



MK Nature Center

STREAM

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The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center SPRING 2023

A Return to Normal and Then Some!

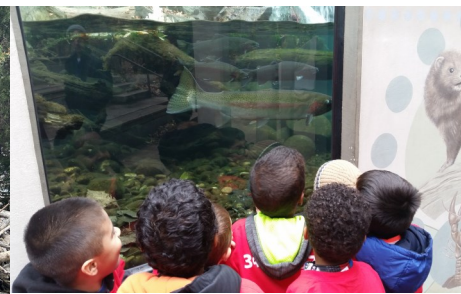
Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

For the past two years, our spring field trip calendar has been rather empty. Pandemic-related field trip prohibitions left yawning gaps in our calendar, but no more! This spring's calendar is absolutely packed with school groups with every available slot filled. We are very excited to welcome students, teachers and chaperones back to the nature center for hands-on, outdoor learning experiences.

A full calendar also gives us the opportunity to welcome back our full complement of Master Naturalist volunteer educators. We have been fortunate to have a core of stalwart volunteers, helping work with what groups were able to attend programs. But a brim-full calendar means ample opportunity for all our education volunteers. We are so happy to have you back!

It is never easy to have to turn away a group. We encourage any teacher or organization leader who called and could not schedule a field trip to consider shifting their field trip timing to autumn. This is a lovely time of year to be at the nature center and is much less busy. While that will not help for this year, it might be a great option to consider for the future.

The nature center will be a busy place in April and May. All of us, staff and volunteers alike, are looking forward to helping our visiting students explore, learn about and enjoy the natural world and all it offers.



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

The term “spark bird” is used among bird watchers to denote the species that first got someone excited about birds. Sometimes these are sightings of something rare and unusual while other times, it’s a common bird doing something interesting. Occasionally, it’s the sudden awareness of the presence of a bird in a shared environment, awakening the observer’s curiosity. No matter the bird or the circumstance, someone’s spark bird propels them into a lifetime interest in birds and, quite often, the rest of the natural world.

Those who know me will be surprised that my spark bird is not a chickadee. Honestly, I do not have a particular spark bird, instead becoming intrigued by things feathered at an early age. What birds did for me, however, was awaken an abiding interest in the natural world around me. Interest in birds led to a desire to learn about wildflowers which led to trees which led to insects and on and on.

Needless-to-say, birds led me to become a curious observer of whatever I found growing, flying, swimming, climbing, hopping or wandering across my path.

The nature center offers opportunities for sparking the curiosity of all its visitors, including a recent group of fourth graders on their very first-ever field trip. Starting school at the beginning of the pandemic, they finally, as fourth graders, were having the opportunity to enjoy a field trip experience. As one group headed outdoors anxious to explore habitats and observe adaptations just discussed, another came indoors eager to share their findings. When asked what they had seen, hands flew up and excited voices rose in a chorus of myriad observations. As their excitement filled the auditorium, I couldn’t help but wonder if the spark of a lifelong curiosity had been ignited in any of those enthusiastic faces. I sure hope so.



A 7th grader birding with binoculars for the first time at MK Nature Center. Photo by Sara Focht.



Lenn Eckman and all of MK Nature Center’s past AmeriCorps Members are sponsored by Friends of MK Nature Center. Photo by Sara Focht.

AmeriCorps 2023

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG

We welcome our 2023 AmeriCorps Member, Lenn Eckman! Lenn comes to us with a diverse and interesting background including falconry, pet photography, film and photo restoration, and customer service. Lenn will be serving as an Assistant Wildlife Educator through August. He jumped right in his first week by observing programs, assessing and handling Wilson (captive peregrine falcon) and completing some project tasks. This spring, Lenn will be teaching classes daily, helping make videos and social media content and writing newsletter articles. Welcome Lenn!



AmeriCorps

Idaho Gives

FOMKNC Board Members

Idaho Gives is coming up and Friends of MK Nature Center want you to know what your donations will do! We recognize it is generous people like you who help improve the educational experience at the nature center for our community's families and children, year after year. [We hope you will donate](#) this year to Idaho Gives in supporting a new project that will be wonderful for all visitors.

Mark Your Calendar - Idaho Gives May 1-4, 2023

2023 Projects we hope to fund:

1. We have begun initial planning on the creation of a new Outdoor Classroom area at the MK Nature Center. Our hope is to create an area where school groups can gather and learn about all that the Nature Center has to offer through programs, classes, and hands-on experiences.
2. Help fund an AmeriCorps member to enhance and expand educational programming for the growing minds visiting this hidden gem in the Gem State! We hope that you participate in the 2023 Idaho Gives. We have been able to accomplish BIG projects with your past contributions, making the MK Nature Center a learning experience for all visitors.



