Idaho Naturalist news

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Wild Plant Field Trips 2
Fundraising for Birds 3
New Chapters Forming 4
From Seed to Splendor 5
The Loss of a Remarkable Woman 6
Book Notes 7
Photo Gallery 8

The Idaho Naturalist News is a quarterly newsletter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.

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Dynamic Duo: Grandmother-Grandson Take on Wild Lunch

Lisa Huttinger, Wood River Valley Master Naturalist Leader

This summer, a very unique Master Naturalist team is lending a hand with one of the Environmental Resource Center's (ERC) free environmental education programs. Meet Starr and Parker Weekes, grandmother and grandson *extraordinaire*! Starr certified during our inaugural class; I had the pleasure of working with Parker several times a week this winter and spring during our high school certification program with the Sage School.

The two are now working together to complete and maintain their certifications by teaching twice a week during Wild Lunch, the ERC's program that connects children to nature in conjunction with a free lunch (provided by The Hunger Coalition).

Parker (left) and Starr (right) work together as Master Naturalists.

When I asked Starr what she likes best about working with Parker, she replied, "I simply love the fact that I get to see a duplicate of my own children, who got to grow up in nature, and that he actually knows something about it. And with so many younger cousins, Parker is also a natural with the younger children."

And Parker's thoughts on Starr? "It's really cool to work with her because if you don't know something, you just look to Grandma, she has the answers. It's a good feeling to know you've got family support in your work—it's great to have a family connection."

We are honored to have two such genuine and enthusiastic people representing the ERC. Starr's spirit of generosity is fully evident throughout her family (her son, Harry, started the Sage School), and we're glad that she and Parker have teamed together to share that passion with the children of our community as well. To see more pictures of this duo in action, or to learn more about our programs, visit www.ercsv.org.

Eastern Idaho Wild Plant Field Trips

Pond Lilly by John Losch

The Idaho and Wyoming Native Plant Societies and Teton Regional Land Trust will host educational field trips on Saturday, July 24, and Sunday, July 25, that focus on wild plants in both states. Participants may attend the Saturday afternoon outing to Woods Fen or the Sunday field trip to the Squirrel Meadows area. Or, enjoy both with a camp-out at the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Squirrel Meadows cabin Saturday night. There is room for eight in the cabin (first come, first served) and room for tents or RVs.

Scheduled first is a trip to Woods Creek Fen near Driggs on Saturday. Those interested are asked to meet at 12:45pm at the Land Trust office in Driggs and carpool. Or, meet at 1pm at Woods Creek Fen on the north side of Bates Road. Expect your feet to get wet! Bring sandals or boots, bug spray, sunscreen, a hat and drinking water.

Spend the afternoon botanizing and learning about fens and peatlands with wetland ecologist Natalie Kashi and University of Montano Research Associate Dr. Michael Merigliano. Woods Creek Fen is a rare calcareous fen that supports dynamic biodiversity and many rare plants. You may see cottongrass, orchids, Kelsey's phlox, alpine meadow rue, and simple bog sedge—to name a few.

On Sunday, take a trip to the Squirrel Meadows area east of Ashton. Klara Varga, botanist, will lead this trip to some of the best botanizing sites to be found in this part of Idaho and Wyoming. Visit a fen at Loon Lake, enjoy the pond lilies at Indian Lake, and identify and discuss the wildflowers found in this area.

Meet at 11am at the Squirrel Meadows cabin 24 miles east of Ashton just off of the Ashton-Flagg Ranch Road. The last ten miles are gravel.
To sign up and for more information, contact Emily Nichols at Emily@tetonlandtrust.org.

A Day of Fundraising by "The Bird Fanatics"

An International Migratory Bird Day Fundraiser

Poo Wright-Pulliam, Wood River Valley Master Naturalist

Years ago we used to do a fundraiser for the ERC (Environmental Resource Center) in Ketchum on International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD); we would ask for a small donation for each species of bird we saw in a day of birding (i.e. if you donate a quarter for each species and we see 100 species, you would donate $25.) Back then we would see around 80 species. We've honed our skills since then and we now bird by ear also and normally see over 100 species.

Earlier this year, my husband and I found a little barn owl that had fallen out of its nest; we called my friend, a raptor re-habber named Julie Randell from Kimberly, to see if she could help. She immediately went and found the owlet (45 minutes away in a snowstorm no less) and took it in. This gave us an idea. Since IMBD was approaching we decided to fundraise once more. I called my birding buddies, Jean Seymour, Kathleen Cameron and Dave Spaulding and said, "Let's do it again!" Only this time we had two causes: 1. Raising money for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Non-game Wildlife Fund which helps support habitat for non-game wildlife including what Julie does; and 2. Give to International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) and their parent organization Environment for the Americas (EFTA).

