



Idaho Naturalist news

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Bear Aware 2

Twin 4
Bladderpod

Snake River 6
Chapter
Update

Henry's 7
Fork
Foundation

Chapter 9
Training
Schedules

Idaho's 10
Wolves

Photo 11
Gallery

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

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-Fairey



Idaho's Youngest Certified Master Naturalist—Age 17!

Lisa Huttinger, Environmental Resource Center, Wood River Valley Chapter

It takes a remarkable high school student to want to spend weeks on end with a group of adults out in the field – and Jon Atkinson surely fits the bill. Jon, who holds the honor of being the youngest Master Naturalist in the state, has a passion for the outdoors that belies his quiet and introspective nature. One look at his photography quickly demonstrates his mature and unique perspective on the world around him. This is his senior year at The Community School in Sun Valley, and he will be putting his certification to the test by teaching science to the younger students at his school. Those of us in the Wood River Valley Chapter can't wait to see what comes next from this amazing young man. See more of Jon's photos on page 11.



*Grasshopper (above)
photo by Jon Atkinson.*

Being Bear Aware!

Lynn Dickerson, Bear Education Technician, IDFG/USFS and Certified Idaho Master Naturalist, Henry's Fork Chapter

When it comes to bears, feelings and opinions abound. It is difficult to come to a consensus on how grizzlies should be managed, how many there should be, or who should handle them. Some people like bears, some intensely dislike them, some are afraid of them, some want to hug them, and some want to shoot them. We are entitled to our personal opinions and preferences, but the reality of the matter is that feelings do not change the fact that we have bears in our backyards. People are here, and bears are here. There will only be more of both species in eastern Idaho in the years to come, and we have to share the same landscape.

Not only are other grizzly-inhabited states watching human-bear conflicts, but the entire country is watching how we as a community handle living with our wild population of bears. Island Park has an opportunity to be the first community in the state to create a safe place for people and bears, and to show other communities in the state that will soon be facing similar bear activity how to effectively live with bears.

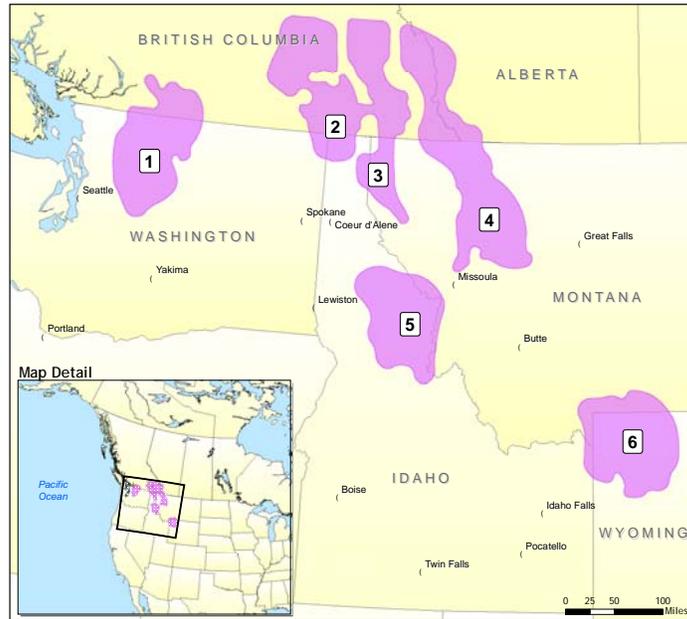
Nationally as a whole, we spend millions of dollars every year repairing damage done by bears that could have been avoided. Habituating a bear to human food sources not only puts you at risk for a potentially dangerous encounter with a bear, it puts your family or guests at risk; it puts your entire neighborhood at risk; it puts the entire Caldera community at risk. Because a bear has an enormous range, what we do to a bear in one neighborhood could greatly affect our neighbors many miles away. Whether we stay in Island Park for one weekend, a year, or for years on end, our actions can have an enormous impact. A bear that gets rewarded at North Henry's Lake can easily be a problem bear for Pinehaven. A bear raiding trashcans in Stonegate is going to be a nuisance in Shotgun. A bear that gets into birdseed on the outskirts of Ashton is going to be looking for birdfeeders in Henderson Pines. Because our bears cross state boundaries, a bear that picks up bad habits in Idaho exhibits that same behavior in Wyoming, in Montana, and in Yellowstone National Park.



