

A PUBLICATION OF THE IDAHO WATCHABLE WILDLIFE COMMITTEE AND IDAHO'S CONSERVATION SCIENCES PROGRAM

### Watching Wildlifecloser than you think

### By Deniz Aygen, Watchable Wildlife Program Leader Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Watching wildlife is one of the most popular types of outdoor recreation in Idaho. Over half a million Idahoans participate in wildlife watching activities annually. Whether you are travelling to the mountains, forests, deserts, or rivers to bird watch, view wildflowers, or snap a few photos-Idaho's Watchable Wildlife Program works hard to keep that experience as rewarding as possible.

The Watchable Wildlife Program is part of Idaho Department of Fish and Game. It is guided by the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee, a collaborative group of local, state, and federal agency representatives and conservation organizations that promotes:

- appreciation for wildlife and their habitats
- wildlife-based tourism
- responsible wildlife observation ethics

The next few issues of Windows to Wildlife will highlight how our committee members bring watchable wildlife viewing opportunities to you. You may be familiar with some of the areas, festivals, and wildlife. It is our hope that you discover something new and check it out for yourself!

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Have you noticed this sign along a roadway in Idaho and wondered what it meant? The binoculars sign lets you know you are approaching a Wildlife Viewing Site, a location where you have a high chance of seeing a variety of wildlife.

### Fish Slideshelping fish move along

By Russ Kiefer, Fisheries Staff Biologist Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Fish slides, officially known as surface weirs, are devices installed in the spillways of the large hydroelectric dams of the lower Snake and Columbia rivers. The decision to build these surface weirs was based upon years of research on how to increase the survival of juvenile fish (salmon and steelhead) affected by these dams. A key finding of this research relative to surface weirs was that the majority of the juvenile fish migrated in the upper 20 ft of the water, but because the spillgates at these dams open 45 to 60 ft deep, the fish would delay in front of the dam looking for a way to pass and many would get pulled into the powerhouse by the large amount of water going through the turbines.

Besides the obvious concerns with many juvenile fish going into powerhouses, research has also found that delaying juvenile fish also caused problems for them. The main problems with delaying these juvenile fish are:

1) their bodies are going through changes as they migrate to prepare them for life in a saltwater ocean instead of a freshwater river, and if the juvenile fish are still in freshwater after this change, they have to use a lot more energy to maintain the salt levels in their bodies;

2) the more these juvenile fish are delayed in front of the dams, the more likely they are to be eaten by predatory fish and birds, and

3) if the juvenile fish are delayed too much, they can arrive to the ocean after conditions have become less favorable for their survival. Surface weirs were therefore designed to improve the efficiency (# of fish per amount of water) of the juvenile fish spill passage program, reduce delay in front of the dams, and to increase juvenile fish survival and adult return rates.

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### F E A T U R E S

### 1 WILDLIFE WATCHING & YOU!

Deniz Aygen, Watchable Wildlife Program Leader, IDFG

A wildlife viewing opportunity is closer than you think...

### **1** FISH SLIDES

Russ Kiefer, Fisheries Staff Biologist, IDFG

What are they and why build them?

### 9 SPRING EVENTS

Find a great escape near you!

The style of surface weirs installed has changed over time. The first styles built are called removable surface weirs (RSWs). They are called removable because if needed in an emergency, some of the bolts attaching them to the dam can be removed, flotation tanks can be flooded, and the RSW would pivot on hinges and come to rest on a pad on the bottom of the reservoir in front of the dam.

The photo on the right shows the RSW for Ice Harbor Dam from its top right side as it was being barged upstream, and you can get an idea of the size of a surface weir by noticing the workers standing next to it. The light blue curved surface is where the nickname "fish slide" comes from because it is shaped like a playground slide and is intended to smoothly transition the juvenile fish from surface spill to the downstream surface of the spillway crest.

Surface weirs pass juvenile steelhead and salmon over a raised spillway crest, and enable the fish to safely pass over the weir more efficiently compared to a dam without a surface weir in the spillway. The two drawings illustrate the importance of spillway weirs. Notice how a regular spillway gate opens by being lifted up from the top of the spillway crest 45-60 feet below the pool surface in front of the dam, which makes it harder for the surface oriented juvenile fish to find this passage route. RSWs were installed in Lower Granite, Ice Harbor, and Lower Monumental dams. You can watch a video of fish passing through a dam with RSW and one without RSW.

