



Idaho Naturalist news

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The Return of the Kokanee

Karen Davidson, Idaho Master Naturalist, Henry's Fork Chapter

Moose Creek, an aptly named stream, enters the Henry's Fork of the Snake River just two miles below Big Springs, the headwaters of this branch of the Snake. Local residents and fishermen remember the days when "Moose Creek ran red" with kokanee salmon coming up to spawn in the early fall.

Over the years, the Kokanee population has disappeared from the stream and this year the Idaho Fish and Game Department is attempting to bring them back to Moose Creek and also to Lucky Dog (a tributary of Moose Creek).



Above: Anne Marie Emery, a Henry's Fork Master Naturalists holds a male kokanee salmon. Photo courtesy Henry's Fork Foundation.

Last August, a team of IDFG employees and two Henry's Fork IMN volunteers harvested eggs and milt (sperm) from fish taken in the Henry's Lake Outlet. According to the team leader Greg Schoby, Regional Fisheries Biologist with the IDFG, 65,000 fertilized eggs from 59 distinct pairs of fish were taken to the Henry's Lake Fish Hatchery. They will be incubated there until the eggs are hardy enough to be moved to incubators placed directly in the two creeks.



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

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Female kokanee salmon. Photo courtesy Henry's Fork Foundation.

As the eggs hatch in the early spring of 2014, the fry will be able to swim out of the incubators and into the stream. They will migrate down the creek into the Henry's Fork and on to the Island Park Reservoir where they will remain until they reach sexual maturity (3- 4 years). At that time many will return to the creek of their birth to spawn and die.

A small amount of genetic material was taken from each fish and DNA analysis will be done. In future years, the DNA can also be analyzed in the offspring and it will be possible to determine the parentage of each fish.

Kokanee form an important part of the food chain, providing food for birds and bears. They are also a very tasty game fish and are sought after by fishermen.

This project is exciting to all who admire this beautiful fish (a land-locked form of the Sockeye Salmon) and we look forward to the day when Moose Creek again "runs red."

In addition to the two IMN volunteers, Anne Marie Emery and Karen Davidson, a third member of our chapter, Nancy Olson, was part of the IDFG team.

Waterlife Discovery Center Open House: A Big Success

Gail Bolin, Idaho Master Naturalist, Pend Oreille Chapter



On Saturday, August 17, the Pend Oreille Chapter sponsored two talks by local author and natural history educator Jack Nisbet (left) at The Waterlife Discovery Center (below) in Sagle. Over 60 visitors enjoyed the exhibits and WDC grounds, including the pond stocked with trout, river frontage, and forested wetland trails.

Photos by Gail Bolin.



BYU Chapter Visits Buffalo Fish Trap



Left: The BYU subchapter **Middle:** BYU Master Naturalist Karen Christiansen carries fish at the Buffalo Fish Trap. **Right:** Tracey Anderson identifies and measures a fish from the trap.

Thirty Thousand Slivers of Silver

From the fishes' point of view of "fin clipping," this is a sonnet written by Clella Steinke, Upper Snake River Master Naturalist

We silver are forced to crowd and to push against the concrete sides
Until we're forced to one small end. Our home, it's called the "raceway."

A 15-gallon tub is filled. It's water that it hides.

With anesthetic, that water's laced to slow the swim expressway.

A net full of silver is scooped and dumped into the waiting potion.

All the silver, we become so docile and so dozy.

They pick us out, in hand or glove and we can make no motion.

The silvers are yielding to the dose. All are feeling quite cozy.

But, small scissors they grip and clip. They cut off our adipose fin!

Still reeling from the dosages, back to the raceway we're tossed.

In clean water now, the silvers try to come to life where they've been.

Coming to life to wonder what sliver of silver they'd lost?

The IMNs, for six hours long, were grabbing those quicksilver.

On the ground, the IMNs found 30,000 slivers of silver!



Fifteen Upper Snake and Henry's Fork Master Naturalists volunteered to join 11 other IDFG volunteers to cut adipose fins off 53,000 fish! **Left:** Yellowstone cutthroat trout fingerling gets adipose fin cut to show it is a hatchery fish. **Right:** Upper Snake Master Naturalist Clarke Kido nets fingerlings for the procedure. These trout were then planted in Palisades Reservoir as part of a study to investigate the development of better Cutthroat fishery in the reservoir.

Photos courtesy Clarke Kido.

Stocking High Mountain Lakes

Steven Berg, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter



Michael Young, Region 3 Volunteer Coordinator for Idaho Department of Fish and Game, had informed me of a *citizen trout stocking program* that takes place in August and September, normally from the McCall hatchery.