Grizzly Bear photo by Terry Tollefsbol, USFWS

**Grizzly Bear
Recovery Ecosystems**

- 1 North Cascades
- 2 Selkirks
- 3 Cabinet-Yaak
- 4 Northern Continental Divide
- 5 Bitterroot
- 6 Yellowstone
** De-Listed Population*



Grizzly bear range in the western United States. Map created by Brent Thomas, IDFG

The Idaho Master Naturalists Program has been instrumental in helping Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Forest Service inform neighborhoods of ongoing bear conflicts in the Island Park area. Volunteers from the program have also helped at various events to get the word out about bears and many Master Naturalists participated in a hike promoting bear safety in prime bear habitat. Master Naturalists have been an invaluable source of labor to help with bear safety and their time and effort will be drawn upon in the future more and more due to shortfalls in federal and state funding capabilities. Kudos to the Henry’s Fork Chapter (Island Park) of the Idaho Master Naturalists Program.



Certified Idaho Master Naturalist and Bear Education Technician, Lynn Dickerson poses with a trapped grizzly bear in the Targhee National Forest.

In Search of the Salmon Twin Bladderpod!

Sue Birnbaum, Certified Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter

It is a sunny summer morning in Salmon, Idaho, and I'm perched on a steep scree slope above William's Creek, my feet dug into the loose rock. It seems like every move I make causes me to slide down a little more. Patches of sun streak across the rock as I look at one of the most unusual plants I have ever seen. The sun illuminates the plant's inflated cream-colored pods, causing them to glow, like tiny light bulbs. I open a yellow envelope and carefully place a cluster of pods from the plant into it, making sure to gather only one-third of the plant's pods, which contain two seeds each. I find another plant, and fill a second envelope. The brown and red volcanic rock that I sit on is hard and loose, and the creek splashes below.



Susan Birnbaum, Certified Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter, sitting steady on the scree slope while collecting seed.

Today is my first day as an Idaho Master Naturalist volunteer to collect seeds of this rare plant—the Salmon twin bladderpod. Three of us will be working on this project. Heading up the project is Lynn Kinter, a botanist, and also the Botany Program Leader for the Idaho Natural Heritage Program. Lynn patiently instructs me as I gather the pods. She inspects another twin bladderpod nearby to determine the maturity of the seeds. I carefully open a pod to look at the color of the seeds; the pod feels like moist parchment paper. The middle of the plant consists of silver-green spatula-shaped leaves arranged in concentric circles, termed a “rosette.” After we fill four envelopes, we hike/slide our way down to the base of the slope. We scan the scree for more plants. This particular site is one of ten sites where this rare plant has been discovered growing only in the Salmon area in the Lemhi Mountain Range.



Elisabeth Major, Wildlife Technician from the Salmon Fish and Game office is helping with this project, too, and she has gone further up the road, checking the slope for more plants. She returns and reports that she has not seen any. Elisabeth is familiar with the Salmon twin bladderpod; she has worked on mapping and counting the plants at all of their ten sites.

On our way up to the William's Creek site, Lynn and Elisabeth had described what the twin bladderpod looks like, and where it grows.

“It looks like clusters of small cream-colored balloons, and they're about this big,” Lynn explained, as she cupped her hands together and slightly overlapped them, palms facing down.

During the next three days, we were to see the twin bladderpod in various sizes: from small rosettes to large plants with many pod clusters. We also saw the plant in its various stages: flowering (higher elevations), fruiting with immature seeds, and fruiting with mature seeds to be gathered (at lower elevations). The “pod” is actually the plant’s fruit.

