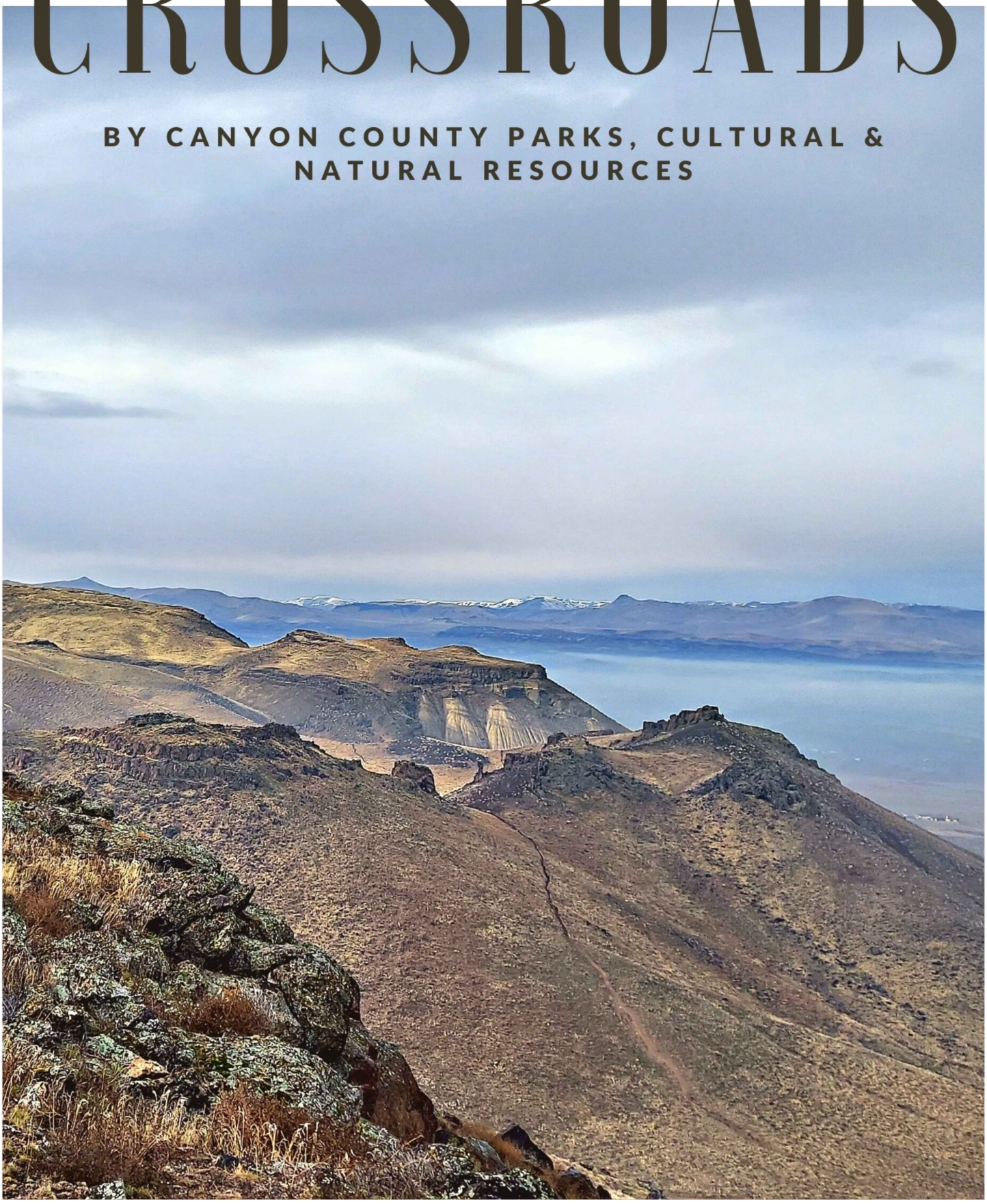
2024

VOL I

CROSSROADS

BY CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES



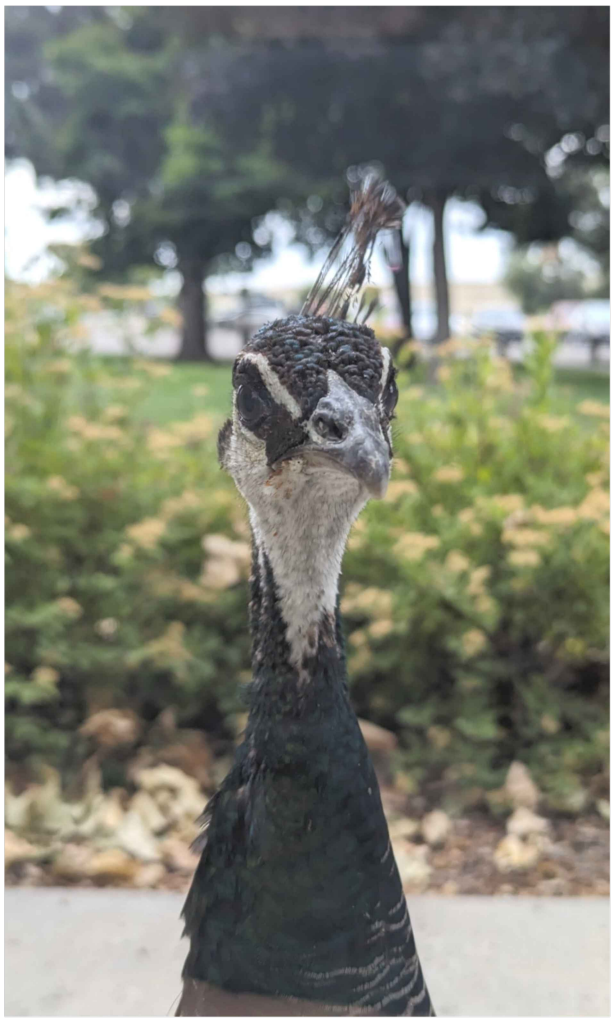
Above: Parks aren't just for barbeques! The Canyon County Sheriff's Office conducted physical fitness tests at Lake Lowell this autumn. They were working hard, but it looked like fun to us!

Middle: The (tired) crew after reassembling the main structure of the museum kiosk after having taken it apart for the Mezzanine construction project.

Below: Rainy days are the best at Celebration Park! This drizzly morning, Director Nicki Schwend went out to the petroglyph field and took some great pictures, showing just how much the petroglyphs "pop" when they're wet and under the right light.

Above: Water like glass. Early mornings provide the best light and still air for beautiful photos like this one, showing the reflection of Guffey Butte and Guffey Bridge. Photo courtesy of Shawn Gray.

Below: ***Asclepias speciosa****—Showy Milkweed—grows naturally at Celebration Park and feeds Monarch Butterflies on their migration route across North America. But this time, it was a bee instead of a butterfly.*



Above, Left: We often feature native bird photos in Crossroads Magazine—birds like the osprey, golden eagle, and sometimes orioles! This one is not one of those. Native to India, the peafowl pictured here has taken up residence at Lake Lowell Park. The bird spends hours looking at itself in the reflection by the door!

