



## IDAHO'S OSPREYS MOVE EAST

By Dr. Wayne Melquist

In an effort to establish a population of ospreys in southeast South Dakota, in 2004 the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks requested the assistance of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and University of Idaho in providing nestling ospreys. Northern Idaho is home to a healthy population of nesting ospreys. Since inception of the project, 72 juvenile ospreys have been collected from nests (one nestling is always left in a nest) in the Coeur d'Alene River drainage and transported by plane and vehicle to release (hack) sites in SD.

In 2008, the release of 20 birds in Yankton, SD was coordinated by raptor biologist and rehabilitator Jane Fink (Birds of Prey Northwest in Coeur d'Alene), with assistance from Greg Kaltenecker (Idaho Bird Observatory in Boise) and a host of volunteers. Similar to other hacking projects, the ospreys were placed in hacking boxes at approximately 6 weeks old and fed daily. Once the ospreys reached their

normal fledging age of about 7-9 weeks old, the box was opened to allow the birds to fly for the first time. The ospreys were continually monitored during daylight hours and provided food at the hack site. It took a few weeks for young osprey to be proficient at catching prey (fish) and thereby independent from the hack site.

Five of these birds received satellite-tracking transmitters in a continuing effort to monitor migration routes and wintering areas. Based on past tracking efforts, the released ospreys tend to follow the Missouri and Mississippi River drainages to the Gulf coast. Once there, the birds either turn east and migrate down Florida and island-hop through the Caribbean to South America. Migrating young that turn west tend to migrate along the Texas coast into Mexico and Central America. One of the youngsters appeared to winter in Cuba, while another went west and south into Costa Rica.

The transmitter on 1 of the 5

birds instrumented this summer failed before the bird initiated migration. The other four birds continue to be on the move:

- Female A-01 left the hack site on 7 September and headed to the Mississippi River drainage in central Arkansas. From there she headed east, ending up in the Columbus, GA area near the Alabama-Georgia border north of the Gulf of Mexico. A-01 remained in

this area for a month when the signal was unfortunately lost on 21 September.

- After leaving the hack site on 12 September, A-15 arrived at the Gulf of Mexico near Freeport, TX 4 days later. The bird continued down the coast to the La Coma, Mexico area, where it remains today.
- A-04 left the hack site on

*continued on page 2*



Locations (red dots) of the four osprey fitted with transmitters.

### FEATURES

#### 1 Ospreys on the move

Dr. Wayne Melquist, University of Idaho

The mighty migration continues...

#### 2 "Be Outside"

The Idaho Children and Nature Network—by Meggan Laxalt Mackey

"Curing" youth may be in the form of a dose of the outdoors.

#### 3 Great Backyard Bird Count 2009!

Count birds in your backyard - easy!



*Female osprey A-01 with transmitter. Photo: Jane Fink*

14 September and arrived at the Gulf coast in Louisiana near the Texas border on 17-18 September, 3-4 days after initiating migration. The bird then migrated east to the Louisiana delta area at the mouth of the Mississippi River, where it remains today.

- A-00, the only male sporting a transmitter, left the hack site on 24 September and arrived at the Gulf coast south of Mobile, AL on or before 3 October. From there it migrated east along the coast, staying in the Steinhatchee, FL area for a few weeks before moving again south through the Everglades and settling near Flamingo, FL.

Will the birds continue migrating south, as expected, or if they choose to remain where they have been for more than a month? Conditions are obviously adequate where they are, or they would have continued their migration.

Young ospreys remain in the wintering area until they approach 2 years of age, when they migrate north to find a nesting area, often in the location where they were released. Males have a greater tendency than females to return to the area they fledged from. It may take 20 or more released birds to get a single nesting pair established, as 50% or more young ospreys die before the end of their first year. Thus far, no released birds have been observed back at the hack sites (all the birds were banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service numbered leg bands and 52 have either blue or green coded leg bands), but we remain optimistic. This project is scheduled to repeat the release of 20 more ospreys each year through 2010.

*Wayne Melquist is the former IDFG Nongame Wildlife Manager. Upon retiring from IDFG in 2003, he spent 3 years as a Research Associate Professor at the University of Idaho, where he continues to work part-time on the osprey and other wildlife projects. He has banded and worked on ospreys in north Idaho for 36 years and coordinated the collection of these ospreys.*

## “Be Outside!”

*The Idaho Children and Nature Network—by Meggan Laxalt Mackey, USFWS*

Idaho is the “land of plenty” when it comes to the great outdoors. Many Idahoans spend time outdoors year-round, and visitors to our state marvel at its beauty.