The second style of surface weirs built are called Top Spillway Weirs (TSWs), and were installed at McNary and The Dalles dams. TSWs have a shaped crest (top) that uses water velocity and gravity (with just an air pocket underneath) to make the transition to the downstream surface of the spillway crest instead of the curved surface (fish slide) of a RSW. Because TSWs are not as bulky or complex as RSWs, they can be simply pulled up on top of the dam in case of an emergency and do not need the complex hinging and retrieval mechanisms. Another advantage of TSWs over RSWs is that they are cheaper and quicker to build.

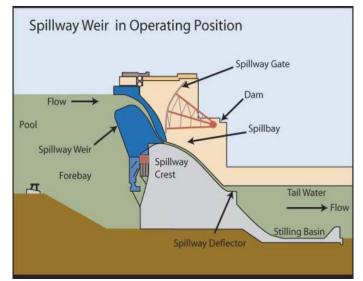
Story continues on page 3...

**Removable Surface Weir at Ice Harbor Dam** 

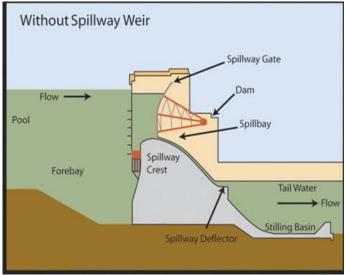
- 105 feet tall
- 70 feet wide
- 1.7 million pounds



Removable Surface Weir (RSW) for Ice Harbor Dam. Photo: US Army Corps of Engineers.



Cross section of a dam with a RSW. Photo: US Army Corps of Engineers.



Cross section of a dam without a surface weir. Photo: US Army Corps of Engineers.

#### "Fish Slides" continued from page 2

The photo below is of McNary Dam from downstream showing water spilling over TSWs located in the first and third spillbay from the right hand side of the photo. Compare this surface spill to the other 4 spillbays on the left side of the photo spilling the normal way from the bottom of the spillway gates. Not only is spilling from the surface of the pool in front of the dam important for increasing the number of juvenile fish that use this route to pass the dam, but also notice that the water coming over the top of the TSWs is green without a lot of turbulence which is believed to also be more attractive to the juvenile fish for passage.



McNary Dam and TSWs. Photo: US Army Corps of Engineers.

The last surface weir built was an adjustable surface weir (ASW), and it was installed at Little Goose Dam. An ASW is just a TSW with the ability to adjust the height of the surface weir so that it can be set to spill more water during periods of high river flow. The plan at Little Goose Dam is to start in the early spring with the ASW in the normal setting, switch it to spill more water when flows increase later in the spring, and then return it to the normal setting once flows decline in early summer.

So how well do these surface weirs work? Researchers have put tags in study juvenile fish to see how they pass dams with surface weirs installed. These researchers have been able to observe a large proportion of study fish initially delaying in front of the powerhouse, but quickly moving to, and then passing over the surface weir as soon as they could feel the current of the water going over the top of the surface weir. Surface weirs are installed in spillbays close to the powerhouse to aid in attracting juvenile fish away from the powerhouse and to the surface weirs for safer passage. Other research has determined that survival is high for juvenile fish that pass over a surface weir, and as designed they pass more juvenile fish per amount of water spilled over them as compared to water spilled under the normal spillway gates.

Since 2009 there has been a complete system of ways to effectively pass juvenile fish through spill at all the lower Snake and Columbia rivers dams. This, in combination with a more robust juvenile fish spill program, appears to have increased their survival as intended. The most dramatic survival improvement has been for juvenile steelhead. Before, estimated juvenile steelhead survival from the upper end of the first reservoir near Lewiston, Idaho, to below the last dam on the Columbia (Bonneville) averaged about 38%. Now with surface weirs and the more robust spill program, survival for juvenile steelhead over this same reach was estimated to be 69% in the average flow year of 2009, and 62% in the low flow year of 2010. Not only has this surface spill program dramatically increased survival of juvenile fish, but the migration rate for in-river juvenile fish over this same stretch of river in 2010 was similar to what had been seen in high flow years before surface weirs and the more robust spill program.

