status of the Idaho Giant Salamander is poorly understood. In Idaho, it is classified as a “species of greatest conservation need” (in Idaho’s State Wildlife Action Plan). Besides Idaho and a small area of extreme western Montana, the species is found nowhere else in the world. Basic data about distribution and how stream characteristics promote salamander abundance are lacking.

One of the most fascinating characteristics of Idaho Giants is their unique ability to choose to live either on land or in the water. The vast majority of Idaho Giants spend their whole life in streams and rivers. Those that choose to live this way retain many of the characteristics of larval salamanders (i.e. external gills) but are sexually mature, breeding adults. Scientists call these larval looking adults “paedomorphs” or “paedomorphic,” meaning “child-like body structure.” Conversely, there is a small portion of Idaho Giants that choose to live on land. When this happens, not only do they absorb their gills and grow lungs, which is an amazing feat in itself, but their body stance, head shape, eye position, and color marking completely change. To the uninformed observer it would look like an entirely different species! However, these terrestrial Idaho

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Giants still must return to streams and rivers to breed and they can interbreed with paedomorphs. At this time scientists don't know exactly what causes an Idaho Giant to choose to live either on land or in the water. It has been hypothesized that individuals living in streams with marginal water flows are more likely to choose to live on the land. Gills only work underwater, so being able to grow lungs when the stream dries out would be a handy skill to have!

The Idaho Giant Salamander became Idaho's official amphibian on April 2, 2015 after an Idaho teen lobbied state lawmakers to pass the bill for five years. So next time you are out in the forests of central and northern Idaho, keep an eye out for giants! It is possible to see Idaho Giant Salamanders basking along the edges of submerged rocks or in shallow pools in gentle sections of mountain streams. If you take the time to roll some cobble sized rocks you will improve your odds of finding one of these elusive animals. Good Luck!



A banner flies near the Capitol Building in Boise recognizing the salamander as an official state symbol © John Cossel, Northwest Nazarene University.

News From the Field

Idaho Wildflowers

Plant Identification App

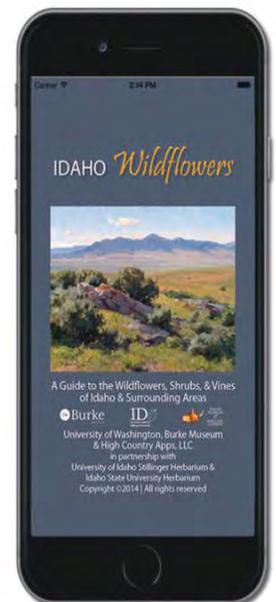
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Summer Wildlife Events

Boise WaterShed

11818 West Joplin Rd., Boise; (208) 489-1284
www.cityofboise.org/Bee/WaterShed/Home/index.aspx

July 15- WaterShed Weekend: Let's Move- Water for Health

Healthy water and healthy bodies will be the theme for our WaterShed Weekend. Join us from 10:00 – 1:00 to learn about the importance of water for our bodies and the Treasure Valley. We'll begin with fun outdoor games, a Hip Hop dance lesson, and other fun ways to be active. At 11:30, we'll have a wastewater treatment plant tour. Closed-toe shoes required for the tour. Ages four and older, please. No strollers. Activities run until 1:00 p.m., but the exhibit hall and River Campus will remain open until 3:00 p.m. Free. No registration is required.

August 19- WaterShed Weekend: Farm to Table

Between 10:00 and 1:00 we'll be on the River Campus to get a taste of agriculture and its importance in the Treasure Valley. Come learn about the benefits of knowing where your food comes from: Environmental Sustainability, Positive Impact on Local Farmers, and Healthier Food. Take some time to admire the art installation "A Perfect World" by Reham Aarti, which highlights the many uses of water, including agriculture. Test your green thumb and take home some plants for your own garden, create some fun outdoor art and just enjoy our beautiful outdoor River Campus. At 11:30, we'll take a tour of the wastewater treatment plant. Closed-toe shoes required for the tour. Ages four and older, please. No strollers. Activities run until 1:00 p.m., but the exhibit hall and River Campus will remain open until 3:00 p.m. Free. No registration is required.

Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve

18 miles SW of Arco on Hwy 20/26/93. 24 miles NE of Carey on Hwy 20/26/93; (208) 527-1300
<https://www.nps.gov/crmo/index.htm>

August 18-19- Star Parties

Join experts from the Idaho Falls Astronomical Society to experience the universe under our naturally dark skies. Opportunities for solar viewing will be available at the visitor center both days. At 9 p.m. each evening there will be a presentation about the night sky at the campground amphitheater. Then head to the Devils Orchard Area parking lot for telescope viewing of the skies above. Begins 9pm until late.