Having just finished taking the Idaho Master Naturalist course in the Wood River Valley, I felt it would be a good opportunity to alert our friends to the fact that Environment for the Americas (EFTA, the home of IMBD) does projects in the other countries that host our neo-tropical migrants for the winter. If you're looking our your window and watching those beautiful Western Tanagers, Bullock's Orioles and Lazuli Buntings—to name just a few—you can begin to understand our want to help. Imagine spring without them! So we decided to split our donations between the two. I entered their website on my Facebook page, became a fan of IMBD/EFTA and sent a donation letter to all my friends.

We plotted our route, designed for species and habitat and what would get us the most sightings in the least amount of time and decided all 4 of us had to see or hear the bird. "Identify and move on" would be the mantra for the day. We began at 6 am at Jean's house for feeder birds and then drove our East Fork Road in hopes of grouse, woodpeckers and other woodland species. We left East Fork with lower numbers than expected, but still . . . we were at 26. It's amazing how birds you're used to seeing every day just don't show up when you want to count them. Next we went to Dave's for all the great birds he gets in his yard, followed by a trip out Deer Creek and a mad dash to Silver Creek Preserve via Punkin Center Road for some riparian species. After that we hit Hayspur Fish Hatchery (which always has fun stuff) and back onto Hwy 20 to Hotsprings Landing and Moonstone Ponds for water and shorebirds. Our numbers were quickly growing!

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 3

Putting on some mileage now, we headed for Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge where the most exciting sighting was of rafts of grebes (five of the six possible species in Idaho) and while following the Snake River out we saw a flock of Long-billed Dowitchers and 100 species by 2 pm! "Wow," we thought, "if we got to 100 by 2pm, what will we do by dark?" We then hit Register Rock and Massacre Rock State Parks where we had a deluge of rain that stopped the Juniper Titmouse and Bushtit showing along with just about everything else.

We next went to American Falls Dam and the Hatchery where we added four species of terns and some water birds. Nice! Then off we raced to Pocatello and Mink reek where we hoped to finds lots of flycatchers and warblers, but to no avail due to more rain; we only added a Mountain Bluebird.

Our final route was to Springfield Ponds near the tiny town of Springfield on the north side of American Falls Reservoir and winding our way back in around the reservoir we saw a moose . . . hanging out in the sagebrush . . . that seemed weird but the water wasn't far away. We ended daylight at Danielson's Waterfall with a Black-crowned Night Heron's silhouette flying over. That put us at 111! As we headed for home after dark we hoped to see some owls and even tried to make a weathervane into one. But we just couldn't, so we instead go lost out in the Arco Desert. A little unnerving when you drive and drive and drive on dirt roads to nowhere with no lights to be seen. But that's Idaho. We finally found Atomic City and, thankfully, got back on the highway.

We arrived home around midnight, exhausted but very happy that we had not only beaten our hoped-for species count of 100 to 110 by one but also raised over $1000 for our event! We think we helped raise awareness for not only the Idaho Non-game Wildlife Fund but also for IMBD/EFTA and with the help of many outdoor enthusiasts, including the Prairie Falcon Audubon Society from Twin Falls, we will be able to share our passion to many more with those donations.

The little owl that started it all, now named Charlie, is doing well and will be released soon. The four of us plan to make this a yearly tradition. So . . . see you next year!

Seed to Splendor in Six Seasons

Bill Addington, Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist

While hiking in the Owyhee Mountains in the spring of 2004, I came across a beautiful blooming *Lewisia rediviva* Pursh var. near the Squaw Creek Drainage.

Returning to the same site in mid-summer that same year, I collected some seeds from the plant and patiently cultivated them at home. Not a single bloom for six years straight! My patience and perseverance were generously rewarded this spring by the beautiful bloom as seen in the photo.

The *Lewisia rediviva* Pursh var. (commonly known as Bitterroot) is only about an inch and a half; the leaves resemble little succulent grasses and are usually gone by bloom time which lasts only a few days. The plant is hard to find and it is typically by accident that one stumbles upon one. The nutritious roots were consumed by Native Americans who dug for them early in the spring as the leaves developed and long before flowering time when the root becomes bitter. The plant was first described and named by the Lewis and Clark party. It is the state flower of Montana.

Bill Addington is a recent graduate of the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter in Boise and a culinary and native plant specialist. Visit his website at (http://tastethewild.net).