Physaria didymocarpa variety lyrata is the scientific name for the Salmon twin bladderpod. The common variety of twin bladderpod, *Physaria didymocarpa variety didymocarpa* is more widespread than the variety *lyrata*; it grows in other parts of Idaho as well as Montana, Washington, and Wyoming. The famous Idaho botanist Ray Davis was the first scientist to collect the Salmon twin bladderpod (variety *lyrata*) in 1935, though he identified it as the more common variety.

Salmon twin bladderpod is not officially listed as threatened or endangered, but it is one of about 300 rare plants that are being studied by the Idaho Natural Heritage Program. The plant has been studied more extensively recently, and Lynn has found more sites where it grows, documenting its habitat and determining the characteristics of its population. She says that the population of this plant has decreased at some sites, particularly at Williams Creek where rock was quarried for decades. Many of the sites are grazed by cattle, and though light grazing use does not appear to harm the plants, in some instances we found heavy trampling and uprooted plants. It seems that the bladderpod likes to grow on steep slopes made up of volcanic rock, surrounded by sagebrush and grasses. At many sites, non-native plants, such as cheatgrass and spotted knapweed have invaded the openings favored by the bladderpod.



Idaho Fish and Game Botanist, Lynn Kinter collects seeds from the Salmon twin bladderpod.

For the next two days, the routine is the same: Lynn, Elisabeth, and I meet at the Salmon Fish and Game building at 7 am, and we drive to the various bladderpod sites that Lynn has mapped and described. I’m somewhat nervous, though not quite to the white-knuckle stage, about some of the steep roads we travelled on. They are used to driving steep, muddy and rocky roads. I am the lucky one—I get to see some gorgeous country in the company of a botanist and a wildlife technician. It’s a dream come true. I try to absorb all the information offered me: how to tell sedges from grasses, what a bitterroot flower looks like, how to tell if a plant is from the mint family. I learn what a few of the noxious weeds look like, and the techniques used to get rid of them. I try to understand as Elisabeth explains what a Geographic Information Systems specialist does. I learn that the “bounce” that a mule deer makes is called a “stot.” (We saw the most beautiful buck on a ridge above us at one of the sites).

Continued on next page

Since summer arrived about three weeks late this year, many Bladderpod seeds were not mature enough to collect in mid-July. So, on some of the sites, we were only able to count the plants and take GPS readings. At one site on the last day, we were excited to be able to collect seeds from about ten plants. These seeds now go to a seed bank in Portland, Oregon where they will be cleaned and stored. With Lynn and Elizabeth's work, we are now more knowledgeable about Idaho's indigenous plants; hopefully measures will be taken to protect them.

As for me, I don't think I could have had a better experience, except that we were not able to collect as many seeds as Lynn had hoped. Lynn and Elisabeth were patient and excellent teachers. I walked in the Idaho wilderness, learned many new things, and had the opportunity to work on a worthwhile project. It doesn't get much better than that. As naturalist John Muir said, "In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks."

Now, when I see a steep scree slope covered with volcanic rock on a hike or a drive, I find myself looking more closely, scanning back and forth across the slope for those plants with the "clusters of tiny cream-colored balloons."

Snake River Chapter Up and Running

Madelaine Love, Idaho Master Naturalist, Snake River Chapter

The Snake River Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist program first met on July 17, 2009 with 15 people. Kaleb Phelps, an AmeriCorps volunteer, has worked with Idaho Department of Fish and Game to prepare for and get the program underway. The Snake River Chapter has members ranging from retired BLM workers to Idaho National Laboratory site workers to school teachers and museum curators. The sessions have been interesting and taught by people who not only have a great deal of experience in their fields but who are obviously very enthusiastic about their work. It brings to mind Aldo Leopold's idea that different people recreate differently or "use" nature differently. His idea was that "professionals" become inured to their surroundings and lose their ability to really see nature. *Not so with our teachers.* Anyone who attended the session at the Ashton fish hatchery clearly saw the enthusiasm of the director there. This was my first trip to a fish hatchery, and it was fascinating. A little bonus of the evening was the Great-horned owl we saw sitting on a post at the settlement pond's edge.