Did you know, however, that today’s children are increasingly disconnected from the natural world? Many of today’s youth have few outdoor experiences. For all of Idaho’s bountiful outdoors, a good number of our children do not spend time outdoors.

In 2006, author Richard Louv published “Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder.” The book gave voice to an undercurrent of concern among child advocates that today’s children are suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally from a disconnection with the natural world. The results of this disconnection, Louv argues, are sobering. Our youth are experiencing obesity, diabetes, depression, and attention deficit disorders at an alarming rate.

The “cure” for many of these physical, mental and emotional problems may be just outside the door! Outdoor activity inspires children to be more active, both physically and mentally. Children who become engaged with nature at a young age are more likely to care about nature and be active in outdoor pursuits when they become adults. They, in turn, become parents who understand the value of the nature-child connection and the natural world around them. Ultimately, these children will develop a sense of place and respect for our land.

Many Americans are actively working to promote outdoor activity for children, from unstructured outdoor experiences to organized events. Idahoans, too, are acting to help our youth grow in healthier ways, including spending more time outdoors.

The Idaho Children and Nature Network is a coalition of diverse agencies, organizations and private citizens united in the common cause of empowering all Idahoans to lead healthy lives by developing a sense of place in Idaho’s outdoors. Its mission is to “connect children with nature in Idaho, from backyards to mountaintops.”

The Network will leverage collective resources to increase community awareness, provide access to information, increase participation in outdoor activities and foster respect and appreciation for Idaho’s outdoor heritage, improve integration of environmental education, create private-public partnerships, and work to improve the physical, mental and emotional health of Idaho’s children.

During January, the Network will launch a statewide initiative called “Be Outside.” Look for “Kick-Off” Events in your community throughout the year that you and your family can participate in to get a taste of Idaho’s outdoors. A very creative website will be live soon, packed with information such as the fun, accessible and affordable “101 Things to Do Outdoors.” Stay tuned, too, for opportunities to join the Network as a private citizen, business, group or organization. Visit: [www.beoutsideidaho.org](http://www.beoutsideidaho.org) for more information.



*Sharing the outdoors together can build strong family bonds and create life-long memories.*

Here are some things  
you can do to support Idaho's  
"Be Outside" initiative:

- ☛ Take a child outside. Explore! Play! Appreciate! This can be as simple as turning over rocks, watching birds or doing homework outdoors.
- ☛ Think back to your childhood. Remember what you enjoyed best outdoors, and try to recreate similar experiences with youth.
- ☛ Encourage "unplugged" time away from technological devices in your home, school or church.
- ☛ Be a "conduit" of information: tell others about this issue.
- ☛ Host a children's outdoor event, or support and participate in family and youth outdoor activities.
- ☛ Contact the Network to arrange for speakers for your business group, organization, or community.
- ☛ Give a donation to an organization that is committed to outdoor activity for kids.
- ☛ Contribute to and use the Network's website:  
[www.beoutsideldaho.org](http://www.beoutsideldaho.org)



Together, we can encourage Idahoans to "Be Outside!"

For more information, contact Meggan Laxalt Mackey, Network Chair, 208-378-5796.

## Welcome to Our New Idaho Watchable Wildlife Coordinator

After 3½ of successfully running the Watchable Wildlife Program, we bid Sara Focht a fond farewell as she continues on with her IDFG career at the MK Nature Center as a Wildlife Educator. Sara's dedication and enthusiasm enabled the Watchable Wildlife Program to grow to new heights while she promoted Idaho's watchable wildlife.

Not new to the watchable wildlife scene, Deniz Aygen hit the ground running when Sara passed the Watchable Wildlife Coordinator torch this past October.

Deniz joined the Idaho Fish and Game team in April 2005 while working on the IBIS (Idaho Bird Inventory Survey) project. Prior to this, she worked as a field biologist for research universities and non-profit bird observatories conducting migratory bird counts, banding, and education programs in such places as Virginia, Massachusetts, Michigan, Israel, Italy, and Costa Rica.

She received her BS in Biology from Michigan State University and Master's from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington with emphasis on seabird diet composition.

Deniz has assisted Sara during the last three years on various watchable wildlife projects from the Idaho Birding Trail guidebook and webpage to educational leaflets. Deniz also is the education director for the Idaho Bird Observatory.

