



Idaho Naturalist news

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

APRIL 15, 2009

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Sagebrush 2

Texas Master Naturalist Milestone 2

IMNP Founder 3

Idaho's CWCS 3

Henry's Fork Update 4

News from Pocatello and Idaho Falls 5

The Newest Chapter of the IMNP 6

The Idaho Naturalist News is a quarterly newsletter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program. For questions, comments, or contributions to this newsletter, contact Sara Focht at Sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov



The Idaho Master Naturalist Program

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

The Idaho Master Naturalist Program was launched in the summer of 2008 with the opening of the Henry's Fork Chapter in Island Park, Idaho.

Island Park, Idaho was not where I thought the program would begin, but what a good beginning it was! Mary Van Fleet, a resident of Island Park, set out to start the chapter.

With the help of some other dedicated volunteers, Idaho Fish and Game, Harriman State Park, the Henry's Fork Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy, the 19 participants spent their summer learning about their beautiful corner of Idaho.

In less than one year, the state program has grown to four chapters and two in the making.

If you would like to know more about the Idaho Master Naturalist Program and more about nature in Idaho, read on. I hope you enjoy this first issue of Idaho Naturalist News.



Idaho's first two certified Master Naturalists, Valerie Zupsan and Bren Dismuke, 2008

Sagebrush-steppe-Not Just Another Barnyard Dance Step!

Glen Mouser, a Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist



Glen poses with his new favorite plan!

"Sagebrush-steppe? Sounds like a barnyard dance step!"

That is what I thought when our master naturalist group voted on the name for our chapter.

"You've got to be kidding! Come on! What the heck is a sagebrush-steppe?"

Well, the name stuck and I can now say that I LOVE the name. It is perfect! You might ask, why the change? Why do you love it?

The word 'sagebrush' made me think of desert, wasteland, no-mans land, desolation. The next word 'steppe', sure, I knew of the word but I didn't use it in regular conversation. For that matter I didn't use it in any conversation.

As a mature adult I had three choices: 1) Quit the group. 2) Moan and groan and cry. 3) Find out WHY this majority of mature, educated adults chose the name. There certainly must

have been some reason they voted for it. I chose #3.

At the same meeting Sara Focht instructed us that all of us would be giving a five minute interpretive talk on any subject and theme of our choice. I immediately chose sagebrush. I felt the only way to understand the reason for our new chapter name was to fully immerse myself in it.

Wow! What an eye opener. Sagebrush is very cool. So many uses... And, 'steppe', what a great descriptor of our geographic area. So... I humbly accepted the name. Sagebrush is so interesting, but the real reason for this writing is as follows:

Allowing yourself to understand other people's perceptions and allowing a paradigm shift to happen within yourself is often difficult.

To allow a different viewpoint to come into your life— that requires a commitment to say to yourself, "Shut-up and listen". Easier said than done. And

then to actually make a change of your own pre-conceived ideas of the way things should be done or believed. I had to say to myself "These guys are way smarter than me. Go with it not against it."

So I studied, read, web searched, asked others, visited experts, collected samples, stayed up late learning. It wasn't a gradual change, it was fast. I am a believer. I gave my five minute interpretive presentation on our most common species of sagebrush, (*Artemesia tridentata*)!

The ulterior motive for this article is really to express to each member of the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter that we have a great group. Great personalities, great learning potential, great teaching potential, and a great future. We will be working on many projects together over the next year (hopefully longer)!

"You've got to be kidding! Come on! What the heck is a sagebrush-steppe?"

One Million Hours of Service!

As of March 12, 2009 the Texas Master Naturalists have served over 1 million hours of service to their state. With 39 chapters and 5,306 Naturalists, this program represents the oldest and largest program of this type in the country.

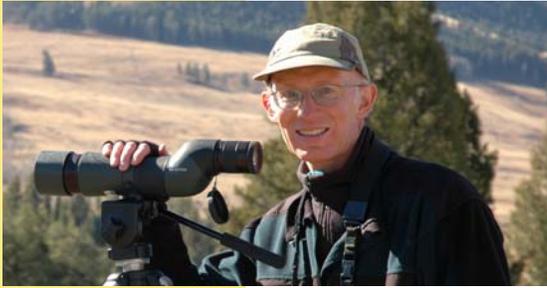
Texas Master Naturalist Program Coordinator Michelle Haggarty calculated that this volunteer milestone is valued at approximately 19.58 million dollars to the State of Texas in work toward conservation.

For more information on the Texas Master Naturalist Program, visit <http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu/>



The Man Behind the Master Naturalist Curtain

Sara Focht, Idaho Master Naturalist State Coordinator



Dr. Charles (Chuck) Harris visited Yellowstone regularly to watch and photograph wildlife.