Above, Right: Celebration Park Interpretive Specialist Josh Preminger demonstrates how to create fire from friction during training for a new educational program. It's harder than it looks!

Below: Interpretive Specialists are usually giving the educational lessons, but on this day, they switched roles. Pictured here, left to right, Dr. Paul Castrovillo, Curator of Entomology at the College of Idaho Orma J. Smith Museum, talks to Interpretive Specialists Charlie Anderson and Tate Jensen about his favorite bugs.

Above, Left & Right: Canoe Science Camp students learned a lot about ecology, hydrology, boat safety, and more. But most of all, they just had fun!

Below: You have to get up pretty early to see the Super Blue Moon rising over the Snake River. Luckily for us, Maintenance Coordinator Shawn Gray does that every day and took this wonderful picture in August.


I hit the Mammoth
Celebration Park
I hit the Mammoth
Celebration Park

P. 6, Above: Kate Nakamura-Stein and her students earned their stickers!

P. 6, Below, Left: Dylon Starry made a new friend—a rubber boa.

P. 6, Below, Right: The yucca blooms in full effect. The stalks will later be harvested to use for field trip projects!

P. 7, Above: A property owner in Silver City talks history with Eric Savadow.

P. 7, Below: Staff were fortunate to be able to enter many of the buildings in Silver City on a field trip this summer, including the historic Catholic Church. Mass is still held once a month in summer.

CROSSROADS

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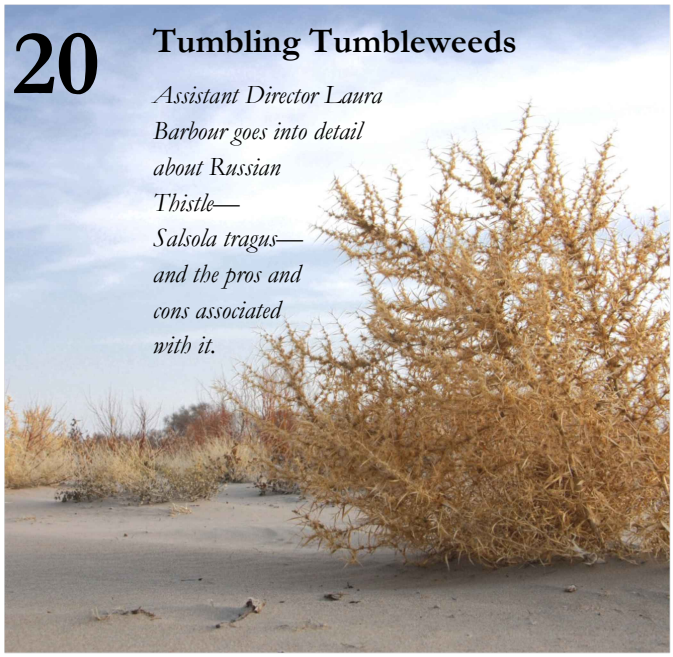

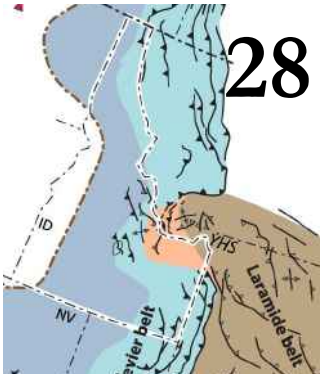

Cover: Interpretive Specialist Larry Haney's incredible photography is featured throughout this issue of Crossroads. This photo is from the top of Guffey Butte, looking toward the Owyhee Mountains.

EDUCATION | ARCHAEOLOGY | HISTORY

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Caldwell, ID 83605
208-455-6022

www.canyoncounty.id.gov/parks
parksprograms@canyoncounty.id.gov

FROM THE DIRECTOR:
NICKI SCHWEND

Figure 1

Celebration Park has been very lucky in the last few years regarding eclipses, including the one that occurred this fall. Within the span of five years, two different solar eclipses have been visible from the park. Solar eclipses occur when the moon passes between the earth and the sun, totally or partially obscuring the light of the sun from view on earth.

On August 21st, 2017, Idaho was one of 14 states in the path of totality for the total solar eclipse that swept across the contiguous U.S. and took news and social media by storm. While Celebration Park was not directly in the path of totality, witnesses at the park got to see 97% of the sun eclipsed by the moon. Before this event, the last time the U.S. had seen a solar eclipse run across the country had been in June 1918! Interestingly enough, the 2017 eclipse was the first US solar eclipse event since the invention of smartphones and social media! Now they make photo filters for smartphones to assist with capturing these astronomical events without causing lens flare (the appearance of additional eclipses reflected in your photos) (See *figure 1*).

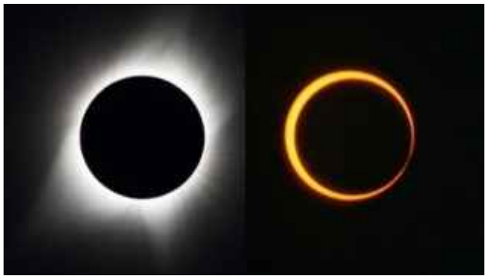
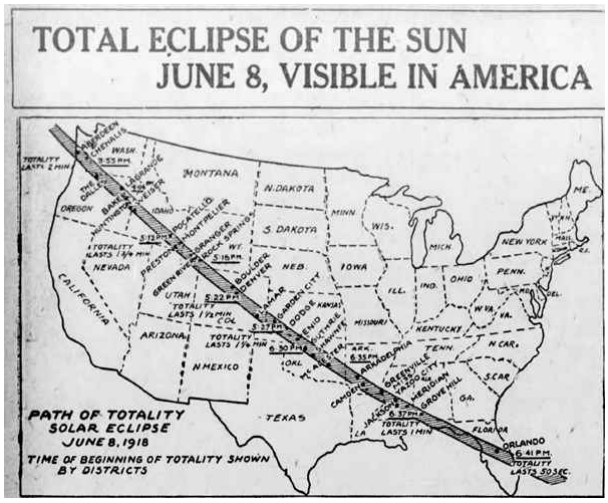


Figure 2

Parks staff and guests view the eclipse with eclipse glasses and try to get a photo.

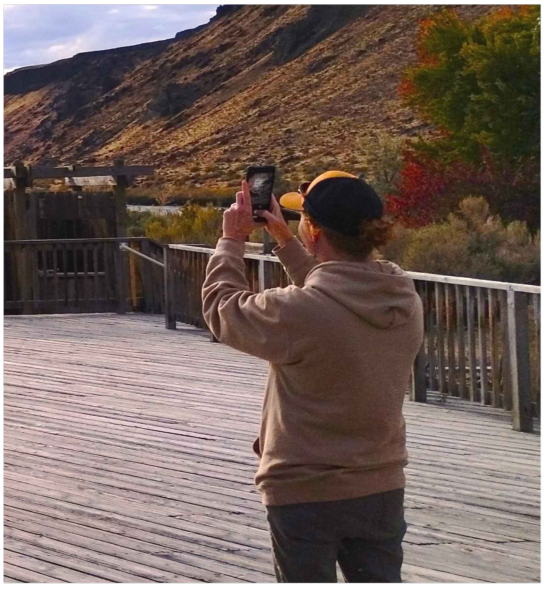
During a total solar eclipse (like the one in 2017) the moon completely blocks the sun from view as the apparent size of the moon and sun are the same from our vantage point (*figure 2*, left image). During an annular solar eclipse, however, the moon is not 'big enough' to completely cover the sun and a bright ring of light can still be seen as the moon passes directly in front of the sun (*figure 2,* right image). The difference has to do with distance the sun and moon are at from earth as compared to each other during the eclipse.

The recent Oct 14, 2023 eclipse was an annular solar eclipse, where a 'ring of fire' from the sun remains visible as the moon appears smaller in diameter than the sun appears. Again, Celebration Park was not within the path of totality (the path in which a total eclipse is visible), but it was approximately 86% visible from the Park. Staff and visitors were able to enjoy the eclipse and take a few stunning photos.



Map of the 1918 eclipse path of totality.

Witnessing events like this from Celebration Park certainly leaves one to wonder: what might it have been like beholding these types of events in the Snake River Canyon thousands and thousands of years ago?



Director Schwend takes photos during the October 14th, 2023 lunar eclipse.

We love winter at Celebration Park—the quiet, the wind blowing through the sagebrush, and even the rare snowfall. Devoted Interpretive Specialist Larry Haney (pictured below in the vest) took these winter photos on Boxing Day.

Above: Guffey Bridge in light snow.

Middle: Halverson Lake, as seen from the top of Guffey Butte.

Below: Director Nicki Schwend teaches Larry and other staff how to make tule toys—a native toy made from bulrish (tule) reeds, harvested from the Snake River. Some looked like the intended horse, while others looked more like giraffes.

CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

DEPARTMENT UPDATE:

ON THE GROUND

Bats in Torpor

Little Brown Bats are great hunters – they feed upon many bugs, such as beetles, flies, ants, moths, and most importantly, mosquitoes. Just like us humans, these bats are diphyodonts—they have two sets of teeth throughout their lives – 22 milk teeth as juveniles and 38 adult teeth once mature. Idaho Fish and Game has informed us that this one (found on a wall) is probably in a state called torpor. This is when a mammal slows down its metabolism and lowers its body temperature to conserve fat and energy. This is common during fall migration.

Parking Lot Update

As part of an ongoing project to update the shoreline at Celebration Park, Outdoor Recreation Planner Alex Eells managed a project to redesign the parking lot. With minimal disturbance to the plants around the parking lot, crews changed the layout, adding new edging, speedbumps, and striping, resulting in **15** more parking spaces for passenger vehicles, a dedicated lane for boat traffic, and space for emergency services vehicles. This project is part of a grant from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Waterways Improvement Fund.

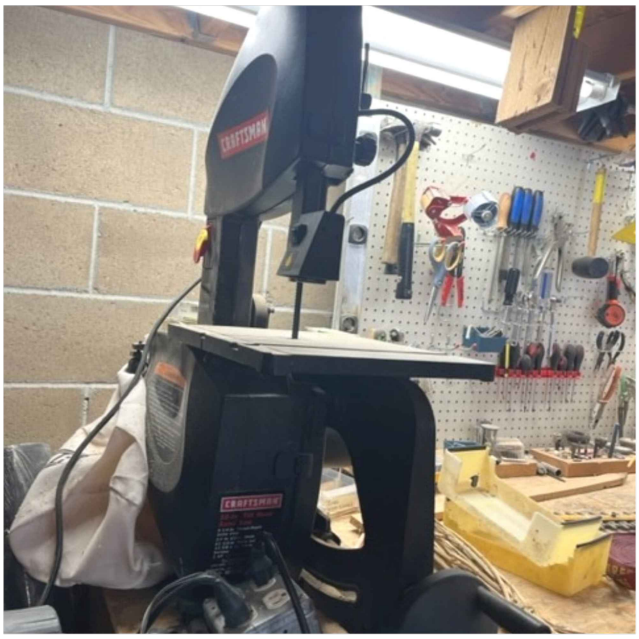
East End Rock Placement

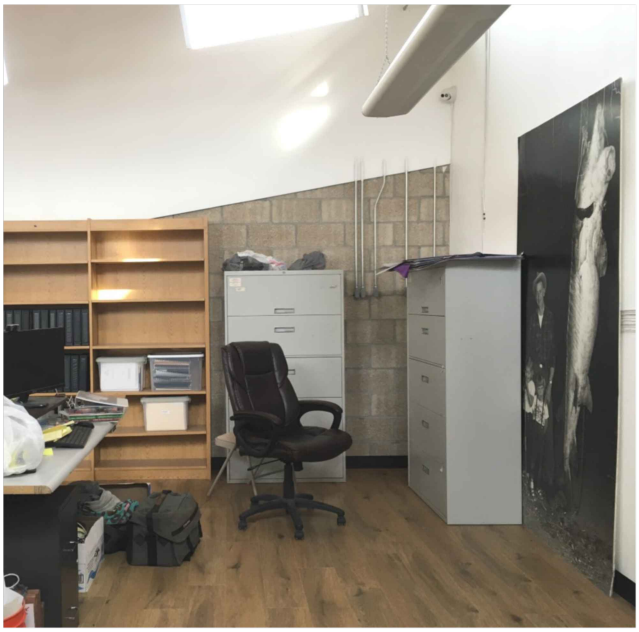
Misuse of the berms in the East End Campground has led to increased erosion concerns. To ameliorate this, Maintenance Coordinator Shawn Gray placed several large rocks along the berms to mark the edges and attempt to stop the vandalism. He plans to add native grasses later this year in order to further combat the erosion—the long, stringy roots of native grasses are one of the best ways to stop erosion.

CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

DEPARTMENT UPDATE:

IN THE OFFICE





Plew Donations

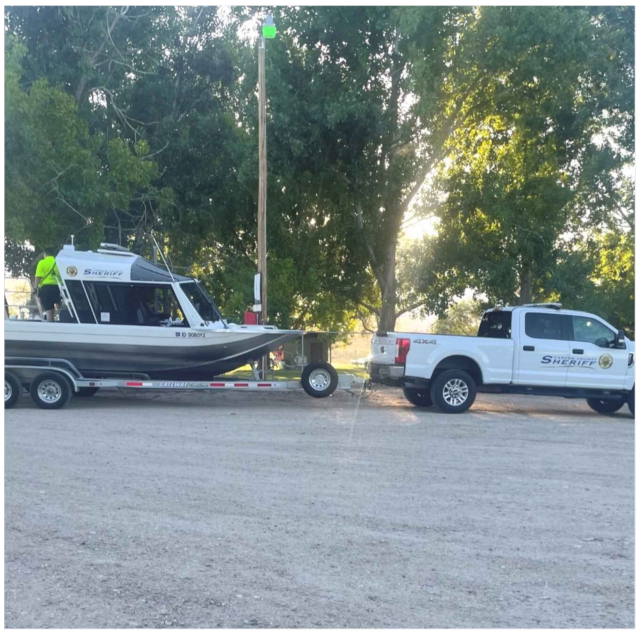
Dr. Mark Plew, professor emeritus of anthropology at Boise State University, recently donated a number of very helpful items to the department. These include some large storage boxes, several wheelbarrows, and even a tilt-head benchtop bandsaw. These have already been put to great use by parks staff, between storing sage bark for later use in making replica artifacts, and using the bandsaw to more effectively cut out new atlatls for students to use during the Stories in Stone field trip. Thank you very much Dr. Plew!

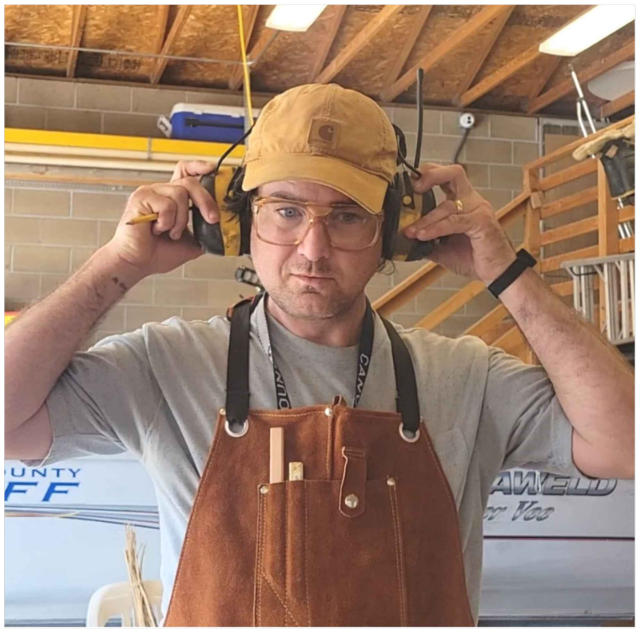
Library Project

With the aforementioned donation of archaeological records, documents, and publications, the next step is cataloguing and organizing everything. Interpretive Specialist Jessica Sweeney has taken this on as a special project. Thanks to a generous donation from Dave and Marcia Vastine, Sweeney is now gathering materials, organizing the library, and beginning to catalogue it in its entirety. A very big thanks goes out to our long-time friends, the Vastines, for their gift to the park and their commitment to its future.

Gun Range Advisory Board

In summer of 2023, the department reestablished the Gun Range Advisory Board and hired two new Range Advisory Board members. The Range Advisory Board works to provide access to a sustainable, quality public shooting range that provides a safe recreational facility that promotes responsible firearm activities and shooting experience for the citizens of Canyon County. Anyone interested in learning more about the Range Advisory Board should contact Outdoor Recreation Planner Alex Eells at Alex.Eells@canyoncounty.id.gov.





CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

DEPARTMENT UPDATE:

EVERYTHING ELSE

Boat Safety Week Kickoff

This year's Boat Safety Week Kickoff event was held in late-May and was a big success. Sgt. Roberts of the Canyon County Sheriff's Marine Patrol organized the event, bringing in many agencies and entities focused on water and boat safety, including the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Canyon County Paramedics, Idaho Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Nampa Fire Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game. Food trucks on site made food and drinks available and the day finished with a boat parade by several marine law enforcement agencies.

Atlatl Training Video

Programs Manager Dylon Starry and Interpretive Specialists Josh Preminger (pictured) and Brendan Blowers-deLeon have finished creating a new training video on how to make atlatls and darts. This was done to create a lasting way to teach part-time and full-time staff how to safely use the right tools for the job and create atlatls for years to come. As a hobbyist woodworker, Starry wanted to teach others how to use the tools safely and while the video won't replace in-person learning, it will be a reference tool for parks staff to use for generations.

