Idaho Watchable Wildlife

Windows to Wildlife

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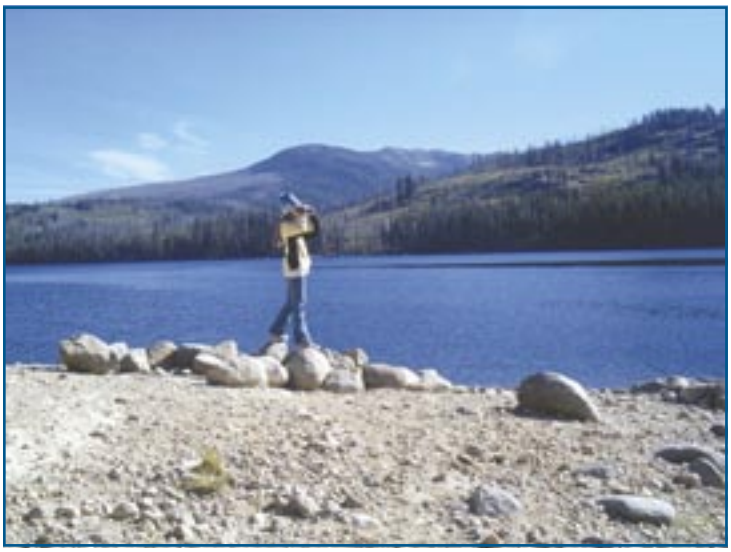
Can "MOSS" Really Raise Wildlife Awareness?

by Eric Carpenter and Greg Fizzell

It has been another exciting year for schools across the state of Idaho, but this year there is something new to be excited about! Imagine a small group of students moving quietly through the brush as six white-tailed deer graze in a meadow. This is not a casual encounter. These deer were tracked, counted, sketched and are members of just one of the herds the students will encounter today. At a silent signal the team stands up and the counting begins... ten seconds...twenty seconds...thirty seconds...flash! The white warning flags are up and three bounds later the deer disappear into the mist and branches. The calls go out..."32 seconds!"..."I got 36 seconds"...."That's a new record!" One young girl shouts from the sagebrush "our hypothesis might be right...those deer ran away a lot faster than the ones back by the pond!" It's just another day in the park with the staff from the McCall Outdoor Science School (MOSS).

Students from across Idaho are learning about wildlife, ecology, and habitats in a place that really counts, makes the process easier, and even makes learning fun; their local parks and wildlife preserves. The new MOSS Community Outreach Program is a cooperative initiative between the University of Idaho, Serve Idaho AmeriCorps, and the Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute in Moscow. The program has two teams of four and five experienced field instructors stationed in Moscow and Boise to facilitate place-based education at local schools. What is place-based education? Very simply stated it is education that uses local resources, like parks and wildlife preserves, as the integrating context for learning. For the learner it means hands-on learning and student-directed inquiries that take place outside of the classroom. It means building science process skills and content knowledge by doing what real scientists and members of their community are doing every day. It means exploring, experimenting, engaging and using the newest technology and best practice to help make their community a better place. But it's not just outdoor education, tracking wildlife, and making observations. It means exploring local resources, developing relationships with community members, teambuilding, as well as collaborations with outside experts and professionals. The goals of this program are to help make learning more engaging and meaningful, to build connections between standards-based content and the real world, and to help teachers meet the needs of all learners.



A student at MOSS looks out over Payette Lake.

...and speaking of students. Our learners in the meadow have moved on to another meadow in their quest to find out whether deer in the front of the Park are more tolerant of people than those in the more remote areas. It was a great idea for a science project and they really worked together! It's been a great day of exploration and inquiry and these students will take home a lot more than just science process skills and content. They will have built meaningful connections between school, their life, and their place.... who knew "MOSS" could be such a window to wildlife, science, and community?

For more information on the McCall Outdoor Science School and the Community Outreach program or to download a program catalog, visit their website at: http://www.pcei.org/moss/ Or to schedule a program contact Greg Fizzell at fizzell@pcei.org or (208) 882-1444.