It will be interesting to see how well this surface passage program does in the expected high flow year of 2011. Not only is the direct survival through the 8 dams and reservoirs higher, but other research indicates that as more juvenile fish migrate in-river with this surface passage program, the predators can be more selective and eat a higher percentage of juvenile fish that are sick or injured. The real test will be in how well this surface passage program does in returning adults. We will have to wait a couple of more years for that important answer.

9 Wildlife Festivals



#### Dubois Grouse Days April 15 and 16; Dubois, ID http://www.grousedays.org

Witness the unusual mating ritual of sage-grouse as males gather on traditional mating territories (leks) and strut their stuff while females wander around looking for their perfect mate! This annual event in eastern Idaho celebrates the shrub-steppe ecosystem and the unique animals which call it home. For more info, call 208-313-2730.

#### Snake River Birds of Prey Festival May 14-16; Kuna, ID http://www.snakeriverbirdsofpreyfestival.com

Experience the unique habitat and birds of the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Field trips, lectures, children's programs, exhibit area, and banquet with keynote speaker.

### International Migratory Bird Day

An annual celebration of birds world-wide. This year's theme is "Go Wild, Go Birding." Celebrations will be held on **Saturday**, **May 14**.

**Treasure Valley: MK Nature Center**, 600 S. Walnut St., Boise, 9am-4pm: Celebration with live birds, bird banding, and children's games and crafts. Call (208) 334-2225 for more info or see MK Nature Center's activities.

McCall area: Contact Diane Evans Mack at IDFG (208) 634-8137 or Terri Bryant at Ponderosa State Park (208) 634-2164 for event details.

Lewiston area: 8am-11.30am at the Moscow Farmers Market: IMBD booth with live birds May 14, 1.30-4.30pm at the Lewiston City Mall: IMBD booth with live birds. Contact Joel at the Idaho Fish & Game office (208) 799-5010 for more info.



Greater sage-grouse. Photo by Mike Morrison.





The following people made direct donations, let us know that they purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or informed us about a tax check-off donation between January 2011 through March 2011.

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!

Kevin Blackman W Boyle Joan Grant Janie Hall Harold Hilliard Chris McMullen Diane Prorak + Al Poplawsky Sydney Craft Rozen Richard Smart William + Clella Steinke

Also, a special thanks to those who donated money to IDFG using the nongame wildlife tax check off on their tax forms.

# Still need to file your taxes?



Don't forget that over 90% of Idaho's wildlife are "nongame" and the <u>ONLY</u> source of state funding to support nongame wildlife is from the sales of wildlife license plates and voluntary tax donations.

Donate any amount on your 2010 tax form. This option is located on Line 35 of Idaho Tax Form 40.

Any amount is appreciated and helps support surveys, monitoring, research, conservation education, and wildlife viewing opportunities state-wide.

Idaho's wildlife thanks you for your support!



Be Outside, Idaho! and partner organizations are hosting

## Unplug and Be Outside

A series of free events to inspire and empower families to reduce their screen time, get off the couch and get active!

For more information and check out the schedule of activities, visit:

http://www.unplugandbeoutside.com/

### Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Boise District Office

www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/four\_rivers/recreation\_ sites\_.html

Raptor banding trips within the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA)

> -Western screech owls -Ferruginous hawks



Snake River Birds of Prey Festival

-Co-sponsor

-Coordinator of the children's activities-Coordinator of adult & youth art contest-Present raptor identification lecture

Participate in the following events

-Bald Eagle Days -Migratory Bird Day -Deer Flat NWR Bio Blitz

### Teacher workshops

-WILD About Raptors

Live raptor presentations

- -Schools
- -Libraries
- -State parks
- -Scout troops
- -Other locations

Publications

-Raptor Identification Guide

- -Snake River Birds of Prey NCA Bird Guide
- -Snake River Birds of Prey booklet

### Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Challis Field Office

www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/challis/recreation\_sites\_.html

In partnership with The Idaho Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, and with funding assistance from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Watchable Wildlife Program, and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, built a sheep viewing kiosk and interpretive site at the Buffalo Jump on Highway 75 near Challis. The goal was to improve motorist awareness of the sheep along the highway, to provide a safe viewing opportunity, and to reduce vehicle/ sheep collision.