He put me in touch with Joel Patterson, Assistant Hatchery Manager (**left**), and we communicated over a period of months leading up to the late summer stocking time. The stocking program is precise, with an elaborate agenda covering hundreds of lakes in the Central Idaho region. If a commitment is made, it must be carried out, as the schedule is critical. Arrangements were made to pick up fingerlings at the hatchery and carry them into mountain lakes for planting. Since my wife Gerre is a strong backpacker and was interested in revisiting the high country with me, we planned to make the adventure together.



On two separate days in a single week, we rose early, drove to McCall and met Joel at the hatchery. On the first day, our fish were waiting for us in an ice-filled cooler. The heavy plastic bags had been carefully prepared, with a specific amount of water and number of fish of a precise taxonomy (cutthroat, grayling, rainbow, etc.) and labeled with type and lake destination. They were then oxygenated and sealed. With proper handling, they would endure for 7 to 8 hours until released in their new home.



Our first delivery was 1,000 sterile rainbows to Blue Lake on Snowbank Mountain. Two days later - after the same travel routine - we watched as Joel prepared our fish bags, then drove to the destination. This time we had 750 grayling fingerlings to be planted in a lake at 7,231 feet just off the Warren Wagon Road. The distance on the very rough forest service road was only 7 miles; however, at 5 miles per hour, it took 75 minutes to reach the lake.

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Top: Joel Patterson oxygenates the fingerling bag for transport to high mountain lakes. **Middle:** Grayling fingerlings ready to go! **Bottom:** Idaho Master Naturalist Steven Berg loaded down with 750 fingerlings ready to be released.
Photos by Steven and Gerre Berg.

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After another relatively short hike, we set the bags in the water for 30 minutes to acclimate, then cut the bags and released the fingerlings in good shoreline cover to enhance their survival rate. We were pleasantly surprised, after having heard the bag water slosh in the car over bump and rut on the inbound drive, to have almost no casualties. Our hope is that, in three or four years, anglers will be able to catch some sizeable trout and grayling from these lakes.



Left: Gerre Berg hiking with fish in her backpack and lunch in her hand. **Middle:** Tear-drop lake was one of the destinations for the fingerlings. **Right:** Steven Berg about to release fish in high mountain lake.

“Cooking” Owl Pellets

Marylee Hale, Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist



All Master Naturalists know the fun associated with helping kids dissect owl pellets – the initial reaction to “owl poop,” watching them overcome their skepticism that the pellets are not “poop” but are regurgitated (yes, I’ve had students tell me owls vomit up the pellets), and seeing their wide eyes when they find parts of a rodent skeleton and fur inside the pellets. Through the dissection process, students learn about food chains, predator-prey relationships, avian digestive systems, rodent skeletons, and gain dissection skills.

Getting owl pellets ready to be dissected, however, isn’t as easy as just locating them and putting them in a dissecting tray in front of a student. For example, MK Nature Center needs hundreds of pellets a year for their education programs. We all see an occasional sample under a tree or other owl perch, but locate that many in a timely manner? There are numerous sources for purchasing owl pellets but the cost for a 1.5” pellet can range from \$2.50 to \$4.00, tough on a non-profit budget. It’s amazing how many companies sell owl pellets. Sara Focht, MK Nature Center’s Education Coordinator, has solved the problem by finding a kindly person who gathers them up from his barn (thank you Dallas Burkhalter).

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Second, owl pellets are actually nasty little Petri dishes of creepy crawlers – parasites, bacteria and viruses. Therefore, they must be sterilized before dissecting. Sterilization of the pellets involves cooking them at 300 to 325 degrees for up to 20 minutes, although some sources recommend a 200 degree temperature for 4 hours. And no, you don't want to burn them! They smell bad enough without the added aroma of burned rodent pieces. It's highly recommended to conduct this activity with rubber gloves and outdoors! A toaster oven works well. After the pellets are cool, they can be wrapped in foil.

I enjoyed sterilizing owl pellets. I think they're fascinating little samples of nature. While cooking is one of my hobbies, the reaction of friends and family varied from "Why?" to "That is the grossest thing you've ever done!" to "Do you use a recipe?" to "Don't bring me any cookies ever again!" to my favorite from my husband "May I have catsup with that?" They just don't understand the fun of being a Master Naturalist!!

Wilderness Volunteers

Interested in volunteering a little further afield?? Wilderness Volunteers is a national non-profit organization that works with public land agencies across the country to organize volunteer service in wilderness areas. It's a great way to spend a week in an interesting and beautiful place you've never been, to give back to the wilderness we all so enjoy, in a focused and useful way, and to meet interesting people. There's always a day off in the midst of the work week to explore and learn, with folks experienced in the area. For more information, check out the website: www.wildernessvolunteers.org or contact Joyce Harvey-Morgan (Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist) who has participated in a number of their trips – jharveymorgan@hotmail.com



WILDERNESS VOLUNTEERS
Giving Something Back



Albino Toad?

Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist Barbara Balance sent this photo in from her backyard pond. She calls it "Pearl" and it really stood out from the hundreds and hundreds of black pollywogs. Barbara has an affinity to her local population of Great Basin spadefoot toads (spring, 2012).

McCall Master Naturalists Help Cavity Nesting Animals

Laurie Boss and Barbara Huff, Idaho Master Naturalists, McCall Chapter



Standing on the top of outdoor restrooms located in Idaho's State parks and National Forest lands while armed with drills may not be everyone's idea of a good time, but this summer the McCall Master Naturalists had a great time doing just that. The Master Naturalists installed vent covers on the vault toilets located in Ponderosa State Park and several United States Forest Service campgrounds located in the Payette Forest.

The installation of vent covers helps cavity nesting birds and mammals, such as woodpeckers, chickadees, owls, and squirrels, which choose these small dark spaces for nesting and roosting. Many vault toilets located on public lands are built with vertical vent pipes 12 inches in diameter in order to aspirate gases out of the vaults. Birds and mammals nest in the pipes because they closely resemble the natural cavities they prefer. The birds or animals crawl into the pipes and get trapped. Installing vault toilet vent covers prevents these cavity nesters from choosing these locations.

Payette's recreation program manager Jane Cropp praised the McCall Master Naturalists in a recent article published in McCall's Star-News: "This is the second volunteer project the group has worked on this year on the Payette," [and] "we are very happy to have them on board as a partner."



For more information about the Master Naturalist program

in McCall, or how you can help save cavity nesting birds and mammals with vault toilet vent covers, please contact Laurie Boss, tonlaurie@gmail.com or Terri Bryant, terri.bryant@idpr.idaho.gov.



Top: Master Naturalists Barbara and Steve Huff install vent caps in a USFS campground.

Middle: Master Naturalist Laurie Boss installs a vent cap in Ponderosa State Park.

Bottom: Master Naturalists Diane DeChambeau and Terri Smith installing vent caps in a USFS campground.

Let's Go Outside Program

Tony Appelhans, Idaho Master Naturalist, Upper Snake Chapter

The Let's Go Outside Program of the Upper Snake Chapter of Idaho Master Naturalists provides tours for youth and the general public at Camas National Wildlife Refuge. The program was started three years ago by Mary Dolven and Therese Loyd, retired teachers (fall, 2010), following a Master Naturalists field trip to Camas. They recognized the opportunity that the Refuge offered for providing outdoor educational experiences and encouraging an appreciation of nature, especially for children. They developed the content for a variety of tours of the Refuge and drew on the expertise of additional IMN volunteers to help structure and conduct the tours. As of the end of this summer over 775 people, mainly elementary aged children, have participated in the program.

A variety of tour experiences are available. The general tour provides all ages with a general overview of the wildlife refuge. The history of refuge systems, wildlife and water management, and observation of birds and wildlife in their natural environment are the main focus of the tour. More specific tours are available to fulfill individual group needs. Scouts have the opportunity to fulfill requirements for merit badges and achievement awards. School tours are aligned with the state standards for the elementary curricula. Many senior living centers provide the opportunity for their residents to have a day outing at the refuge. This summer IMN educators assisted the Museum of Idaho educators with a day camp experience at the refuge.

School groups will be the highlight of the fall touring season. A large group of home schooled children will spend time at Camas studying ungulates with the Camas Refuge management staff and IMN volunteers. In addition, a specific curriculum is being prepared by the IMN educators for Hamer Elementary School relating the history of their farming community to the management of a wildlife refuge. These events will take place during the fall migration season and should offer the chance to see lots of interesting wildlife as it uses the Refuge for what it is, a refuge.

All are invited to visit Camas National Wildlife Refuge, there is something there for everyone. Tours can be arranged by calling the Camas National Wildlife Refuge, Hamer, Idaho 208-662-5423. More information is available at the Friends of Camas website, <http://www.friendsofcamas.org/education>.

Left: Glenn DeVoe, Gloria Hahn, Mary Dolven, Marlene Riplinger, Therese Lloyd, Alice Crockett, Diane Yonk. (Not pictured: Evan Tibbott) . **Middle:** Master Naturalist Glenn Devoe takes a walking tour with scouts, introducing them to many signs of animal life and habitat at CNWR. Photo courtesy R. Anderl. **Right:** Trumpeter swan and signet at CNWR. This year, two pairs have successfully fledged signets at Camas. Photo courtesy Glen Devoe.