Alana Jensen's session on insects also demonstrated the enthusiasm she has not only for her topic but also for sharing her information with us. We have seen how counts of large mammals are done and learned about nongame species. The opportunities for learning and experiencing something new seem endless. There is something for everyone. We have had the opportunity to gather antelope bitterbrush seed, to band ducks (see photo on last page), to help at fish hatcheries, to do check-in at Sage Creek station, even to count Ute ladies' tresses orchids; just to name a few of our activities. The enthusiasm has spread to those in the program, and the main concern seems to be how we will ever remember half of what we are given. And after this program? What then? The Idaho Fish and Game hope to have some well-trained, knowledgeable people they can count on to help them out in a variety of ways. With budget cuts reducing staffing and programs, this group of volunteers will be needed to fill an ever-growing gap: too much to do and neither enough people nor enough money to do it in the ranks of Idaho Department of Fish and Game!



Henry's Fork Foundation

"The Voice of the River"

*Anne Marie Emery Miller, Certified Idaho Master Naturalist, Henry's Fork Chapter
and Employee of the Henry's Fork Foundation*

The Henry's Fork Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program has created a valuable resource for local organizations within the Henry's Fork watershed. As the state's first chapter, the Henry's Fork Master Naturalists (Henry's Fork IMNs) have contributed a total of 800 volunteer hours to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, The Nature Conservancy, the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, and the Henry's Fork Foundation during the summer of 2009. These organizations, in turn, have been able to increase their research and monitoring projects throughout this area of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

One organization in particular, The Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF), has benefitted tremendously with the implementation of this program. The Henry's Fork Foundation is a non-profit member-based organization founded in 1984 with the mission to conserve, restore, and protect the unique natural qualities of the Henry's Fork watershed. Through its research and restoration program and partnerships with other agencies, the Henry's Fork Foundation has dozens of on-the-ground projects throughout the 1.3 million acre watershed.

Prior to the Henry's Fork IMNs, the HFF relied heavily on the limited resources of its small staff, summer interns and paid outside contractors to assist with its mission. Now, trained volunteers are available to assist with several projects, while creating new avenues of outreach and awareness for the organization.



Henry's Fork Master Naturalists Phyllis King and Valarie Zupsan working at the Buffalo River fish trap.



Left: Idaho Master Naturalist Gary Gross assists Henry's Fork Foundation employees electro fishing for cutthroat trout. Right: Anne Marie and Valarie Zupsan (Henry's Fork Master Naturalists).



Henry's Fork Foundation

"The Voice of the River"



Henry's Fork Master Naturalists Kate Chase (left) and Kyle Babbitt (right) assist with the buffalo fish ladder trap.



Henry's Fork Master Naturalists at the Henry's Fork Foundation community river cleanup.

Each naturalist receives intensive educational and field training to become certified. Naturalists are educated by professors, biologists, and other experts about the specifics of the Henry's Fork watershed including its natural resources, land use practices, resource management agencies and challenges. This provides a comprehensive view of what organizations like the HFF and other resource management agencies are doing and why. Several agency personnel have presented program topics for this watershed overview and some paid professionals participated in the program itself.

Currently, the Henry's Fork Foundation is relying heavily on the Henry's Fork IMNs to monitor two fish traps on the Buffalo River Hydroelectric Project. During the summer, an AmeriCorps worker (and Henry's Fork IMN participant) was responsible for checking these traps daily, which involved heavy lifting, and identifying and measuring fish species before returning them to the river. Currently, the HFF is relying on the Henry's Fork IMNs to continue the daily monitoring of this project throughout the upcoming fall, winter, and spring seasons – contributing valuable data and tremendous resource to the HFF.

Other projects that the HFF has been able to accomplish directly because of the Henry's Fork IMNs include: organizing a community event to clean up the river, surveying for native Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations in high mountain streams, inventorying river access sites on their condition and for the presence of noxious weeds.