### **Idaho Department of Commerce**

Idaho's flagship website, visitidaho.org, has a dedicated landing page that features wildlife viewing areas that visitors can access, along with Voluntourism opportunities, in the categories of Outdoor Education and Recreation, Natural Attractions, and Kid Friendly.

### **Idaho Department of Fish and Game**

http://fishandgame.idaho.gov

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is dedicated to providing watchable wildlife opportunities throughout the state. Too numerous to mention, highlighted below are a few token wildlife viewing opportunities.

 <u>Nature/Wildlife Viewing Centers:</u> Boise: MK Nature Center Sandpoint: WaterLife Discovery Center Lewiston: Lewiston Wildlife Habitat Area

• The Idaho Birding Trail is a network of sites and side-trips that provides the best viewing opportunities to see birds in Idaho. With 175 sites and about 2,000 miles of trail, the birding trail represents a collection of bird watching hotspots, diverse habitats, and a glimpse of Idaho's rich natural heritage.



 Wildlife Management Areas are a great place to enjoy the outdoors. 32 WMAs are located across Idaho for public enjoyment of wildlife habitat.

- Participate in the following events: **Bald Eagle Days-Boise** International Migratory Bird Day-statewide Snake River Birds of Prey Festival- Kuna **Dubois Grouse Days- Dubois BioBlitz at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge** Salmon and Steelhead Days-Boise
- Publications:

The Idaho Birding Trail Guidebook The Idaho Wildlife Viewing Guidebook Windows to Wildlife e-newsletter Nongame Wildlife Leaflet Series

• Webcams:

Peregrine Falcon webcam in downtown Boise Wildlife webcam at MK Nature Center in Boise

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge**

### www.fws.gov/deerflat/

• Wildlife viewing opportunities at the Lake Lowell and Snake River Island Units, including trails, viewing platforms, and viewing blind.

Osprey nest webcam

 On- and off-site environmental education programs for classrooms and scouts. Traveling trunks also available to borrow.

 Coordinate Idaho Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest for K-12 students

- Monthly Wild About Life lecture series
- Digital photography scavenger hunt

 Annual BioBlitz Festival (2nd weekend in June) offers wildlife walks

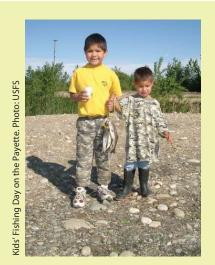
### **U.S. Forest Service**

http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/map/state\_list.shtml#Idaho

The Forest Service has several national initiatives intended to connect the public, both adults and children, to nature.

<u>Naturewatch</u> – The purpose of this program is to provide children and adults the opportunity to safely view, and participate in, activities and programs that raise their level of awareness and understanding of wildlife, fish, and plants, and their connection to ecosystems, landscapes, and people. Many activities take place under the auspices of this initiative including, but not limited to:

- · Hooked on Fishing and Kids' Fishing Days;
- Nature walks, educational talks, and demonstrations related to wildlife;
- Development of wildlife interpretive sites;



 Public Naturewatch Sites Database allows the user to search for great opportunities for viewing wildlife, fish, and wildflowers on our National Forests nationwide

• Participation in International Migratory Bird Day Celebration.

Eyes on Wildlife is a sub-program of Naturewatch that facilitates habitat management and improvements for wildlife viewing on National Forests and Grasslands. The purpose of the program is to: provide enhanced opportunities for all people to experience wildlife; promote learning about forest animals and plants and their habitat requirements; and develop broad public support of conservation that maintains healthy ecosystems for all plant and animal species.

More Kids in the Woods is a suite of programs offered by forests aimed at connecting kids with nature through experiential learning and recreation programs. Check with your local Forest Service Office to see what they have to offer.