Hundreds of people have contributed to the development and implementation of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.

However, none of us would be involved if it were not for the commitment of one man.

Dr. Charles Harris (1951-2007) is responsible for this program's development perhaps more than anyone else. "Chuck" did not write any of the curriculum chapters, He did not attend any informational meetings. He did not plan the training, write up the start-up documents, decide on policy, or start a chapter.

So what did he do? Chuck devoted one of his full time staff members to the development of this program. That staff person happened to be me. Chuck hired me in

2005 as the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Program Coordinator, a job which usually not include creating new volunteer programs. Chuck liked the idea of getting citizens involved in conservation. At the time, he was the State Nongame Program Manager and was tasked with leading the implementation of Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS-see article below). He envisioned citizens getting out in the field with biologist to help learn more about Idaho's wildlife species that were in trouble or in need of researching.

Chuck's support of the IMNP gave life to the program during a time when his own life was slipping away. He gave me words of encouragement and advice up until one month before his battle with cancer ended. He would be very pleased to see all the IDFG employees, partners, and participants working together toward conservation within the framework of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.



"Many warblers are yellow, but the yellow warbler is the yellowist of all!"

-Elaine Lloyd-Fairey, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush Steppe Chapter.

Photo by Dr. Charles Harris

Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy



Pintail ducks and 228 other Idaho species are on the Species of Greatest Conservation Need list. Male pintail, photo by IDFG

In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mandated all states to write a plan outlining wildlife conservation priorities.

Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) is now a working document, guiding conservation work all throughout Idaho.

This proactive plan identifies Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and helps prioritize work that benefits wildlife. This proactive approach is believed to be much more cost effective than trying to bring species back from the brink of extinction.

In the future, Idaho Master Naturalists could play an important role in implementing the CWCS. Ask your chapter leaders or contact Idaho Department of Fish and Game in your region for how you can help.

You can find a link to this plan at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/tech/CDC>

Henry's Fork Update

Bren Dismuke, President of the Henry's Fork Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program



Wildlife Biologist Bob Hirnyck leads an IMNP field trip.

A little bird spoke to me recently and said that a robin was seen on the Ashton Hill, a hill to the south of our caldera's south rim. In our world in

Island Park, Idaho that is not only good news it is big news. Why is something so common and plentiful so exciting to us Idaho Master Naturalists? Because it means spring is on the way and it also means it is the time of year that we at the Henry's Fork Chapter are scurrying around as

busy as chipmunks looking for future naturalists- putting together our 2nd year of classes. We are in the process of writing our bylaws, making class schedules, and recruiting instructors to teach our classes not to mention finding meeting space and advertising the program! These are just a few of the

numerous tasks that are being done by a dedicated team of our board members.

Our board here at the Henry's Fork Chapter currently consists of the following folks: Mary Van

Fleet, Secretary / Treasurer and last years beloved and celebrated original organizer of our chapter; Valerie Zupsan, as Vice Chairman and one of the first to become Certified in the state of Idaho (see photo on first page of newsletter); Anne Marie Miller, an invaluable member from Henry's Fork Foundation serves as our Chapter's Natural Resource Advisor, Kyle Babbitt is a new board member for this season from the Harriman State Park of Idaho and brings a wealth of knowledge to our table; and myself, Bren Dismuke, this year's Chair and also one of last years firsts to be certified in Idaho (see photo on first page of newsletter). We are all very excited about the upcoming program and look forward to getting classes underway.

In the Henry's Fork Chapter we are truly fortunate and blessed to have as our sponsoring agencies the following BIG FIVE: The U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Parks and Recreation (Harriman State Park), The Nature Conservancy, and Henry's Fork Foundation. They have all been and continue to be instrumental in supporting our efforts so that we can find ways to support them in their various efforts. Thank you BIG FIVE.

Island Park is an extension of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem which includes the famed Henry's Fork of the Snake River. This is a very important piece of our ecosystem where many conservation measures and activities are spawned (pardon the pun). And, obviously this is where we get our chapter name. In our area we have vast wildlife representation, carnivores like grizzly bears, and wolves. We have many ungulates

such as moose, elk, pronghorn, and deer. We have oodles and gobs of small mammals and much more - too much to mention here. Because of all that vast wildlife; he have the need to maintain and support many types of habitats. We have fish hatcheries, wetlands and ranch lands, mountains, huge beautiful forests of lodge pole pines and aspens (although the aspens are in decline). We have wildflower covered meadows and many large lakes and numerous creeks. So, you can see why we need well informed volunteers to assist our BIG FIVE in their conservation efforts: especially in this current day of government financial cuts to some of these agencies.