August 19- "Eclipses, Transits and the Search For Life"

Join NASA scientist Steve Howell for a presentation about the history and current state of the discovery of exoplanets, planets orbiting alien suns. Starting with ground-based telescopic observations and the on-going NASA Kepler and K2 missions, he will highlight the most fundamental, important and bizarre discoveries yet made. The finding that small, rocky planets, such as the Earth, are common throughout the Galaxy has led scientists and NASA to undertake exciting new explorations of the night-sky and begin the search for life outside the Earth. Join us for this voyage of discovery, an exploration of one of the greatest pursuits of human-kind - the search for life in the universe.

August 20- "In the Shadow of the Moon" Presentation

Join NASA scientist/educator Brian Day for a special eclipse presentation at the visitor center theater. He will discuss what a solar eclipse is, and examine the various types of eclipses. He will discuss what to look for - a lot will be happening in a short time, and you will not want to miss any of it! The essential steps for safety in viewing a solar eclipse will be covered. After seeing this eclipse, you are likely to be hooked, so he will also discuss when and where you next solar eclipse opportunities are. Brian Day, of NASA's Solar System Exploration Research Virtual Institute, will share his experiences and adventures as an eclipse addict, having chased down eight previous total solar eclipses around the world. For more information about the 2017 Eclipse Across America events at Craters, click [here](#).

Foothills Learning Center

3188 Sunset Peak Rd., Boise; (208) 514-3755
www.cityofboise.org/Bee/Foothills/index.aspx

July 5 - Boise Bird Series: Bird Identification

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. We will focus on identifying the most common birds coming through Hulls' Gulch. This is the perfect time of year to catch a glimpse of our regulars! There will be a short talk, but most of the time will be spent birding on the trails.

July 12 - Sunset Series: Discovering Boise's Wildflowers and Butterflies

7-8:30 p.m.; No pre-registration; free; please leave pets at home. The sagebrush-steppe slopes, meadows, and valleys of south-central Idaho offer a great array of wildflowers! These flowers and plants offer prime habitat for butterflies. Nearly one hundred species have been recorded in the area, and many of those may be found in season between the Treasure Valley and Bogus Basin. In this class, we will go walking to see as many as we can find, and discover how to find, harmlessly detain, and identify butterflies, while learning their lifecycle, needs, and natural history.



FREE!

FREE!

3
JUNE

Birds, Birds, Birds!

Learn about the area's raptors through a bird identification walk, and hands-on activities
Meet at the Rock Creek Ranch Barn

Wildflowers and Pollinators

Learn about wildflower identification and the role of pollinators
Meet at the Rock Creek Ranch Barn

17
JUNE

15
JULY

Beavers, Bugs, and Streams

Learn about beavers, insects, stream restoration, sage-grouse, and more
Meet at the Rock Creek Corrals

Earth, Fire, and Wildlife

Learn about the relationship between wildfire, soils and fish and wildlife in Idaho.
Meet at Rock Creek South Camp

19
AUG

16
SEPT

Cowboy Days on the Range

Enjoy cowboy coffee and learn about wild horses and cattle movement. Program followed by a **Community Appreciation Wrap-Up** Nature Journal Presentations and Thanks
Meet at the Rock Creek Ranch Corrals

Learn about the plants and animals of Idaho's **Iconic Rangelands**, and how the range is being studied for improved ranching, conservation, and recreation.

Bring the whole family and campchairs!
Outdoor learning for all!
Saturdays 9:00 - 11:30 am

Closed-toe shoes, long pants, jackets, and hats recommended.
All participants receive Nature Journals!



ROCK CREEK RANCH

This 10,400-acre working ranch near Hailey, Idaho is a model for conservation and education.

The goal is to establish a sustainable rangeland research and education facility in the heart of Idaho where ranching, recreation, and conservation intersect. This outdoor laboratory will help Idahoans conserve rangelands, improve livestock production, enhance wildlife habitat, and support public access and recreation.

PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

This is a project operated by the University of Idaho, The Nature Conservancy, and Wood River Land Trust.

Generous support also provided by: University of Idaho Nancy M. Cummings Center, University of Idaho Hagerman Fish Culture Experiment Station, USGS, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM, NRCS, Idaho Dept of Fish & Game, World Center for Birds of Prey Peregrine Fund, and Prescott Cattle.





YOU'RE
INVITED

Citizen Science Workshop: Monarchs & Milkweeds of Idaho

Thursday, July 27, 6:00PM – 8:30PM
& Friday, July 28, 8:00AM– 12:00PM

Idaho Fish and Game Southeast Regional Office
1345 Barton Rd, Pocatello, ID 83204



MONARCH
JOINT VENTURE



Join Idaho Fish and Game for a workshop to learn more about monarchs and milkweeds and how you can get involved in current conservation efforts.

Workshop topics will include basics of the monarch life cycle and migration, population trends, and conservation issues. Learn about milkweed and monarch monitoring tools including the new [Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper](#), a citizen science project to track milkweeds and monarchs across the West.