In Memoriam: Molly Bailey- The Loss of a Remarkable Woman

Lisa Huttinger, Wood River Valley Master Naturalist and Chapter Leader

Our chapter and valley suffered a great loss last month. Molly Bailey, a lively, passionate member of our second Master Naturalist class, died unexpectedly on Friday, May 14, at the age of 65.

Keri York, when reflecting on Molly's spirit, shared that on the very first day of class, Molly—whom she'd never met—took her in a giant hug, and exclaimed, "I'm so excited to be here!"

Poo Wright-Pulliam had this to share: "Molly was a woman full of excitement for everything in nature, from birds to the whales she got to pet on her trip to Mexico this year. Shopping at the grocery store will never be the same after her presentation in our Master Naturalist class on birds in the market. She was inventive and joyful. I will forever miss her wonderful smile and a trip for groceries will keep her memory alive for me always."

Poo references Molly's interpretive program, "Couch Birding," in which she led them all on an amazing journey to the birds we can find no further than our own couches—on cereal boxes, wine bottles, and at the feeder just out the window. Her quick wit and intelligence were at the forefront during those moments of class, and in everything she embraced. She will be sorely missed.

Book Notes

Dr. Kevin M. Laughlin, Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist

The Green Hour- A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids

Turning over New Leaves and a host of other great ideas can be found in *the green hour* by Todd Christopher, creator of the National Wildlife Federation's http://GreenHour.org. This new book offers tips for reclaiming free time and making outside learning fun. Highlighted are Montessori methods and Multiple Intelligences that directly apply to outside learning for youth and adults. The key focus is your own backyard, on the trail, over in the meadow, it's a shore thing, and eyes on the skies. Activities are practical and fun to do. The introductory chapter is focused on family health and safety outside. Each of the 22 activities provides background information, directions, journal ideas, and "Did You Know?" cues for the naturalist to use. Resources and notes provide solid insights to further study for the naturalist.

Some of the resources will be familiar to the Idaho Naturalist— but with new twists. The author is a writer, educator, and producer who celebrates wonder in nature wherever he finds it. The creator of the National Wildlife Federation's Green Hour website, he has served as director of online media for its publications. If you are interested in keeping a moon journal, or need ideas to extend current outside activities you are using, this will be a good book as a teacher, interpreter or naturalist.

John James Audubon, Plate #221 CCXI. Great Blue Heron, Ardea Herodias, Printed by Robert Havell, London, 1834, Handcolored copper plate engraving. Collection of the John James Audubon Museum, Henderson, Kentucky.

Boise Art Museum Hosts John James Audubon

If you live in Boise or have summer travel plans that might take you there, consider visiting the Boise Art Museum. They are currently hosting (through August 22) a beautiful exhibition entitled *John James Audubon: American Artist and Naturalist*. Sixty large, hand-colored engravings printed from 1826 to 1838 are on display as well as original Audubon letters, books, photographs, and personal items. For more information visit the museum's website at www.boiseartmuseum.org.

Did You Know?

….that birds and reptiles have several things in common? They both lay eggs; have similar eyes and brains; and similar skull and ear bones?

….that birds have three types of feathers? These include contour feathers (covering wings, body, and tail); down feathers (located close to body, helping to insulate a bird); and flight feathers (special contour feathers on the wings shaped to fan the air)?

….that all the ants you see in an ant pile are female?

.....that one Chinook Salmon female lays 5000 eggs?

Spring Chinook Salmon have traveled from the Ocean to Idaho. It is a 900 mile journey full of danger and obstacles. They will begin to spawn in Idaho in mid-August. After spawning, they will die and provide nutrients to the rest of the ecosystem.

New Chapters in the North and South

Sara Focht, Idaho Master Naturalist Program State-wide Coordinator

The Idaho Master Naturalist Program will be gaining a new chapter in northern Idaho this year. Currently, the northern-most chapter is in McCall. This much-needed panhandle chapter is still in the early stages of planning and will be based out of Bonner's Ferry. If you are interested in learning more about this chapter, getting on a participant waiting list, or helping plan the chapter, contact Dr. John Oxley at drjohno@gmail.com.

Southeastern Idaho will also host a new chapter starting in October. The Lizard Butte Chapter is hosted by the USFWS Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the SW Idaho Birders Association.

If you live in the western Treasure Valley and are interested in the Idaho Master Naturalist Program, contact Diane French at diane.french@id.usda.gov or at 208.896.4544, ext. 110.

Photo Gallery

Top: A hoary bat visits MK Nature Center in Boise. Photo by Sara Focht.

Middle: Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist, Leah Cruz, surprises a screech owl while cleaning nesting boxes. Photo IDFG.

Bottom: Beautiful Harriman State Park near Island Park Idaho. Harriman State Park is a partner agency for the Henry's Fork Chapter.