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Litter and Wildlife Don't Mix

by Susan Kain, USFWS

A juvenile fox stumbles about with its head stuck in a canning jar. An osprey chick fails to fledge because its leg is tangled in the baling twine its parents used to build their nest. A western grebe struggles to escape the fishing line tangled around its legs.

Gull death due to plastic debris entanglement, USFWS

These local incidents serve as sad and vivid reminders that litter and wildlife don't mix. Although the fox, osprey, and grebe were discovered and helped, that help came too late for the osprey, which died as a result of its injuries. Also, most animals injured or killed by trash go undetected, leaving many people unaware of the scope of the problem.

Student volunteers picking up trash at Deer Flat NWR, USFWS

Litter harms wildlife in a variety of ways. Animals sometimes eat discarded litter they mistake for food. Indigestible litter may accumulate in the gut and cause a fatal blockage or reduce hunger signals required for the animal to maintain healthy feeding activity.

Animals may get entangled in litter, like the osprey and the grebe. Or they may get stuck in glass or plastic containers, like the fox. Even if trapped animals manage to escape, resulting injuries or wasted energy increase their risk of death by predation, disease, or starvation. Litter can have a particularly bad impact during already-stressful times like winter, breeding seasons, and times of drought.

Cigarette butts, though small and sometimes overlooked, are the most common litter collected in organized litter clean-ups. Fish and birds sometimes mistake butts for food items and eat them. Cigarette butts can also indirectly harm wildlife if they are washed or blown into lakes or streams. Remaining tobacco and residual toxins trapped in the filter may leach into the water and cause wildlife health problems at even very low concentrations.

Most conscientious and well-informed wildlife-watchers don't litter non-biodegradable items. However, well-meaning people may think it's okay to litter biodegradable trash like orange peels or paper, or to "feed the wildlife" by tossing edible left-overs. Even if something is biodegradable, it may take a long time to disappear. Orange peels and cotton rope can stick around for months or years under the right conditions. Also, litter attracts additional litter, so less-conscientious people may be tempted to add their non-biodegradable litter to the pile.

How about "feeding the animals" with our edible leftovers? Even if it's littered with good intentions, "people food" negatively impacts wildlife in several ways. It is not healthy for wild animals, whose bodies are designed to digest their natural diets. Deer and ducks will happily eat bread, but it can make them sick and distract them from natural, more nutritious foods. Also, food tossed from cars may attract wildlife to roads, where they are at greater risk of being killed or injured by cars. And, littered food may attract more scavengers, such as crows, raccoons, and skunks. More scavengers may increase predation on other wildlife, particularly young animals.

What can you do to help? First, don't litter! Also, bring a plastic bag with you when you're bird-watching or hiking, and try to leave the places you visit cleaner than they were when you arrived. Get in the habit by picking up at least two pieces of litter each day!

Those who want to get more involved can participate in one of many formal litter clean-up programs. Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge near Nampa, for example, recently kicked off a Refuge Helpers Litter Control program at Lake Lowell. As in familiar adopt-a-highway programs, Refuge Helpers adopt parts of the refuge and commit to regularly clearing their area of litter. Also, the Idaho Transportation Department has a statewide adopt-a-highway program, and various agencies, including the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, hold special litter clean-up events.

A pelican saved from strangling fishing line.

See the back cover for information on how to get involved in cleaning up our wildlife's habitat!

Dr. Don Betts holds the wolverine before releasing to the wild.

A Wolverine's Story

Lauri Hanauska-Brown
Regional Non-game Biologist, IDFG

The IDFG Upper Snake region had a big surprise on the evening of February 13th . A bobcat trapper near Arco had captured a wolverine in a foot hold trap. Biologists know little about wolverine habitat use in that area so wildlife biologist, Lauri Hanauska-Brown saw this as an opportunity to learn something about the species. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) out of Ennis, MT willingly donated an abdominal implant radio transmitter so IDFG could monitor the animal after her release. Before the transmitter could be placed and the wolverine released, some first aid needed to be administered to the wolverine's front foot. The young female wolverine was transported to Driggs Veterinary Clinic where Dr. Don Betts donated his time and equipment to fix the foot as best he could and insert the abdominal transmitter. After the foot surgery, the animal was given time to heal, some healthy doses of antibiotics, and some hearty meals before her release back into the wild on February 23rd. Her radio transmitter radio emitted a "live signal" nine days later in the general area of release. IDFG will continue to monitor her survival and movements from ground and aerial telemetry as time and funding allow. No one knows how a wolverine missing a front foot will do in the wild. We are hoping for the best and hoping to learn something about animal resilience and wolverine movements in the Lemhi Range.

