



MK Nature Center

STREAM

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The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center WINTER 2023

Winter Lectures

Wednesday, January 18th 6:30-8pm. Freshwater Mussels of the Boise River by Colin Custer, City of Boise. Learn how the City of Boise inventories, monitors, and conserves western pearlshell mussels in the lower Boise River.

Wednesday, February 8th 6:30-8pm. Crystal Davidson from the Ada Soil and Water Conservation District will share information about the significance of soil health, its impact on other ecosystem services, and strategies for improving soil that can be applied at home.

Monday, March 13th 6:30-8pm. Firewise Landscaping by Bret Van Paepeghem. Learn ways to garden and landscape around your home that will reduce the risk of fire damage, use less water, and be beautiful!!

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 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.

Western pearlshell mussels by Keisha Miller. Soil in hand by Sara Focht. Firewise landscaping by Firewise Idaho. Giant stream orchid by Lynn Kinter.



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

During a recent on-site meeting, I witnessed one of the many priceless gifts the nature center provides—community engagement. Two local project partners stood in the snow covering the future pollinator garden, animatedly discussing different project elements. The shared enthusiasm for their unique contributions to the nature center was obvious and inspiring. That could also be said of the local artists who transformed the shelter window concrete into a beautiful mural in September. They enjoyed being able to work here and interact with visitors curious about the project. And while the Idaho Youth Conservation Corps crew were working behind-the-scenes clearing massive amounts of invasive vegetation, they too, were excited to be here completing an important project, despite the sweltering summer temperatures.

This engagement is also seen when a local organization arrives with a team of excited employees ready to tackle a project as part of their community service program, like Micron did in May. Often, these same folks return with family or friends to show off the good work their group accomplished. Not only does the nature center benefit directly by the work done, we also enjoy the ever-growing web of connections as myriad organizations and individuals engage to contribute their time, talents, skills and expertise to this small but much-loved community facility.

Brave Kids Art Club

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MK Nature Center

On December 9th, Brad Woodard, from Brave Kids Art Club (YouTube), held an in-person drawing session with kids ages 5-10 at the nature center.

Last year, Brad filmed one of his drawing episodes at the nature center, featuring Wilson, the peregrine falcon. During this session, Wilson made a guest appearance before Brad guided the kids as they drew a peregrine falcon. Brad paid close attention to the adaptations that make peregrines special. Thanks to Brad, his family, and all the kids who came to meet Wilson and draw her. Hope to see you all back here again to draw another nature center animal!

www.bravekidsartclub.com

[Facebook Group](#)

Left: Wildlife Educator, Sara Focht, introduces Wilson to participants before the drawing begins. Photo by Krystal Woodard. Middle: Brad holds an up close photo of a peregrine's beak while Sara explains how their beaks are different from other raptors. Photo by Krystal Woodard. Right: Brad and his peregrine drawing. Photo by Sara Focht.



Bird Seed Sale Volunteers

Sue Dudley, Gift Shop Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC

Thanks to all of you who came out and supported our Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser. It is always big help to the MK Nature Center and we sincerely appreciate it.

I want to personally thank all of the wonderful, hardworking volunteers who helped me with this year's sale. I couldn't do it without you!