Past Idaho Gives campaigns have funded:

The new educational Kiosk
AmeriCorps Members
Pollinator Garden
Interpretive Signs
Pollinator Display
Bird Mural in Auditorium



Celebrating Pollinators

PROVIDING FOOD, HABITAT & WONDER

at the

MK Nature Center

600 S. Walnut, Boise

Saturday, June 10th

10AM-3PM

\$5/person (ages 3 & up)

- Family Friendly
- Observation Hive Tours
- Exploring Bee Keeping
With Treasure Valley Bee Keepers
- Pollinator Themed
Education Booths
- Activities and Crafts

Questions? Contact Sue Dudley

Sue.dudley@idfg.idaho.gov

208 287 2900

Spring Lectures



Monday, April 10th 6:30-8pm. Orchids of Idaho by Lynn Kinter. Idaho is home to 28 native orchid species. They occur in a surprising array of colors, shapes, and sizes, from the dainty fairy slipper, which is bright pink, to the giant stream orchid, which is peach and green. A few lack chlorophyll and parasitize other plants. Some attract pollinators in unusual ways. We will cover unique traits of orchids, and how to identify and search for Idaho species.



Thursday, May 18th 6:30-8pm. Finding Dragons! Hannah Kittler will provide an opportunity to learn more about the dragonflies in the Boise area and how to identify them. Learn how to use iNaturalist to help document dragonflies (and other flora/fauna) in your area.

Stream orchid photo by Lynn Kinter, IDFG. Dragonfly photo by Daniel Gonzalez.

Idaho Master Naturalists 2023

The Sagebrush-steppe Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist program welcomed its 15th class in late February this year! The chapter is sponsored by MK Nature Center, the Idaho Botanical Garden and Golden Eagle Audubon. The 25 new members are eager to learn and hungry for information about Idaho's natural world. We are looking forward to engaging with them this year in classes and as they work along side us at the Nature Center during our day-to-day work.



Images of Spring

Lenn Eckman, AmeriCorps Member, MKNC

It's time to come out of our winter hibernation and start welcoming the warm refreshing colors of spring! From the bees to the mule deer, we can all agree that spring ime is a lovely time of year, and where's a better place to be than the MK Nature Center? While you are visiting this spring you can expect to see many colorful and interesting animals along the trail! From the blooming Oregon grape and other flowers, to the emerging Mason bees that come out of their winter slumber. Do you know what other animals are coming out of hibernation this spring? Come on down to MK Nature Center to learn and find out!



Photos clockwise starting in upper left:

Mule deer fawn: Brian Lawless

Geese with goslings: IDFG

Oregon grape: Sara Focht

Garter Snake: Austin Reich

Bullfrog: Daniel Gonzalez

Left: Lilac by Austin Reich

Observation Bee Hive Blues

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

Beekeeping is not for the faint of heart, especially when dealing with an observation hive. The smaller space inside these hives often cannot accommodate the rapid growth of honey bees during the summer season. Judicious monitoring and occasional intervention helps keep a good balance of bees in the hive while allowing people to enjoy what the hive is intended for--observe the activity of the hive's residents.

Potential concerns can also arise at the end of the summer season as nectar dries up and preparations for winter begin inside the hive. One of the most important preparations of the bees is the production of diutinus (die-YOU-tin-us) bees. These are worker bees that begin to emerge as the foraging season comes to an end. Unlike their short-lived sisters, these workers can live six months or longer, which is why they are also called long-lived winter bees. These bees help regulate temperature in the hive during the winter as well as tend the queen and raise the first broods of worker bees in the spring.

Winter bees are able to successfully raise new workers in the spring because they have large fat bodies in their abdomen. These fat bodies produce a protein called vitellogenin. This protein, along with giving the winter workers longer lifespans, also substitutes for pollen in the bees' diet. Pollen is an important source of protein for honey bees. However, during the winter a hive's pollen stores can become depleted. If not for the vitellogenin of the diutinus bees, the developing larval bees might not have a source of vital protein in the spring.

In spite of having an ample food supply, including stored pollen, the nature center's observation hive experienced a winter die-off. It is possible that not enough winter bees emerged, leaving too few to carry out the winter duties. Whatever the reason, this is not the first time that our hive did not make it through winter. But rest assured, this is not an end to the observation hive! Later this spring, a new colony of bees will be introduced into the hive, allowing visitors to once again enjoy observing the fascinating behaviors of honey bees. In addition, we now have a new observation hive thanks to the Friends of MK Nature Center. The old hive will receive a thorough cleaning and some refurbishment, making it ready for future use. Having two separate hives will be helpful in the future as we continue to enjoy adventures in observation hive beekeeping.



Howard Sheppa and Kevin Drews are still smiling after putting the new hive together.
Photo by Vicky Runnoe.

BLIPPY!

You Tube celebrity BLIPPY filmed an episode of his very popular show at MK Nature Center in the spring of 2022. *This* spring, the episode went live! [Click here to watch!](#)





2023 Idaho Native Plant Sale

April 22-23 (while supplies last)



[Watch the INPS website under “Pahove Chapter”](#) tab for detailed availability list

and ordering instructions on April 22nd . Nursery License #00T0016

Cash and Checks only.

Wild Fun Facts

W

Wild trout have been observed eating ducklings at MK Nature Center.

I

Ichthyology is the study of fish.

L

Lady bugs are not true bugs (and they are not all ladies), but rather beetles and they smell using their feet.

D

Dragonflies are some of the oldest insects; evolving over 300 million years ago.