IDFG appreciates the cooperation of the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Driggs Veterinary Clinic!

Mammals of the Upper Salmon Basin Checklist now available!

Thanks to a generous grant from the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation, IDFG's Salmon Region has published a brand new checklist of the 81 mammal species known to occur in the Upper Salmon Basin. The checklist also identifies mammal habitats and classifications. To request a checklist, contact Salmon Region Nongame Biologist Beth Waterbury at (208) 756-2271 or bwaterbury@idfg.idaho.gov.

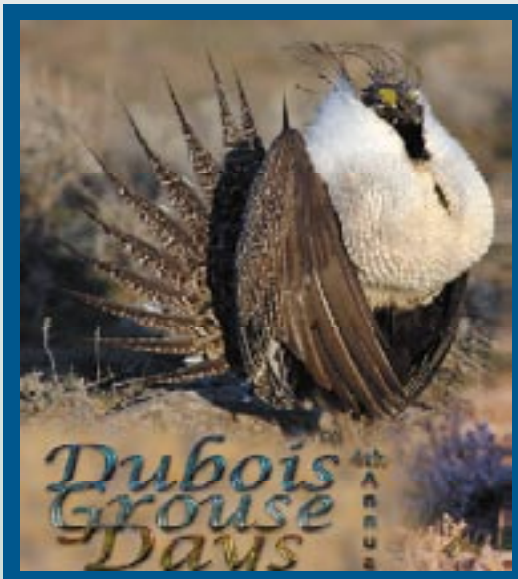

photo by Duane Tomchak

April 7-8, 2006

Registration fee: $35 for adults and $20 for children (12 or younger) ($40 and $25 respectively, at the door) ($20 for either Friday dinner or the lek tour and brunch only). To reserve a space in the photography blind, please pay an additional $25 fee. (Photo blinds available Thursday-Sunday). For a schedule of events and to register, call Jeri at (208) 374-5422

Still need to file your taxes?

Don't forget that 85 percent of Idaho's wildlife species are "nongame species" and the ONLY source of state funding to support nongame wildlife is from the sales of wildlife license plates and voluntary tax donations. Any amount is appreciated and helps support surveys, monitoring, research, conservation education, and wildlife viewing opportunities state-wide. Idaho's wildlife thanks you for your support!

Every

Blooming

Growing

Squirming

Flowering

Living

Running

Soaring

Creeping

Oozing

Slouching

Flitting

DEER FLAT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BioBlitz

Join us for 24-hours rapid inventory of biological diversity!

When: **Friday, June 2, 3 P.M. to Saturday June 3, 3 P.M.**

Where: **Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge**

Who: **YOU!**

Scientists: We need your field work experience and taxonommic expertise to ensure the quality and quantity of the results.

Naturalists: Do you have a general interest in nature but no particular experience? You can join scientists during survey work, participate in a demonstration or help with event logistics.

TO REQUEST A SIGN-UP FORM OR MORE INFORMATION:

Call Lauren Giebler at 208.467.9278

E-mail lauren_giebler@fws.gov

To learn more about the refuge, visit www.fws.gov/deerflat

Spring *Wildlife Events*

The Sacajawea Interpretive, Cultural and Educational Center-Salmon

Early Morning Bird Walks are scheduled for May 16, May 30, June 13, and June 27, led by experienced local birders. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Visitor Center.