For small organizations like the HFF, and even for larger government agencies that work within this watershed, the Henry's Fork IMNs are an indispensable resource. Of the hours donated this summer, over one-third of these hours went to helping the Henry's Fork Foundation, and our watershed is better because of it. At this moment, six Henry's Fork IMNs are out in the snow, assessing access points for noxious weeds, checking fish traps and performing bird counts. Rain, snow, or sun these volunteers provide the resources and people power needed for many projects, and the HFF is proud of the example they are setting state wide as the program's first chapter.



The 2009 Henry's Fork Master Naturalist Class. Photo by Valarie Zupsan.

Chapter Training Schedules

- NEW McCall Chapter
- Sagebrush Steppe Chapter
- NEW Coeur d'Alene Chapter
- Wood River Valley Chapter
- Henry's Fork Chapter
- Snake River Chapter
- Portneuf Chapter

Training began in early October, 2009	jen.smola@gmail.com
Training begins January 12, 2010	Sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov
Training starts fall, 2009	Pete.gardner@idfg.idaho.gov
Training in 2010. Email for details	Lisa@ercsv.org
Training in summer 2010	Parmerv@fairpoint.net
No training information for 2010 available	Kaleb.phelps@idfg.idaho.gov
Training begins in 2010. Email for details	Terri.bergmeier@idfg.idaho.gov



Wood River Valley Master Naturalist Mike Treshow (right) releases a thrush at Lucky Peak.



Idaho Falls Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.



A member of the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter bravely holds a male Madagascar hissing cockroach.



Henry's Fork Master Naturalists on a bear safety education hike.



Dan Brown, park ranger at Massacre Rocks State Park and Barb North, a Portneuf Chapter organizer pose as SE Idaho mammals!

Idaho's Wolves—What Do YOU Think?

Sara Focht, Idaho Master Naturalist Program State Coordinator, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

I once attended a talk by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Wolf Biologist Ed Bangs. The first line of his talk was, “The wolf issue in the west is not a biological issue, it is a social issue.” I was in my very first week working for IDFG and though I was familiar with the wolf debate, I had no idea how true this statement was.

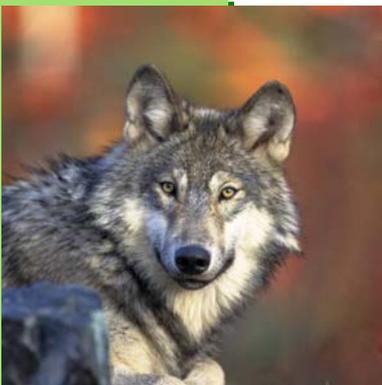


On September 1, 2009, Idaho's first legal wolf hunting season opened in some parts of the state. The biology of wolves is straightforward and can be read in a book checked out from the library. The events and emotions that have occurred in the west in the last century concerning wolves are complicated and need to be explored and studied.

One resource to help you better understand the history of wolves in Idaho is a timeline of events on the Idaho Department of Fish and Game website. If you are interested, check out <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/timeline.cfm>

As a citizen of Idaho, you are entitled to your own opinion about wolves. As an Idaho Master Naturalist, it is important that you understand multiple points of view and are able to explain opposing sides of the controversy surrounding them.

If it's not already part of your IMNP training, ask your chapter leaders to schedule a talk about Idaho wolves.



Top Left: Idaho wolves in the winter. Photo by IDFG.
Bottom Left: Grey Wolf. Photo by Gary Kramer, USFWS.
Above Right: IDFG wildlife biologist Michael Lucid setting traps for wolves for radio collaring. Photo by IDFG.

Photo Gallery



Photo by Jon Atkinson-see cover story



Dragonfly by Jon Atkinson-see cover story



Stonefly nymph by Jon Atkinson-see cover story



Ferruginous hawk chicks. Photo by Kelly Wey



Idaho Master Naturalist, Snake River Chapter, Glenn DeVoe helps band ducks at Mud Lake WMA.

To submit a photo for the photo gallery, send to:
sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov.

Please include the photographer's name, the location where the photo was taken, and a short description of the photo.