How I Spent my Summer Vacation

Gretchen Vanek, Idaho Master Naturalist, Portneuf Chapter

My husband and I decided to spend more time at our cabin in Island Park this summer, so I asked the Henry's Fork MN group if I could take classes with them to learn about the area. They were very welcoming and friendly, and I was able to enjoy a summer of exciting and memorable experiences.

Just squinting through a spotting scope, or hiking a few yards from our cabin, I was able to watch the following:

A **Red-tail hawk** pair (1 dark morph, 1 light) raise 2 chicks, but only one fledged.

A **Sandhill crane** pair hatch and raise 2 chicks.

A **Great Blue Heron** who found out quickly that there are no fish in our pond.

White-tail doe with fawn.

Two cow Moose with 1 and 2 calves respectively, that browsed in the willows all summer.

At least 1 **bull Moose** with an impressive rack.

A herd of **Prong Horns** whose babies raced in big loops, then disappeared into hidey holes while mom grazed.

Three pairs of **ducks** who raised their **ducklings** on the pond.

A **Bald Eagle** that devoured some poor victim (my husband's educated guess is duck) over 30 minutes or so.

An **Elk** herd of 15 cows and calves, and 1 magnificent bull.

Innumerable birds like **hummers** and **woodpeckers**, and fields of flowers that changed colors by the week, from the yellows and whites of **Wyethia** to the vivid blues of the **Camas**.

I could stop here, but those events were when I was relaxing. The rest of my time was spent with the classes that were offered by the HF Master Naturalists. This group is well-organized, friendly, smart, and enthusiastic. I can't thank them enough for allowing me to participate with them.

The classes were rigorous and totally absorbing. Our teachers were amazing and imparted to me exactly what I was looking for—how to look and appreciate the rich environment around me.

The HFMN chapter is a trusted and popular source of volunteers for many organizations in the area, and I wanted to get my volunteer hours as well as take the classes. I was able to do surveys at the Big Springs boat launch (thanks to HFMN's who helped me). I have also participated in Grizzly bear habitat surveys, which is at the top of my list for a method of achieving complete peace.

As I watch the leaves start to turn, I feel like I have been so very lucky to be a Master Naturalist. I will never forget this summer vacation.



Left to right: Measuring bear footprints, red-tailed hawk and pre-partum pronghorns. Photos courtesy Gretchen Vanek.



Idaho Master Naturalists Support the American Kestrel Partnership

Brenda and Dave Pace, Idaho Master Naturalists, Upper Snake Chapter



Early in February of 2013, members of the Upper Snake Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalists and interested students from BYU-Idaho were inspired to participate in the largest kestrel research and conservation program in history. The effort began with an informative presentation in Idaho Falls by Dr. Matt Giovanni, PhD, then Director of the Peregrine Fund's American Kestrel Partnership based in Boise, Idaho. Matt shared details on the Partnership's goals and unique online tools that enable volunteers to build and install kestrel nest boxes (create habitat) and monitor the success of kestrel pairs and their nestlings (contribute to research). Sundance, an American kestrel animal ambassador from the Tautphaus Park Zoo, and Alyssa Rod, the Zoo's Curator of Education, also attended Matt's presentation and allowed participants to see one of these colorful little falcons in person.

For the next phase of the project, Master Naturalist, Dave Pace assembled all of the supplies and tools necessary to host two nest box building workshops at his home shop west of Idaho Falls. Rod Hughes, Market Manager for BMC West, was kind to offer a discount on the cedar, keeping the cost for each box down to about \$15. The weekend of February 22-23 brought snowy weather and 15 enthusiastic volunteers who braved the storm and arrived at Dave and Brenda's place to build 15 brand new nest boxes.

Timesheet Tips

Sara Focht, Idaho Master Naturalist Program Coordinator

This is my annual reminder for everyone to get their volunteer time and education time entered for 2013 before January 1, 2014. Even if your chapter's certification year is not the same as the calendar year, this deadline is still important. In January, I tally all the hours for the calendar year for my annual report. Make sure you and your chapter get the credit deserved by logging all your time.

And speaking of the timesheet, there have been some glitches with the timesheet as your computers automatically update to Internet Explorer 10. If you are having issues entering your time on the form, try this: **When in internet explorer go to Tools, Compatibility View Settings then add Idaho.gov to the list. If you don't see the tools menu then try pressing the Alt key.** This should allow the site to work in Internet Explorer. As always, feel free to contact me for further timesheet assistance. Sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov