Windows to Wildlife

Volume 11 Number 4 Fall 2004

A Publication of the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and Idaho's Nongame Program

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The Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee is comprised of the following agencies and organizations:

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

Photo above: Osprey release tower in South Dakota.

Idaho Ospreys Move to South Dakota

On July 15, 2004, a state plane from South Dakota landed at the Coeur d'Alene airport. Its intended cargo—20 young ospreys. Waiting at the airport with the birds were biologists from Idaho and South Dakota. With the assistance of a crew from Avista Utilities, the majority of 16 nestlings were plucked from nests on power poles in the vicinity of Harrison, Idaho, on the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene the previous day. Prior to arrival of the plane, the remaining 4 birds were collected from nests near Coeur d'Alene. Only nests that had 2 or more nestlings were used so 1 bird was always left in a nest.

In an effort to establish a population of ospreys in southeast South Dakota, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks requested the assistance of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) in providing 20 nestlings each year for the next 3 years. Former State Nongame Wildlife Manager for IDFG, Wayne Melquist, and now a Research Associate Professor at the University of Idaho, has banded and worked on ospreys in north Idaho for 32 years and coordinated the collection of these 20 ospreys. North Idaho has one of the largest nesting osprey populations in the western United States, so these should be minimal impacts on the population.

All 20 ospreys made the flight back to Yankton, South Dakota, without a hitch. Similar to other hacking projects, the osprey were placed in hacking boxes and fed daily. On July 21, Mark Martell (Audubon Minnesota) and Melquist attached satellite-tracking transmitters to the backs of 4 of the oldest birds. On the 22nd, the doors to the hacking boxes near Vermillion, SD were opened and 2 of the 4 sporting satellite transmitters made their first flight.

If all goes well, the satellite-tracking transmitters will allow the biologists to monitor the migration routes and wintering areas of the birds. If this initial satellite-tracking effort is successful, more transmitters could be attached to next years nestling ospreys.

To stay posted on the progress of this restoration effort, look in future issues of Windows to Wildlife. You may also check www.wildlife-experiences.org for updates. The project is being funded through South Dakota's State Wildlife Grants Program. For those interested in Idaho's State Wildlife Grants Program, look at IDFG's website at http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/wildlife/grants/home.cfm.

What an Antelope Needs

Magic Valley Region of Idaho Dept of Fish and Game

Pronghorn Antelope browses on some grass, Gary C. Will

Looking through a set of binoculars, University of Idaho masters student Tim Smyser, watches the antelope stand up in the sagebrush surrounding their beds in the Three Creek area south of Twin Falls. After stretching and looking around, the animals move off to feed. Tim, armed with a two-way radio and Zip Lock bags, moves off to the bedding area.

This is the second year Tim has studied the antelope, as he tries to understand the determining factors that control their population growth. The three factors he is examining include habitat and the nutritional value of feed, predation, and fawning season weather. "They are truly an incredible animal," Smyser said. "From their 60 mile per hour running speed, the desert conditions they survive in, to their long distance seasonal movements; they are truly unique among animals in the state."

After reaching the bedding area by following the directions given to him over the two-way radio from the spotter left at the truck, he picks up samples of antelope droppings. The fecal material collected will be studied at the Washington State University wildlife lab to determine the chemical analysis of materials the animals are eating. Smyser said, "Last year we collected 130 fecal samples and 225 this year. The chemical analysis will help use understand the types of feed the animals need to produce their young and what type of habitats best provide it."

The second part of the study helps them determine the number of coyotes following the does and their new fawns. Smyser said, "We remove all the coyote scat from many county roads in both the Camas Prairie area and around Three Creek inhabited by antelope. A week later we go back, follow the same roads and count the number of coyote droppings. We them compare it to data collected from other studies, helping us estimate the number of coyotes in the area."

The final two steps in the study are aerial counts and following 24 radio-collared antelope that were trapped earlier this spring. Smyser said, "Aerial counts help us follow antelope movement and track growth or decline in the overall population. When we complete the study, we will better understand antelope population changes due to changes in habitat, their nutrition needs, how predation effects them, and effects of different types of weather during fawning season."

Biologists have already learned much from the information gathered last year. The Camas Prairie and the Little Wood area are producing fawns at twice the rate as eastern Owyhee and western Twin Falls counties. It is mostly a combination of higher fawn survival rate and a higher percentage of the does bearing young. The chemical analysis of the fecal material show the nutritional differences. Having forbs in their diets seems to be the biggest difference. There are several different populations of antelope in the state, each having different growth potential, and they each need to be managed differently.

Eagle Watch Week

Coeur d'Alene

Adapted from The Fish Hawk Herald, Newsletter of the Coeur d'Alene Audubon Society

Location: Wolf Lodge Bay, 8 miles east of Coeur d'Alene
Date: December 26 - January 1
Contact: Scott Robinson (scott_robinson@blm.gov), Bureau of Land Management 1808 N. Third Street, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814 (208) 769-5000

The BLM (Bureau of Land Management) has been counting Bald Eagles around Wolf Lodge Bay since 1974. In 2003, Audubon's Corinne Cameron counted 143 Bald Eagles on December 29, which was our all-time greatest number of eagles.

Since 1994, visitors to this event were asked to record their mailing zip code in one of two register books. Nearly 38,000 people have come to watch eagles over the last nine years. To date, 49 American states, Washington D.C., 3 military zip codes, and 29 foreign countries have been represented. We continue to wait for Rhode Island to come on over and sign in!

Although people watched eagles before and after our designated week, about 4,800 people representing 36 states came between Christmas 2003 and New Year's Day. In addition, people from Canada, China, Mexico, England, Denmark, the Philippines, South Africa, and Zimbabwe also attended. The BLM appreciates the local Audubon members for helping with the Coeur d'Alene Eagle Watch Week. See you there after Christmas.

Magic Valley Region Peregrine Falcon Reintroduction: Year Two

by Scott Jay Bailey, Nongame Biologist, IDFG Magic Valley Region

In the Fall 2003 issue of Windows to Wildlife (Volume 10, Number 4) we told you about the first year of a reintroduction project of peregrine falcons (Falco peregrinus anatum) into the Centennial Marsh Wildlife Management Area. One of the goals of the project is to re-establish breeding peregrine falcons in south-central Idaho to link known, and apparently disjunct, breeding populations in the eastern and western portions of the state. Well, we are wrapping up year two of the project and here is an update.

Overall this year has been much better than last year. We were able to place four, equal-aged young birds in the hack box in mid June (nearly a month and a half earlier than last year). We opened the box for the two male and two female fledglings after about 10 days and they took to the air almost immediately – all four are still alive and have been seen flying over the prairie up to a mile or more away from the hack tower. Last year two of the four young birds released perished within the first two weeks after being released.

At the time of this writing, we are still feeding the young birds captive bred feeder quail on an almost daily basis. They have been observed chasing potential prey species and we assume they are now also capturing some prey on their own. We expect these young birds to stay near the release site through late August or early September and then migrate to wintering grounds in the southern United States or Latin America. Our hope is that they will return to the tower or other nearby suitable habitat in subsequent years. Our goal is for these birds to find mates and establish breeding territories in the Magic Valley Region. A few peregrine falcon sightings on the Camas Prairie have been reported this summer, suggesting that one or more of the birds released last year may have returned or that wild-reared birds are moving into the area. Either way, this is the sign we are looking for.

Another aspect of this project is to educate the public (including school-aged children) about peregrine falcons, the successful recovery effort that has occurred across North America since the near-extinction of the species in the 1970's, and the reintroduction project occurring in their "backyard." To this end, we made several presentations in Blaine County schools and prepared news releases for local print and television. During our school presentations we were accompanied by a live, female, captive peregrine handled by Nampa Regional Nongame Biologist, Bruce Haak. She was a big hit with the kids and generated lots of questions. We hope to have the opportunity to make additional presentations in other schools in the coming year. If you or someone you know would like to schedule a presentation, please call Scott Bailey at 208/324-4359.

Funding for year two of this project was provided by Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Sawtooth National Forest. Additional support was provided by the Environmental Resource Center of Sun Valley and Blaine County School District #61.

IDFG

Nongame Biologists band a nestling peregrine set for release at Centennial Marsh.

Bird Counts You Can Do

Gary C. Will

Oregon Junco

Have you ever looked out your window and identified a bird at your feeder? Have you enjoyed sitting relaxing by the window, just watching all the different birds visit your feeders. Watched birds interact with each other. If the answer is yes, then you are a great candidate for helping conduct a bird count.

The Thanksgiving Bird Count is a simple way to get started. It doesn't take much time, only one hour. The count takes place on Thanksgiving Day, and many participants have called it a welcome break from the Holiday hustle. You pick the time of day and the location. This location could be in a nearby park or even your backyard centered around whatever attracts birds, such as feeder, birdbath, pond, or shrubs for cover. All you do is count all the individual birds that pass through a 15-foot diameter circle from your center. The count includes birds on the ground and ones that flew through the circle if extended upward. All the info you need is on the Count Form on the following page. For more information, see http://www.utahbirds.org/cbc/ThanksgBirdCount.htm.

The Christmas Bird Count, conducted some time in December, has been around for much longer. This count is usually of larger scale, taking place in many refuges or wildlife areas. The area to cover includes a 15-mile diameter circle, and coordinators use several observers to complete the task. This count can occur all day long, but if enough observers are scheduled, you may not need to spend a whole day. Some counts are conducted at feeders or roost sites where large congregations occur. For more details on the Christmas Bird Count, see http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html. To get involved, contact your local Audubon Society Chapter or Nongame Biologists at the Regional Idaho Fish and Game offices.