Already this season, we have 7 students that are interested in this years classes and we are sure to get more after we start advertising. We are getting fascinating people with varied backgrounds and from all walks of life. Here at the Henry's Fork Chapter we are proud of our accomplishments thus far and we look forward to producing another group of well informed students this season with enthusiasm for conservation and education of our region's great natural resources.

Moreover, we will have all kinds of fascinating and exciting volunteer opportunities within Fremont county's borders and beyond for our class this year. Just watch us grow!



Learning about Plants.



The whole gang at Harriman State Park. Photos by Bren Dismuke.

Take a Hike

Terri Bergmeier, Portneuf Master Naturalist Leader and Volunteer Coordinator, IDFG

Many of us have been engaged in our first Idaho Master Naturalist Program trainings. If your training is anything like the one being offered in Pocatello, your mind is working overtime to read all the materials, prepare for individual presentations, assimilate all of the information provided in each training session, and think about what volunteer projects you are most interested in.

While preparing to be a Naturalist, our focus is often on others (on those hungry-to-learn participants in upcoming interpretive programs), what they will gain, what will the “teaching moment” be and how can I build on their experiences? In our attempts to spread the conservation word and make a difference in our communities, it is equally important to nourish ourselves and our need for connecting with nature.

So, I suggest you “take a hike”. A hike just for you, the naturalist. A hike to connect you with the current changes in the season, with the environment around you, with the sounds, smells, and sights of spring. You will have more to share!



Left: Portneuf Master Naturalist learn about fish from members of the ISU American Fisheries Society

Right: Pam Reschke and Tiffany Kinder (far right) study aquatic invertebrates!



Master Naturalist Chapter Starting in Idaho Falls

Kaleb Phelps, Idaho Fish and Game Volunteer Coordinator, Idaho Falls

We are thrilled to be starting a Master Naturalist Chapter in the Idaho Falls region! This location and the surrounding area have diverse and abundant plant and wildlife species. As part of the Idaho Master Naturalist training, we will visit prime natural areas to identify and discuss the various plants, soils, climates and animals here as well as their interactions with each other.

We will also meet on several occasions at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game regional office to discuss natural resource issues and to be taught by wildlife biologists and experts from a variety of natural resource agencies. With educated Master Naturalists volunteering their time toward conservation, the people, wildlife in this region will benefit.

For information about joining the Upper Snake Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program, Contact Kaleb Phelps at: (208) 525-7290 or kaleb.phelps@idfg.idaho.gov

For more information on the Idaho Master Naturalist Program or to see if there is a chapter in your region, contact:

Sara Focht at
Sara.Focht
@idfg.idaho.gov
or
(208) 287-2906

New Chapter in the Wood River Valley

Lisa Huttinger, Natural Resource Advisor, Wood River Valley Chapter, employee of the Environmental Resource Center

On February 6th, representatives from the Environmental Resource Center, Wood River Land Trust, Sawtooth Science Institute, and Sawtooth National Recreation Area sat down to discuss the possibility of launching a Master Naturalist chapter in the Wood River Valley. On April 7th, our chapter candidates arrived for their first day of training! Thanks to the amazing efforts and strong collaboration of the planning committee, a committed citizenry, and the generous support of Idaho Fish and Game, we were able to create our chapter in record time.

In our inaugural session, are training 13 individuals to become Master Naturalists. Our candidates come from a wide array of backgrounds – we have life-long valley residents with a passion for place, former biologists and rangeland managers, and even a high school student with a desire to learn as much as he can. We are excited about the richness that will develop out of the ideas, knowledge, and perspectives within our group.

We will be following the Conservation Education track this session; however, we will also incorporate basics of scientific research into the three full days we will spend in the field. Our classroom sessions, which will hopefully move us out of the unpredictable weather of spring in the mountains, will provide a foundation of knowledge for the participants – including journaling, using dichotomous keys, plant and bird anatomy, and ecological principles. Our field days will allow participants to apply what they have learned to different plant communities and systems.

If you have questions about our program, or would like more information, please contact Lisa Huttinger, Environmental Resource Center, at lisa@ercsv.org, 208-726-4333.

Wood River Valley Master Naturalists on their first day of Training.



Idaho Fish and Game adheres to all applicable state and federal laws and regulations, related to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, disability or veteran's status. If you feel you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility of Idaho Fish and Game, or, if you desire further information, please write to: Idaho Department of Fish and Game, P.O. Box 25, Boise, ID, 83707. This publication will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Please contact the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for assistance.