Several on-line educational programs are available to anyone at anytime to assist in discovering the natural world. Below are a couple you can check out:

• PollinatorLIVE is a distance learning adventure focused on monarch butterflies and features pollinators, citizen science projects, and gardening. In addition, PollinatorLIVE will keep you up-to-date with the latest about monarch butterflies.

 Discover the Forest aims to inspire tweens (aged 8-12) and their parents to re-connect with nature, experiencing it first-hand. The on-line information brings to life the joy and excitement kids have when they discover the wonders of nature, helping create interest in their environment and a lifelong relationship with it.

## Spring Wildlife Events

### **Boise Watershed-**

11818 West Joplin Rd., Boise; www.cityofboise.org/Bee/EnvironmentalEducation

WaterShed Weekend Series every third Saturday from 10am-1pm. Free for all ages. Join us for an outdoor walking tour of the Wastewater Treatment Plant from 1-2pm. Closed-toe shoes required.

### April 16- Watershed Watch!

Be a water quality scientist for a day! No experience is needed to participate in this community event to get a snapshot of the health of the Boise River. All ages are welcome. Sign up by by calling the Boise WaterShed at 208-489-1284 or visit the WaterShed Watch website at: http://bee.cityofboise.org/WaterShed/ Learn/WaterShedWatch/index.aspx email BoiseWaterShed@cityofboise.org

### May 21- Boise River Revival

The Boise River is the true treasure of our valley! Come celebrate the river with this event sponsored by Water Awareness Week Region 3. From 10:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. award-winning storyteller and author Joy Steiner will bring the Boise River to life with her inspiring and adventurous stories. At 11:15 a.m. venture half a mile to the Boise River to help us release our "Trout in the Classroom" fish into the river! Inside the exhibit hall make beautiful fish and leaf prints, leaf rubbings, bird puppets and nests, and help create a giant mural of the Boise River! Stop by the National Public Works Week booth to hear about sustainable projects taking place at the wastewater plant. End your visit on a sweet note: Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and United Water will help you build an edible aquifer using ice cream and other treats!

### June 18- Boise WaterShed Ramble

Celebrate water and help raise funds to support new educational exhibits! Join us for a fun onemile walk around the grounds of the wastewater treatment facility. Get a sneak preview of the new greenbelt extension while strolling near the Boise River. Along the way, stop at the Passport Exploration Stations to view wildlife and learn about how you can protect and save water. Preregistration required by June 1st. Registration and more info at www.BoiseWatershedExhibits. org If you choose not to walk, drop in to the exhibit hall between 10:00-1:00 for exciting handson activities! Note: No wastewater treatment plant tour today.

### WaterShed Wednesday Programs are FREE all summer long!

### June 8- August 7- WaterShed Wed. Drop-in Programs

Dive into fun at the Boise WaterShed on Wednesdays in June, July and August from 10:00 a.m. to noon for free all-ages activities, scientific demonstrations, movies and more in the exhibit hall! At 10:15, join us for a hands-on presentation and interactive activity (June program: Making Stuff series...from lemon juice batteries, robots, and oobleck, prepare to get your hands dirty!) At 11:00, see and smell the process of wastewater treatment during the treatment plant tour. Closedtoe shoes required for tour, no strollers. There's something for the whole family to enjoy while staying cool this summer. No pre-registration required; come alone, as a family or bring a group of people to share in the experience!

### **Deer Flat NWR**

13751 Upper Embankment Rd.; Nampa; 208-467-9278; <u>http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/</u>

### April 12- The Story of Rocks, 7pm

Come explore the story of rocks through time including current paleoresearch and volcanic activity in Idaho, as well as information on Idaho's available geologic resources. Margret Stallknecht, Education Chair of the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology will be presenting.

#### May 10- Leave No Trace Camping: Leaving Your Mark is Overrated, 7pm

Learn how to protect the places you love by incorporating the Leave No Trace principles into your camping routine. Hailey and Bob Barr, two certified Leave No Trace Master Educators will explain the principles of Leave No Trace camping as well as demonstrate some of the best techniques to use for sustainable camping practices.