Cindy Clark, Jan Egge, Debbie Wiggins



Jon Mathews, Claire Veseth



Crikky Simon



Wild Birds Unlimited



Bronwyn Myers

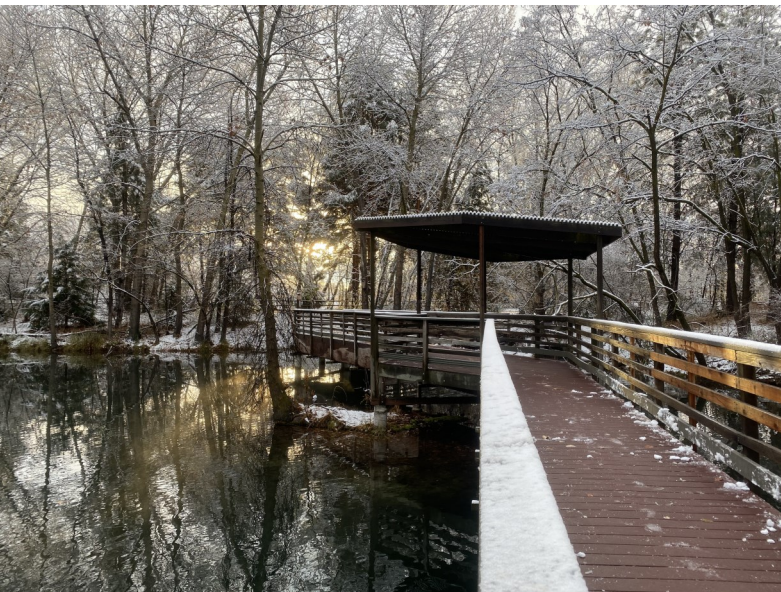


Above: Cindy Marlow
Left: Larry Ridenhour
Not pictured: Carolyn King

Photos by Sue Dudley.



Images of Winter



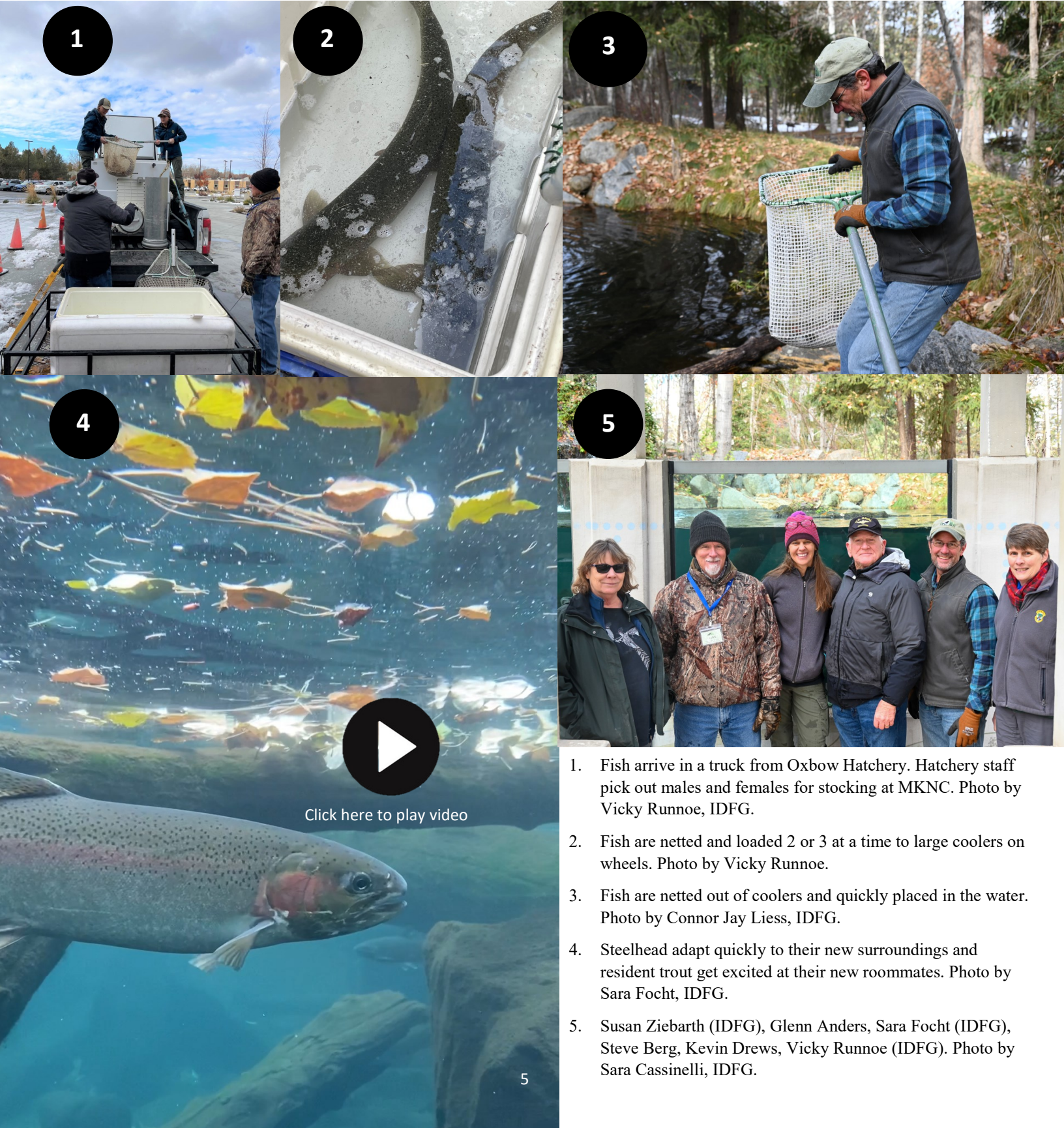
Clockwise starting in upper left: Morning light on a winter day. Wilson puffing-out her feathers to stay warm,. Youth volunteer, Lyla Olson shovels snow at MKNC. Squirrel tracks. The beaver dam looking cold and peaceful. All photos by Sara Focht, MKNC.

Steelhead Arrival

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MK Nature Center

Lake viewing windows. Steve Berg, Kevin Drews and Glenn Anders are volunteers we often call on when we have fish-related tasks at MKNC. They know the drill and move efficiently through the steps to get the fish to their new habitat. Thanks to Oxbow Hatchery staff, our volunteers and staff for making quick work of it!

When the Boise River is stocked with steelhead for anglers, the nature center receives a few of these amazing fish! On November 29th three volunteers helped us stock the fish in our Alpine



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[Click here to play video](#)

1. Fish arrive in a truck from Oxbow Hatchery. Hatchery staff pick out males and females for stocking at MKNC. Photo by Vicky Runnoe, IDFG.
2. Fish are netted and loaded 2 or 3 at a time to large coolers on wheels. Photo by Vicky Runnoe.
3. Fish are netted out of coolers and quickly placed in the water. Photo by Connor Jay Liess, IDFG.
4. Steelhead adapt quickly to their new surroundings and resident trout get excited at their new roommates. Photo by Sara Focht, IDFG.
5. Susan Ziebarth (IDFG), Glenn Anders, Sara Focht (IDFG), Steve Berg, Kevin Drews, Vicky Runnoe (IDFG). Photo by Sara Cassinelli, IDFG.

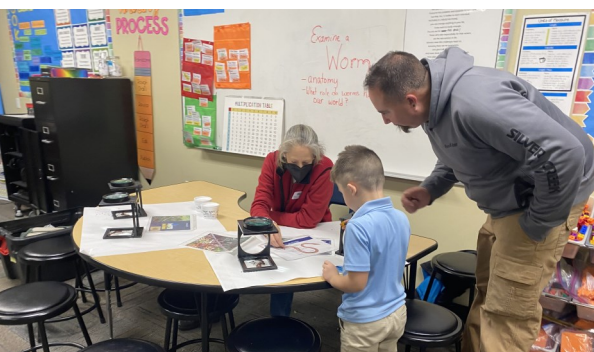
STEM NIGHTS

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MK Nature Center

to present a booth, activity, or talk on a chosen evening. The MK Nature Center is asked to attend many STEM nights, and although we cannot accommodate every one, we try to attend a few events during our less busy times at the center. One of our favorite STEM activities is a scientific experiment using real worms, posing the question, "Do worms like to be in the light or dark?" And, "Do worms prefer to be wet or dry?" Though kids think they already know the answer to these questions, based on what they have observed in nature, it is fun to hypothesize, set up the experiment, control for variables, and let the worms tell the story. As scientists, the students at STEM nights get to share their results with others by recording all data on the board.