Thanksgiving Bird Count Form

Thanksgiving (window watch) Bird Count.
Counter's name and mailing address:

_____

_____

_____, Zip _____

Location of Count _____

_____

Date: _____, Temp. _____

Time: Begin _____, End _____

Weather _____

Habitat type _____

Feeders / baths (Types) _____

_____

Feeders / baths (Number) _____

Procedures for Count: Select a circular area on the ground (may include water area), 15 feet in diameter, to include feeders, bird baths, shrubs, etc., as you wish. Imagine the circle extending upward as a cylinder. Count the numbers of individual birds of each species which come into this circle (or cylinder) during exactly ONE HOUR. Try to judge as best you can the actual number of individuals which are making visits to the Circle, or which fly through the imaginary cylinder. Try NOT to count the same individual bird over and over again. Please print clearly the number for each species in the In Circle column. If you wish to report any, seen outside the Circle, list them in the "Outside" column.
Pick any ONE-HOUR period during the day --and make the count on Thanksgiving Day! Please send your count results (even if you see no birds at all) to:

Dr. John G. Hewston
Natural Resources Building
Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA 95521

Record your observations on the field form below

Species Seen	In Circle	Outside
California Quail		
Rock Dove (Domestic Pigeon)		
Mourning Dove		
Anna's Hummingbird		
Northern Flicker		
Woodpecker, (list)		
Steller's Jay		
Blue Jay		
Scrub Jay		
Black-billed Magpie		
Common Raven		
American Crow		
Chestnut-backed Chickadee		
Black-capped Chickadee		
Mountain Chickadee		
Red-breasted Nuthatch		
White-breasted Nuthatch		
Northern Mockingbird		
American Robin		
Golden-crowned Kinglet		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		
Cedar Waxwing		
European Starling		
Yellow-rumped Warbler		
Spotted (Rufous-S) Towhee		
White-crowned Sparrow		
Golden-crowned Sparrow		
Fox Sparrow		
Song Sparrow		
Dark-eyed Junco		
Red-winged Blackbird		
Purple Finch		
House Finch		
Lesser Goldfinch		
American Goldfinch		
Pine Siskin		
Evening Grosbeak		
House Sparrow		
Other species:		

THANK YOU

Thank You to All Contributors

Our sincere thanks go to all supporters of the Nongame Program, financially or otherwise. 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 their tax checkoff donation. These lists represent only newsletter subscribers who have returned a subscription form between June 1–August 31, 2004, and marked the contributor box. Many subscribers not listed here have contributed generously and Idaho's nongame wildlife thanks all of you.

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Fumiko Tanaka

Seen a Wolf?

Public assistance in monitoring wolves now and in the future is critical. The more we know about the state's wolf population and distribution, the better they will be managed. To report a sighting, visit the Idaho Fish and Game website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/wildlife/wolves/report.cfm>, or call your local Fish and Game Office.

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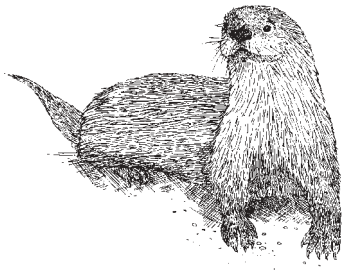
EVENTS

MK Nature Center Events—Boise

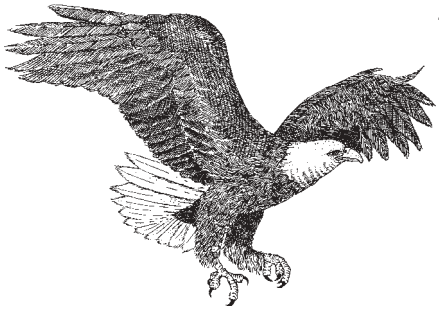


- **October 23**, 10:30am Bats: Are they spooky? Batty Crafts for Kids, $5 per person, Presented by Beki Olsen, Animals in Distress bat rehabilitator, and Brenda Beckley, Wildlife Educator, Idaho Department of Fish and Game. For more information, call 208/334-2225.
- **November 13**, 1:00pm Fabulously, Funny Furbearers, $3 per person, Presented by Gina Patton, Wildlife Technician, Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
- **December 8**, 6:30pm Animal Tracking—Kids make plaster animal tracks, $5 per person, Presented by Adare Evans, Wildlife Educator, Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Bald Eagle Day—Boise

- **January 29**, 2005 at the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. The Idaho Bird Observatory invites you to a day of wildlife watching, hands on activities, and live bird presentations. For more information, call 208/334-4199.

Eagle Watch—Coeur d'Alene



- **Dec 26-Jan 1** at Wolf Lodge Bay. Discover the large population of wintering bald eagles in northern Idaho. Don't miss this opportunity to view these majestic birds swooping down to pluck Kokanee salmon from the water. For more information, call 208/769-5000.

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Windows to Wildlife

is a quarterly publication of the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and Nongame Program.

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