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Wings over Water- Idaho to South Dakota

Jane Fink, Raptor Biologist, Birds of Prey Northwest

The summer of 2009 saw another year of north Idaho osprey collection, part of an ongoing effort by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department to reestablish a nesting osprey population on Lake Yankton. Idaho biologists Wayne Melquist (retired Idaho Fish & Game) and Jane Fink (Birds of Prey Northwest) initiated the reintroduction effort by collection of young ospreys from north Idaho lakes and rivers. North Idaho is home to one of the country's largest nesting populations of osprey, a highly migratory fish-eating bird of prey.

Osprey nests with more than one youngster of appropriate age are collected from sites; while one young osprey is always left remaining in the nest, those raptors to be reintroduced are then flown to the release tower at Gavins Point Dam managed by the Army Corps of Engineers along the South Dakota and Nebraska border. Great Plains residents along the Missouri River have enjoyed observing the large state-endangered bird of prey soar once again after the deleterious effects of DDT in the seventies nearly caused the demise of ospreys and other species of raptors.

This year another 18 young Idaho birds were successfully released in South Dakota; two of them sporting special tracking devices to monitor their choice of southerly migration routes and selected wintering grounds. As the days shorten, usually in late September, ospreys seek southern latitudes with shallow water and available fish for foraging. The adults return in late spring to begin the duties of nesting.

These beautiful large black and white birds can be found in Mexico, Central and South America, and throughout the Caribbean where they migrate for winter months. Last year's 4 young ospreys that were tracked by similar devices found them wintering in the Florida Everglades, Georgia, coastal Louisiana, and eastern Mexico. It seems as though the young ospreys were cautious to avoid long distance open water crossings, preferring instead to winter near protected bays and shores. The birds remain in wintering areas for several years before hopefully returning to South Dakota and neighboring states as breeding adults.

At this time, of the 2 instrumented birds, the female remains near the release site while the male has already begun his journey south and is located in Kansas. Over the next few years, it is thought the birds will



These juvenile osprey, fitted with transmitters and identifiable with green paint, practice flapping their wings before leaving the "nest." Photo by: Roger Dietrich.

begin to return to areas from where they fledged, having reached sexual maturity and seek to claim nesting territories. To facilitate this process the agencies involved will place man-made nesting platforms near the release tower to encourage the returning ospreys to take up nesting.

Biologists with the project, slated to conclude in 2010, have placed silver federal leg bands on one leg and green bands on the other leg of the young birds reintroduced in South Dakota.

Much like reintroduction programs for bald eagles and peregrine falcons aided to bring those birds off the Endangered Species List, it is hoped ospreys, too will establish a stronghold once again along the shores of the Missouri River.

For more information: www.birdsofpreynorthwest.org

Jane Fink is a raptor biologist residing near Coeur d'Alene and the Osprey Release Coordinator. She works closely with Idaho Fish & Game, South Dakota Game Fish & Parks, and the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure a successful osprey reintroduction.

FEATURES

1

Idaho's Osprey

Jane Fink, Birds of Prey NW
Update of the osprey reintroduction project in South Dakota.

3

Treats for the Senses

Trish Nixon, The Peregrine Fund
Tennis balls, sticks, and shredding paper--what are these raptors doing?

4

Fall Wildlife Events

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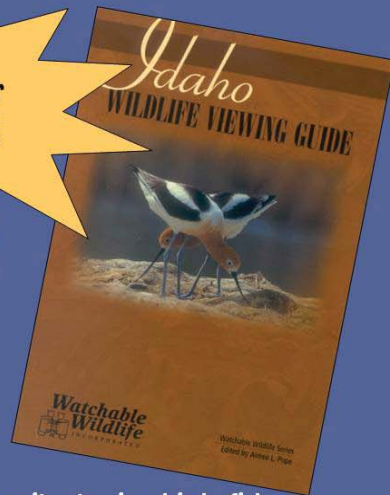
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Enrichment – Treats for the Senses and Sensibilities of our Education Birds

Trish Nixon, Raptor Specialist, The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey

Enrichment, according to the dictionary, is defined as “adding greater value or significance to”. Many of us enrich our companion animals’ lives by providing activities, environment modifications, or choices to keep the animals engaged, challenged, and exercised. Walk into any pet store and look at the vast array of “toys” available for our companion animals and it’s easy to see that enrichment plays a big part in an animals’ physical and psychological health.