### Scout Day: April 2 and May 7, 1pm-3pm

Cub Scouts (Wolf, Bear, and Webelos packs) and Girl Scouts (Brownie and Junior troops) can earn their wildlife related badges in one fun-filled afternoon. Scout Day is held the first Saturday of the months from October – May at the Visitor Center at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge! Please register at least a week in advance.

### April 23- Earth Day Work Day 9am-noon

Celebrate Earth Day by removing litter or noxious weeds to improve wildlife habitat at the Lake Lowell Unit of the Refuge. Bring gloves and water. Wear clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Please preregister.

### June 10 and 11- BioBlitz 10am-3pm; free

A BioBlitz is a 24-hr rapid inventory of biological diversity, and Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge hosts the only one in Idaho! Scientists and naturalists will survey the refuge for living things on Friday and Saturday. The BioBlitz festival educates the public about Idaho's wildlife and plants and the importance of biodiversity through demonstrations, guided walks, booths, live animals, and kids' activities. Volunteers are needed on both days.

### June 11- Kids' Fishing Day, 10am-3pm

Participate in fishing-related activities and crafts, and then practice your new fishing skills! Fishing poles will be available to borrow, or bring your own. At Gotts Point at Lake Lowell.

### June 20-24 - Biodiversity Basics Day Camp 9am- 12:30pm

Students entering 4th or 5th grades are invited to explore the incredible variety of life in the world! Go on hikes, create your own field guide and find out what it's like to be a biologist. Pre-registration is required, sign-up early as space is limited.

### Foothills Learning Center

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

#### April 9- Those Awesome Owls 10am-2pm; Free

Owls are some of nature's most amazing creatures. Explore owls of Idaho with the gang at the Foothills Learning Center. Get to know their night hunting adaptations; join in the owl hooting contest; dissect owl pellets. Best of all, take a guided walk on Owls Roost trail to see our local family of great horned owls. Presentations will be at 10 and 12, each followed by a hike.

### **MK Nature Center**

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

### April 27- Unplugged Week! 5-8pm; donations accepted

In support of UNPLUGGED week, enjoy an evening at the MK Nature Center as we extend the hours of our education center until 8:00pm. Families can join in a tour of our streamside path, have a face to fish encounter, learn new facts about habitat, and stroll our Idaho Native Plant garden. Meet some of our special critters too, with quest instructors.

### April 30- Go Native in 2011! Plant Sale 10am-2pm

Celebrate Native Plant Appreciation week by planting wildlife friendly plants that are well adapted to our soil and climate. This sale, which will be at the MK Nature Center gives area gardeners and native plant enthusiasts an opportunity to choose from a wide selection of native plants, talk to knowledgeable botanists and help support the Idaho Native Plant Society and the MK Nature Center.

During the sale, families can create their very own patchwork plant art piece to take home. All ages welcome. Streamside tours will be offered as well on the hour. Have a face to fish encounter, and learn new facts about habitat, and stroll our Idaho Native Plant garden. Meet some of our special critters too with guest instructors. Donations accepted.

#### May 14- International Migratory Bird Day 9am-4pm; donations accepted

Enjoy a full day of bird observation and educational activities for bird enthusiasts of all ages from 9:00am-4:00pm. Families can GO BIRDING, do some owl pellet investigation, watch wood carving demonstrations, play in bird Olympics, get your face painted, create some nature arts, and other children's activities. Get WILD at our new woodpeckers and waterfowl stations. The Anser Charter School Kindergarten students will once again be selling their hand-made bird cards, as well as showcasing student bird projects. Biologists and experts from Boise National Forest, Idaho Bird Observatory, Idaho Fish and Game and Golden Eagle Audubon Society will be on hand to share their expertise. Picnicking will be available in the formal backyard of the nature center. Requested

### Renew Your Newsletter Subscription

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### Boise's Peregrine falcon webcam is up and running for its third nesting season.

### Watch the live broadcast at:

### www.peregrinefund.org/falconcam/



### Windows to Wildlife

Conservation Sciences Program P.O. Box 25 Boise, ID 83707-0025

### Forwarding Service Requested

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

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