F

“Fish Park” is a nickname we hear visitors using to refer to the Nature Center.

U

Uinta ground squirrels are one of 18 species of squirrels in Idaho.

N

Nectar is extracted from flowers by hummingbird tongues at a rate of 18 pumps per second.

F

Five hummingbird species can be found in Idaho.

A

Anadromous fish migrate from freshwater to the ocean and back to freshwater to spawn. Catadromous fish do the opposite!

C

Chickadee parents bring ~300 caterpillars to their chicks per day.

T

Ticks search for hosts using a search process called questing.

S

Sturgeon and peregrine falcons have something in common! They both have a paratympanic organ which helps them sense the barometric pressure.

White sturgeon at MK Nature Center. Photo by Sara Focht. Dragonfly photo by Austin Reich. Hummingbird photo by Frank Lundberg.



Details Make the Difference

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC



The nature center displays attempt to depict different habitats in Idaho and the animals that live in them. Our main taxidermy room is split into three sections. South Idaho high desert sagebrush, where you will find the pronghorn, burrowing owl, and sage-grouse (pictured left below). Mid-Idaho mountains where you will find the grizzly bear, marmot, and flying squirrel (middle). North Idaho where you will find a more lush environment that once supported woodland caribou and still supports fox, bear, and mountain goats (right).

We try to add details to these displays to make them more interesting and authentic. Recently, we acquired some mushrooms for our north Idaho section made by 7th grader, Max Ferris (pictured above). One of Max's hobbies is sculpting and painting the sculptures to look real. We commissioned these mushrooms and could not be more pleased! Thanks Max! We will be looking for more sculpting projects for you!



Auditorium Complete

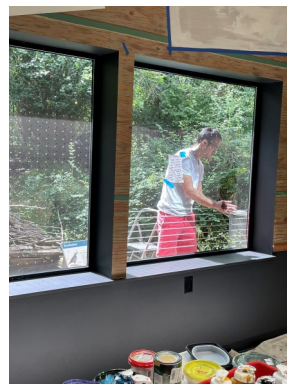
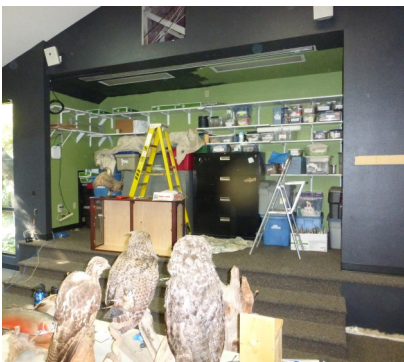
Good things take time! The auditorium at MKNC has been in a state of “remodel” for several years. We are proud to have completed the final touches. In the last decade, this room has had a complete overhaul including the HVAC system, removal of taxidermies, new curtains and blinds, and new chairs. We added a counter and cupboards, a beautiful mural about birds, new glass for the viewing windows and now finally a full paint job and artwork for the west wall.

The auditorium is a central meeting place for the nature center. Nearly 10,000 people start their MKNC tour/program in this room annually. It serves as a meeting space for us, IDFG staff, the Friends of MK Nature Center and the Idaho Master Naturalists.

When not in use by people for meetings or classes, it doubles as our biggest (and only) workspace for large projects and volunteer appreciation parties. Next time you visit, pop in to enjoy the aesthetics of the auditorium!



THEN



Photos left to right: Painting is not so easy with all that stuff in the way. Photo by Susan Ziebarth. Paul from Dynamite Signs installs lettering. Photo by Sara Focht. Volunteer Ed Lee installs bird dots on new window. Photo by Vicky Runnoe. Painters from Certa-Pro painters clean up the look. Photo by Susan Ziebarth.



NOW



DONORS *AND* VOLUNTEERS

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

John and Edwina Allen
Bill Horton
Matt Kule
Hilda Packard
Christopher Parks
Scott Prestel
Samantha Rasmussen
Aitan Reed
Hayden Thornton
Wild Birds Unlimited

January

February

March

Lindsey Baker
Pam Bly
Patrice Davies
Kevin Drews
Elizabeth Grosse
Kristin Hasselblad
Carolyn King
Kevin Laughlin
Jon Mathews
Terri Muse
Bronwyn Myers
Lyla Olson
Howard Sheppa
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Josh Wilson
Kevin Wilson

Julia Zarbnisky

Volunteer Spotlight



Julia Zarbnisky joined the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program in 2022. Idaho Master Naturalists come from many backgrounds with various skill sets. Occasionally, we get a person who has some education experience, and wow, Julia has more than *some!* Julia taught elementary school for 31 years and was an adjunct professor at NNU, retiring in 2021. She has volunteered at the nature center in a variety of ways in our education program including guiding tours, staffing educational stations, and staffing STEM nights. Most recently, Julia took on an outreach program for us at Valley View Elementary School-a series of classes at the school that we did not have enough staff to fulfil!

Julia is also active in the Re-Wild Project with Golden Eagle Audubon, growing plants, weeding and planting native plants along the Boise River. We value Julia's teaching skills and independent project management to help us meet our goals and serve the public.