At The World Center for Birds of Prey, enrichment is integral to our bird –keeping. Understanding a bird’s natural behavior and physiology is important – we devise activities that match a bird’s tendencies in the wild – and each bird’s individual traits – whenever possible. Casual observers may not immediately recognize the enrichment activities/objects – so here’s a bit of a peek behind the scenes to demonstrate how we maintain our birds’ quality of life, improve bird/handler relationships, and ensure good responses when our birds are on display.

Tiring is one form of enrichment we often use. A term from the sport of falconry, tiring means giving a raptor a piece of food that requires work and time to consume. An example is giving feathered chicken wings or a bone with most of the meat removed to a bird to “nibble” on. There IS food to be had, but the bird must pluck feathers, break bones, and WORK to get at the meat. During the process, the bird strengthens muscles, conditions the beak, and is mentally occupied on the task at hand. Pulling and tugging on a wing while being shown on the glove may help keep a bird from being startled easily while on display, and also gives them a “project” to do when in their chamber alone.

Generally speaking, birds of prey don’t preen one another. An exception to this rule are Bateleur eagles. Their courting/ breeding rituals include preening one another on the back of the neck. This inherent need is exhibited by Kwang and Stoffel, our resident Bateleurs. They bow their heads, “inviting” their keepers massage them with our fingers –a reasonable substitute for genuine preening. Since this behavior is innate,our touch is quite welcome. Kwang, the

female Bateleur is also skilled at finding hidden food items. Tasks at which she excels include revealing a hidden meal by removing a towel or basket and pulling morsels out of a ball with openings in it. I’ve also hidden treats in paper towel cardboard cylinders and watched her tug and pull until the treat is revealed.

Most raptors are supremely adapted to carry prey and other items with their feet. For safety reasons, our birds don’t hunt live prey in their chambers. They do have balls, sticks, stuffed toys, and other items which they grip and/or carry with their feet and talons. Each bird is an individual when it comes to their ‘play’ habits; some will catch an object in the air on the wing, others will just grip it and run across the ground with it. In each instance, the birds are executing instinctive behaviors. Our Swainson’s hawk zips across the floor of her chamber to seize a small ball with swift accuracy – a innate talent essential for hunting beetles, grasshoppers, crickets and other small prey. Falcons dive and hover while pursuing a lure with meat tied to it. Once “caught”, the lure provides the birds with a tasty treat and the chase helps to maintain the bird’s physical and mental fitness. Tennis balls dropped into a large water pan provide our Bald eagle with a diversion and exercise as she splashes about, grasping at the bobbing targets with powerful feet.



Adult gyrfalcon “playing” with tennis ball; photo by The Peregrine Fund.

Scavengers benefit greatly from enrichment activities which encourage them locate hidden food –imitating foraging in the natural world. Our turkey vulture frequently works to get treats out of Kong dog toys, egg cartons, “clamshell” food containers or bags. She is also flown daily for the public, which, in itself, is enriching and has a variety of items in her chamber to tug at and keep her busy.

Daka, an American Crow is new to our interpretive program. As a member of the corvid family (including ravens, magpies, and jays), he has an impulse to hide, or cache, objects he finds particularly interesting. He creates a lot of his own enrichment activities, but is also the beneficiary of training and interactive behaviors with people to help satisfy his need to explore, hide objects and keep his mind occupied.