"Food for Thought" lecture series includes: "Adventures in Peru" on May 17 with birding expert Hadley Roberts, "GPS 101" with USFS biologist Diane Schuldt. "Mountain Goats of Central Idaho" with IDFG wildlife manager Tom Keegan. "Native Plants/Noxious Weeds" also with Diane Schuldt. "Birds of Prey in the Salmon Region" with IDFG nongame biologist Beth Waterbury.

Bring a sack lunch, sit back, and feed your curiosity!

International Migratory Bird Day-Salmon

Salmon Region Spring Wings Festival: The region's annual celebration of International Migratory Bird Day will take to the field on May 20, 2006 for a guided tour of Idaho Birding Trail sites near Salmon. Join IDFG nongame biologist Beth Waterbury for a half-day birding excursion to some of the best viewing spots in east-central Idaho. For more information contact Beth at (208) 756-2271 or bwaterbury@idfg.idaho.gov.

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge-Nampa

Earth Day Litter Lift. Saturday, April 22, 9 AM-12 PM. Litter's not for critters, so help clear litter from the Lake Lowell sector of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 467-9278 or deerflat@fws.gov.

International Migratory Bird Day Celebration
Saturday, May 13, 2-5 PM

BioBlitz. Friday, June 2-Saturday, June 3
(See information at left.)

Coeur d'Alene Audubon Society

Beginning Birders Trip. Saturday, May 20
MEET: Fernan Ranger Station
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
LEADER: Dick Cripe, 665-0010
ACTIVITY: Visit local feeders (half day)

Century Count
This is a "Big Day" style count in which we attempt to locate 100+ species in a single day. All skill levels welcome for this event held in late May. The 2006 Century Count will be in Kootenai County on May 30. It's a blast! Check our website in April or May for details. http://www.cdaaudubon.org

Thank You to All Contributors

Our sincere thanks to supporters of the Nongame Program! Without your contributions, the Nongame Program could not conduct critical research, hold wildlife viewing events, or publish this newsletter. The following people made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of a tax check-off donation. This list represents those marked the contributor box when they donated to the Nongame Program between December 1, 2005- March 1, 2006. Many subscribers, not listed here have contributed generously and Idaho's Nongame wildlife thanks you ALL!

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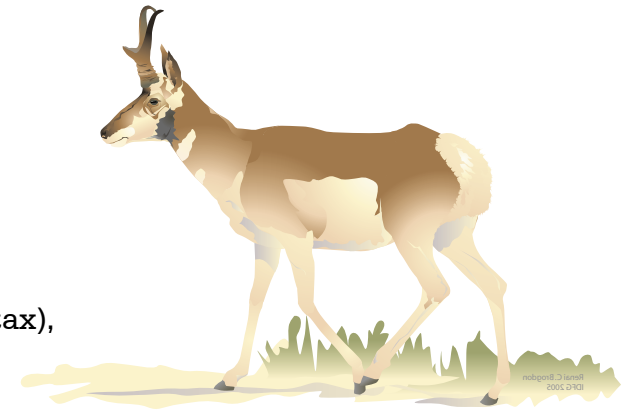

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Sara Focht — Editor

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Idaho Department of Commerce
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Litter-control Volunteer Programs

Refuge Helpers Litter Control Volunteers
Where: Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge
What: Businesses, groups, families, or individuals adopt a section of the refuge for 2 years and commit to cleaning it up between 2 and 5 times per year. Adopters are acknowledged with a sign at their adopted site.
For more information: Contact Susan Kain, (208) 467-9278, susan_kain@fws.gov

Litter Clean-ups

Where: IDFG sites throughout state
What: Volunteers help with special litter clean-up events at an IDFG area.
For more information: Contact the regional volunteer coordinator in your region:
Panhandle Region, Pete Gardner, 208-769-1414, pgardner@idfg.idaho.gov
Clearwater Region, Matt Bruns, 208-799-5010, mbruns@idfg.idaho.gov
Southwest Region, Mary Dudley, 208-327-7095, mdudley@idfg.idaho.gov
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Salmon Region, Vicky Runnoe, 208-756-2271, vrunnoe@idfg.idaho.gov

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