Students set up a wet and dry section of a box and give the worms 4 minutes to decide where they want to be.



MKNC volunteer, Julie Zarbnisky shows a student the anatomy of a worm and staffs the magnifying glass booth.

STEM nights are all the craze at elementary schools these days. STEM is short for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. These events are some school's solution to "too much to do and not enough time!" Local agencies and organizations are invited

Do worms want to be in the light or dark?



Using science to answer the question!

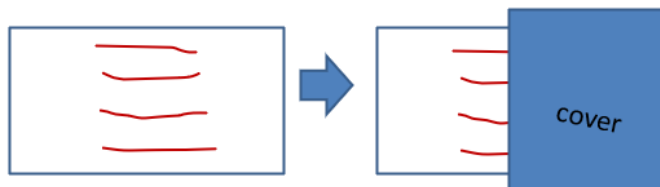
1 You Need: 1 box, 1 timer, 1 cover, 4 worms, 1 data sheet



2 Fill out your hypothesis (your best guess)

3 Experiment - Do worms like the light or the dark better?

1. Line up worms in the middle of the box not touching each other.
2. Put cover on one side of the box.
3. Flip timer over (do not touch any part of the experiment in this time).
4. Record where worms go on data sheet.



5 Write your answers on the board and turn in your data sheet.
THANK YOU FOR BEING A SCIENTIST.

Volunteer Spotlight

Benita Putzier

If you have any tough garden projects that need to be done, then Benita Putzier is the person to ask for help. She is one of the hardest working people I know, especially when it involves weeding and cleaning flower beds. We had several gardens this past year that were completely overrun with weeds. Benita came all summer long until they were whipped back into shape. We all appreciate how she fully commits to any project she is working on. Thanks Benita, you are the best!



Wild Fun Facts



- W** **Without** any know exception, the Cassia's crossbill is found only in Cassia County in southern Idaho.
- I** It takes about 100,000 tiny water droplets to make a snowflake.
- L** **Lion** (mountain), puma, and cougar are all common names for the same animal.
- D** **Did** you know that earthworms are hermaphrodites (having both male and female reproductive organs)?
- F** **Female** turkeys who are young are referred to as "Jennys."
- U** **Ungulates** are a type of hooved animals (deer, elk, moose) and are related to whales.
- N** "Natural flavoring," listed on food packages could be referring to beaver castoreum.
- F** **Fruit** like chokecherries, hawthorn berries, crabapples and juniper berries become the main food of American robins in winter.
- A** **Ants** can carry up to 50 times their own body weight. Consider a 150 lb human; that would be 7,500 lbs!
- C** **Cattail** flower heads (part that looks like a corn dog) can be boiled and eaten like corn on the cob if picked in the spring.
- T** **To** find more food and stay safer, chickadees form mixed flocks in winter with nuthatches, kinglets and downy woodpeckers.
- S** **Snakes** brumate in winter dens, significantly slowing their metabolism and becoming inactive while remaining awake, waiting for spring.



American Robin by Chad Horwedel on Flickr (CC-BY-NC-ND2.0). Moose by Jake Powell, IDFG. Chickadee by Brian Lawless. Wild turkey female by Roger Phillips, IDFG.

FOMKNC Membership Drive

Joe Gandolfi, Board Member, Friends of MK Nature Center

It's membership time at the Friends of MK Nature Center! Please consider joining us, with as small a donation as \$25.

What's in it for you? Ten percent off your purchases at the MKNC store, an invitation to special members-only events, and most of all, knowing that your contribution helps us to make a wonderful organization—one that's so

important for our community's kids and families—even better! If you'd like to join us, send a check to FOMKNC, PO Box 604, Boise 83701, or join online at www.friendsofmknc.org/donate.