Deniz says, "We are truly fortunate to live in state where wildlife and recreational opportunities abound. I look forward to connecting Idaho's citizens with our great natural resources while emphasizing the importance of community conservation and education."

## We are going electronic!

The Windows to Wildlife newsletter brings you watchable wildlife viewing events, topics, and information to your mailbox four times a year. In an effort to be more efficient while making our funds go further (each issue costs over 50¢), we are going electronic. You will still receive a newsletter in the mail once a year, however the three other issues will be delivered right to your email inbox. The spring edition (mailed in April) of Windows to Wildlife will be in print while the summer, fall, and winter editions will be electronic.

Your email address will never be sold or used for any other purpose than delivering the newsletter!

If you would like to make the switch and continue to receive newsletters four times a year, please contact Deniz Aygen at [daygen@idfg.idaho.gov](mailto:daygen@idfg.idaho.gov) or (208) 287-2750. To mail in your request, use the form on page 5.

You can also view the newsletters online at: [http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/news/newsletters/windows\\_wildlife/](http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/news/newsletters/windows_wildlife/)

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**Windows to Wildlife** is a quarterly publication of the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and IDFG Conservation Sciences Program.

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Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation  
Idaho Power  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
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U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Participating in the  
GBBC?

(see page 6)

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to  
All Contributors*

The following people made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of a tax check-off donation between September through November 2008. This list represents those who marked the contributor box when they donated to the Conservation Sciences Program. However, many subscribers not listed here have contributed generously and Idaho's nongame wildlife thanks you ALL!

Ron & Ethel Adams

Gardner Cromwell

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# Winter Wildlife Events

## Deer Flat NWR -

**Nampa - Jan. 3:** (and each first Saturday of the month from 1-3pm) Scout Day! Brownies and Cub Scouts are invited to the refuge to take a hike, work on a craft, and earn wildlife badges while having some wildlife fun! Register at least one week in advance by calling the refuge at (208) 467-9278.

## Foothills Learning Center-Boise

Second Saturday Programs from 10am-2pm for all ages.

## Xeric and Native

**Landscaping: Jan 10:** It is time to start planning your spring landscape. Landscape designers

will help you choose the right plants and design for your own native garden. Kids will have a fun time doing some great garden crafts.

## The Biology of Bats:

**Feb. 14** - Join experts who will introduce you to the biology of bats, show you live bats, and guide you through making a bat box.

## Wildlife Spring Fling:

**March 14-** Learn about the changes that animals are going through during the spring—from hibernation and getting ready to bear young to the animals' seasonal travels and the adaptations they make along the way.

## Bald Eagle Day- Boise

**Jan. 31:** 10am-4.30pm. Public celebration of bald eagles, the Boise River, and its wildlife. Join the fun at the Idaho Shakespeare Festival facility (held inside and outdoors) with live bird presentations, bird walks, informational booths, and kids activities! This year's celebration kicks off the Idaho Children and Nature Networks efforts to connect children with nature. A free family event! Visit [http:// baldeagledays.blogspot.com](http://baldeagledays.blogspot.com) for more information and the schedule of events.

## The Great Backyard

### Bird Count- Feb 13-16th:

Join "citizen scientists" from around the continent for this three day bird watching event that helps make an

important contribution to conservation! Visit <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/> to sign up and to learn about this joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Natural Audubon Society. Last year, Idaho reported 109,421 birds of 160 species!

Feb 14: 9am-1pm at Deer Flat NWR. Sponsored by the Southwest Idaho Birders Association. Live birds, bird walks, and crafts. For more info, call Cathy Eells: (208) 458-4435

## The World Center for Birds of Prey- Boise -

**Feb. 21:** 10am-3pm. Cub Scout Saturday: scavenger hunt activities designed for Wolf, Bear, and Webelos scouts to obtain badges that meet the World Conservation Award requirements. Admission will be \$1 for scouts in uniform and \$2 for adult leaders.

## JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT COUNT FOR FUN, COUNT FOR THE FUTURE



New York, NY and Ithaca, NY—Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

"The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It's a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future."

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). The data these "citizen scientists" collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

"The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director, John Fitzpatrick. "With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade."

## How to do the GBBC...

IT'S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3!

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 13–16, 2009.
2. For each type of bird you see, count the most you see at any one time.
3. Enter your results on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site!

Visit: [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) for more info