Many of our birds enjoy shredding paper, breaking sticks, or rolling a ball around as they discover how to extract the edible tidbits tucked inside. Sunning themselves (on a handler’s glove or perch) is a wonderful form of enrichment, as is taking a bath or eating a meal – all activities wild birds do frequently. You may see us simply walking around the courtyard or through the Interpretive Center with one of the raptors on the glove; affording them the opportunity to watch and hear wild birds, rabbits and insects and visitors – stimulating their senses.

The basic goal of enrichment is to encourage our birds to interact with their environment, including their handlers, using natural skills and behaviors. Through the process of devising new ways to keep the birds engaged, we also discover unique ways to interpret our birds’ innate habits and skills to our visitors. Ultimately, the enrichment we provide the birds enriches all of us!

For more information:
www.peregrinefund.org

Trish is the Raptor Specialist at the Velma Morrison Interpretive Center at the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey. She is the primary caretaker and trainer for the 17 hawks, owls, eagles and falcons used in the Education Program. During her outreach programs, Trish shares her passion for the conservation of wild raptors with audiences of all ages.

Fall Wildlife Events

Birds of Prey Northwest-

PO Box 3507, Coeur d'Alene; 208-245-1367;
www.birdsofpreynorthwest.org/

December 6- Bald Eagle program and cruise on Lake Coeur d'Alene, 1-3pm

Liberty, a live bald eagle, will make an appearance with raptor biologist, Jane Fink. See Liberty up close and listen to Jane's interesting program about bald eagles. View bald eagle nests while enjoying a scenic cruise. For more information visit: <http://www.birdsofpreynorthwest.org/>

Boise Watershed-

11818 West Joplin Rd., Boise; 208-489-1284
www.cityofboise.org/Bee/WaterShed/Home/index.aspx

The Boise WaterShed is open every 3rd Saturday of each month from 10 am - 2 pm as part of the Watershed Weekend series. Join us for an outdoor walking tour of the Wastewater Treatment Plant at 1 pm. FREE admission! No pre-registration required unless indicated.

Sept. 19 - Boise River Autumn Expedition

Experience an unforgettable and educational adventure on a half-mile trek from the Boise WaterShed to a wooded section of the Boise River usually closed off to the public. The hike begins at 10:30 with Golden Eagle Audubon Society and a local botanist who will help you identify the plants, birds and wildlife that call this riparian habitat their home. Collect fall treasures along the trail and bring your samples back to the center to create natural works of art.

Oct. 17 -Wacky, Wild Weather

Join NOAA's National Weather Service Hydrologist Jay Breidenbach at 10:30 am for an exciting opportunity to learn about our watershed's wild and wacky weather and how it differs from weather in other regions of the world. Discover how Boise's landscape is influenced by weather patterns and how this affects Boise's water supply and water use. Learn how the pros forecast weather, see weather demonstrations, play a jeopardy game, and make your own mini-tornado!

Nov. 21 – Our Historical Watershed with Meriwether Lewis

Dive into the discoveries Meriwether Lewis made on his 8,000-mile exploration of the Louisiana Territory and west to the Pacific Ocean. Join actor and historian Tim McNeil at 10:30 am as he offers an interpretation of the 1804-1806 expedition in character as Meriwether Lewis. Make your own discoveries on a half-mile journey to the Boise River. Design a family coat of arms and a timeline listing important events in your life.

Dec. 19 - I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas
Christmas is the most wonderful and most wasteful time of the year. Learn tips on green lighting, decorating, spending and giving. Discover how to recycle old Christmas cards into new cards, create your own wrapping paper and make ornaments and decorations from recycled items. Note: Part 1 will be held at the Foothills Learning Center on December 12.

Dec. 21-31- Winter Break Activities

Drop in Monday – Friday, 9:30 – 4:30, for special activities in our Library and Theater. Enjoy hands-on exhibits, movies, and crafts for all ages.