What have the Friends of MK Nature Center been up to? With the generous support of our members and area foundations, this past year we have:

Revitalized the nature center auditorium with new, energy-efficient windows and a mural spanning the entire length of the wall (top photo). This mural was designed and painted by local artist Rick Friesen, and encourages visitors to take written field notes on the native birds that they see through the windows. To significantly reduce bird collisions, *Feather Friendly* markers were added to the window glass.

Completed the educational kiosk and started using the display window to highlight the goings-on at the nature center. The back of the kiosk provides much-needed storage for an extensive collection of educational materials used by both staff and volunteers in addition to groundskeeping supplies and tools (photo left).

Finished the Shelter Window mural, designed and painted by local artist Jay Rasgorshek and his assistant, Eva Streicher. The scenes depicted in the mural highlight the benefits of downed trees and rocks in streams and ponds, which provide a safe place for animals to rest, hide from predators, and lay their eggs (bottom photo).

We are currently working on a new pollinator garden for the nature center, which is a total overhaul of the current garden. The new garden will highlight native plants and also include a metal sculpture made by a local artist. The new garden site prep was started in the fall of 2022, and the planting and irrigation system installation are both scheduled for the spring of 2023. Please consider joining us and becoming a member of our team to help kids and families get outside to enjoy, appreciate, learn about and take care of the natural world.



Photos provided by FOMKNC.

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Betting on the Badger

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MK Nature Center

The popular TV channel, Animal Planet has a series of episodes called Animal Face-Off, where they examine which animal would win a fight if paired up to do so. I found episodes about wolf vs. cougar, lion vs. crocodile, elephant vs. rhino, but I could not find an episode featuring black bear vs. badger. It does not seem likely they will explore this topic anytime soon, so I am left to wonder... But my curiosity was sparked by an interesting taxidermy display recently donated to MKNC by Berk Fraser. Since we obtained the piece, I have been asking kids who they think might win the confrontation depicted in this scene. They all say the bear will be the winner. However, I am not so sure. The taxidermist who created this art work got several things right. First, yes, badgers and black bears do coexist in the same habitats, even though we might not first think of bears living in sagebrush habitats. Second, badgers are aggressive predators. They often advance, instead of backing down when trying to protect themselves. Frankly, badgers are one of the very few animals in nature I would rather not stumble across. Check out the badger's stance! Third, bears are actually cats, *scaredy cats*, to be exact. They run from almost anything. The bear in this display is not sure of himself. He is standing in a way that shows his hesitation. He does not look angry and his ears might even be tilted back with reservation. The truth is, we may never know who would win this fight because the fight is not likely to ever happen. My guess is that this taxidermy display captures that moment in time just before the bear takes off running. In my eyes, that means the badger wins and that is where I will place my bet!

Photos by Sara Focht, IDFG.



DONORS

These include cash and in-kind donations but do not include donations made through Friends of MKNC.

Berk Fraser

Rebecca Fernandez

Bob and Anne Hay

Bill Horton

Hilda Packard

Sharon & Russ Kiefer

Susan Norton

October

November

December

Happy New Year

VOLUNTEERS

Glenn Anders
Jaimi Anghel
Violeta Anghel
Steve Berg
Ingrid Brudenell
Bill Brudenell
Sherri Cecil
Cindy Clark
Patrice Davies
Marlene Deveraux
Kevin Drews
Caleb Dudley
Jan Egge
Sonya Feibert
Elizabeth Grosse
Marylee Hale
Jubilee Johansen
Carolyn King
Randy Langseth
Kevin Laughlin
Allison Lerback

Cindy Marlow
Jon Mathews
Tricia Matthews
Martha McClay
Karen McLaughlin
Terri Muse
Bronwyn Myers
Mauricio Nava
Katie Newton
Lyla Olson
Liz Paul
Benita Putzier
Hannah Rodabaugh
Howard Sheppa
Crikky Simon
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Debbie Wiggins
Joshua Williams
Kevin Wilson
Josh Wilson



Kokanee salmon, photo by IDFG.

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