The workshop will take place over two days: an evening classroom session on Thursday and a morning field trip to Sterling Wildlife Management Area on Friday. During the field trip we will search milkweed patches for monarch life stages, practice data collection, and tie in lessons learned from the Thursday night info session.

Transportation will be provided to Sterling WMA on Friday, July 28th. Meet in front of the Idaho Fish & Game Southeast Region Office at 8:00 a.m. to board the bus. Bring snacks, water, hat, hiking shoes, sunglasses, insect repellent, etc., as we anticipate warm weather. We will be returning around noon.

The workshop is **FREE** but pre-registration is required (space limited to 35 participants). To register, email beth.waterbury@idfg.idaho.gov and indicate if you will attend Thursday and/or Friday sessions. We will reply by email to confirm your reservation. Questions? Contact Beth at the email above or 208-940-2754.





Citizen Science Workshop: Monarchs, Milkweeds & Bumble Bees of Idaho

Classroom Sessions:

 **August 3, 6:00PM to 8:30PM**
WaterLife Discovery Center, Lakeshore Drive, Sagle

 **August 4, 6:00PM to 8:30PM**
Idaho Fish & Game Panhandle Regional Office
2885 W. Kathleen Ave, Coeur d'Alene

Field Trip:

 **August 5, 8:00AM to 12:00PM**
Meet at Idaho Fish & Game Panhandle Regional Office
2885 W. Kathleen Ave, Coeur d'Alene

Sponsored by



MONARCH
JOINT VENTURE



Join Idaho Fish and Game for a workshop to learn more about these important pollinators and how you can get involved in current conservation efforts!

Workshop topics will include basics of the monarch life cycle and migration, population trends, and conservation issues. Learn about milkweed and monarch monitoring tools including the new [Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper](#), a citizen science project to track milkweeds and monarchs across the West. Topics will also cover bumble bee life history, identification, conservation, and habitat needs.

Meet in front of the Idaho Fish & Game Panhandle Regional Office at 8:00am on Saturday August 5th to carpool or bus to field sites. Bring snacks, water, hat, hiking shoes, sunglasses, insect repellent, etc., as we anticipate warm weather. We will be returning to the Panhandle Office around lunchtime.

The workshop is **FREE** but pre-registration is required (space limited to 35 participants). To register, email beth.waterbury@idfg.idaho.gov and indicate sessions you will be attending. We will reply by email to confirm your reservation. Questions? Contact Beth at the email above or 208-940-2754.

Watchable Wildlife

The Idaho Birding Trail Needs Your Help!

Whether you are a birder, a wildlife enthusiast, or just want to see the wild side of Idaho, the [Idaho Birding Trail](#) needs your help. The Idaho Birding Trail is a network of more than 175 sites and side-trips that provides the best viewing opportunities to see birds in Idaho. With about 2,000 miles of trail, the birding trail represents a collection of bird watching hotspots, diverse habitats, and a glimpse of Idaho's rich natural heritage.

How you can help:

The trail was created over 10 years ago and like many good things, it has started to show its age and needs a tune-up. That is where you come in!

- You do not need to be a birder to participate. Easy to use forms are ready for you to fill out and submit.
- We need volunteers to check the accuracy of existing information on the Idaho Birding Trail website by visiting sites around the state. This includes driving directions, accessibility, and amenity information.
- You have until the end of September to submit your forms- plenty of time to get out and explore Idaho while helping the birding trail!

For more information and to sign up, contact Deniz at deniz.aygen@idfg.idaho.gov or 208/287-2750



Conservation Corner

I Found a Bat in My Home- What do I Do?

They come out after sunset in the summertime, swooping through the backyard hunting for moths, flies, beetles, spiders, crickets, and other insects. That is all okay. But what if you find a bat trapped inside your home? First, stay calm.

Many people assume that bats “carry” rabies, that is, spreading the disease without ever becoming sick themselves. However, although bats can transmit rabies if infected (typically through a bite), only about one-tenth of one percent of bats ever contract the disease and when they do, they eventually become sick and die. But that doesn’t mean you should handle a bat carelessly.

The most important thing is to keep both you and the bat safe because bats are a valuable part of our environment and are legally protected in Idaho. Bats provide free pest control by consuming the insects that damage crops, saving US farmers over 3 billion dollars annually. A single individual of the bat species known as Little Brown Myotis can consume up to 600 mosquito-sized insects per hour!

So what to do about that bat in your home? Idaho Fish and Game has produced a short video that explains in quick precise steps how to safely remove the bat in a manner that will protect both you and the bat.

To watch the video, click on the image below:



Top: Hoary bat © (CC-BY-SA) Nessie Grace on Flickr CC
Bottom: Silver-haired bat © Rita Dixon, IDFG



Thank You for Your Support!



South Fork of the Boise River © Mike Morrison

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 April 1 - June 30, 2017.

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



Windows to Wildlife

Wildlife Diversity Program
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