Coeur d'Alene BLM Eagle Watch

(208) 769-5000;
www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/coeur_d_alene.html

Dec. 19-21 & 26-29; 10am-4pm

Join biologists at the Coeur d'Alene Lake - Wolf Lodge Bay wildlife viewing area to observe bald eagles feeding on the lake's spawned kokanee salmon. Attend staff presentations, learn from the eagle exhibits and watch hundreds of waterfowl.

Deer Flat NWR

13751 Upper Embankment Rd. Nampa; (208) 467-9278; www.fws.gov/deerflat

Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5- Cub + Girl Scout Day

1pm-3pm; Cub Scouts (Wolf, Bear, and Webelo packs) and Girl Scouts (Brownie and Junior troops) can earn their wildlife related badges in one fun-filled afternoon. Please register at least a week in advance.

Oct. 13-Wild About Life Lecture Series

Join AmeriCorps member/biologist Katie McVey for a talk about the amazing owls of Idaho; 7-8pm. Nov. 10th and Dec. 8th lecture TBA.

Oct. 24- Creepy Critter Encounters

Come in costume for some Halloween fun from 6-8pm. Go on a spooky wildlife hike, create Halloween crafts, and stay to try calling in live owls. Join us at the Visitor Center at Deer Flat.

Foothills Learning Center

3188 Sunset Peak Rd., Boise; (208) 514-3755
www.cityofboise.org/Bee/Foothills/index.aspx

Second Sat. Programs are from 10am to 2pm. All ages welcome! Free; no registration is required.

Oct. 10- Creepy Crawlies

Learn about ant lions; discover darkling beetles, grasshoppers, and dragonflies.

Nov. 14 – Handmade Books: Make your Own

Join local artist Jessye White on an adventure in making your own book or journal using natural materials. Craft a hand-made book to take home.

Dec. 12- I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas
Craft gifts, decorations, wrapping and more from natural and re-used materials. Fold a gift box, sew a cloth gift bag, make fanciful ornaments, create a wreath, and many more fun holiday activities.

MK Nature Center

600 S. Walnut St., Boise; (208) 334-2225; <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/education/mknc/>

Oct. 23 + 24- Creatures of the Night; 6.30-8.30pm

As the sun sets, out come the creatures of the night! Bring the whole family in costume to our Halloween event. Bring a sense of adventure for a night walk to learn all about nocturnal critters. Create your own mask and enjoy fireside story telling. **Purchase tickets in advance at the MK Nature Center after Oct. 15th. Tickets are \$3/person (kids age 2 and under are free). A limited number of tickets (400/night) will be sold to maintain the quality of the event.*

MK Nature Center's third Saturday programs are held from 2-3.30pm each month. No registration is required. Free for all ages; donations accepted.

Oct. 17- Hoo Hoo Are You?

Learn about owls--our special guest speaker Larry Ridenhour will introduce two live owls. These silent flyers and skilled hunters have interesting adaptations. Walk our outdoor paths to look for roosting screech owls, and enjoy the fall beauty. Auditorium presentation followed by walk up craft activity.

Nov. 21- Let's Talk Turkey

Learn about turkey life cycle, turkey species that we have in Idaho and hear turkey calls. An educational session followed by a chance to "try on" turkey adaptations, a walk up craft to take home will be available. Don't forget your camera for fall outdoor photos opportunities.

Dec. 19- Northwest Native Conifers

Join us for a fun, educational program all about the conifers of Idaho and the northwest. Enjoy an afternoon session learning how to identify various conifers and learn about the critters that depend on these trees for important habitat. Bundle up for an outside walk around the MK Nature Center, as well as a drop in activity kids can take home.

The World Center for Birds of Prey

5668 West Flying Hawk Lane, Boise; (208) 362-8687; www.peregrinefund.org

Join us Thursdays- Sundays in Oct. at 3.15pm (weather permitting) to experience the beauty of raptors taking flight. These bird flight demonstrations are a treat for all ages. Price: General \$7, Seniors (age 62 +) \$6, Youth (ages 4 -16) \$5, Free to members and children under age 4.

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