Environmental Field Experience—A New Field Trip

One of our ongoing projects is the new program Environmental Field Experience (EFE) - a pilot program in partnership with Boise School District. The program has changed since last being highlighted in Crossroads Magazine—we've added a new program, Art & Ecology, as well as tweaked how we teach the Mock Archaeology Dig. We look forward to the sustained partnership with the school district and teacher and student feedback as we continue to adjust to better serve the students.

Southwest Idaho RC&D

UPDATE

- The Southwest Idaho Resource Council & Development Council (RC&D) partnered with the Waterfowlers of Idaho to host a youth conservation day to promote the sport of waterfowl hunting. On September 16th, local kids received educational instruction and information by professionals to spark interest and promote the future of hunting. About 50 youth and their families were in attendance this year. Thanks in part to Idaho Sporting Clays of Homedale, we were able to provide the opportunity for all youth in attendance to each shoot about 25 sporting clays each! Many kids won prizes, including a shotgun, electronic decoys, and even lifetime hunting licenses!
- In close cooperation with the Southwest Idaho RC&D Council, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management developed a plan to address a serious fire hazard along Highway 21 in Southeast Boise. The fire mitigation work area was an 800-foot stretch of heavily overgrown brush and dead trees, with many years of accumulated pine needles (in some spots a foot deep) bordering a large housing development. Trees were limbed, dead trees fallen and removed, brush heavily trimmed, and yards of material put through a chipper for recycling. In all, approximately 55 yards of fire hazard material was removed.
- The Warm Springs Mesa Neighborhood Association and the Southwest Idaho RC&D Council began a multi-year project reducing fuels for wildfire. Part of a three-phase project, Phase 1 includes initial removal of invasive plant materials and thinning, installation of a hiking trail for access and to create a defensible control line to limit fire spread, goat grazing, tree and shrub plantings, and application of preemergent herbicide for control of invasive annual grasses.
- The Southwest Idaho RC&D is fiscal agent for both the Boise and Payette Forest Coalitions. The Boise Forest Coalition had a field day with the U.S. Forest Service to view the Upper Mores Creek Restoration Project proposal that is in the early planning stages of restoration of forest health.
- The Treasure Valley Canopy Network (TVCN) builds healthy and vibrant Treasure Valley communities through collaboration, innovation, and sustainability. 2023 was the second year of the Boise Tree Captains Program, which retained and recruited over 20 Tree Captains. These Tree Captains connected with residents and found homes for over 200 trees in neighborhoods that need increased tree canopy to reduce urban heat and improve quality of life. And in September, the Network was informed that the U.S. Forest Service awarded them $1.1 Million to support the Treasure Valley Tree Equity Project that will help them scale up planning for, planting, and growing trees in target neighborhoods in Boise and beyond, into communities all across the Treasure Valley.

Historic Preservation Commission

2024 Grant Awards

The Canyon County Board of Commissioners (BOCC), by resolution, re-established the Canyon County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in January 2013. The HPC is an advisory board in matters pertaining to historic preservation in Canyon County. A unique responsibility of the Canyon County HPC, under the direction of the Board of County Commissioners, is the recommendation and administration of the Canyon County Historic Preservation Grant Award Program. This program funds qualified, non-profit organizations in Canyon County who have a mission of conservation, protection, and maintenance of historic objects, information, or properties. Canyon County sets aside a sliver *(no more than twelve one-thousandth of a percent, or ≤.012%)* of property tax revenue dedicated to a grant award program for historic preservation projects every year. These were the grants recommended to the BOCC for 2024.

Caldwell Historical Society: Requesting funds to hire a professional for the process of petitioning to list the Caldwell Luby Park Rose Garden and pump house on the National Register of Historic Places. **Total Request $11,780**

One unique home in Shalimar Terrace Neighborhood.

Canyon County Historical Society (on behalf of the Nampa Arts and HPC): One application requesting funding for hiring a qualified professional to perform a historic resources survey of two historic and unique Canyon County neighborhoods in Nampa—Shalimar Terrace & Glen View Estates.

Total Request: $19,716

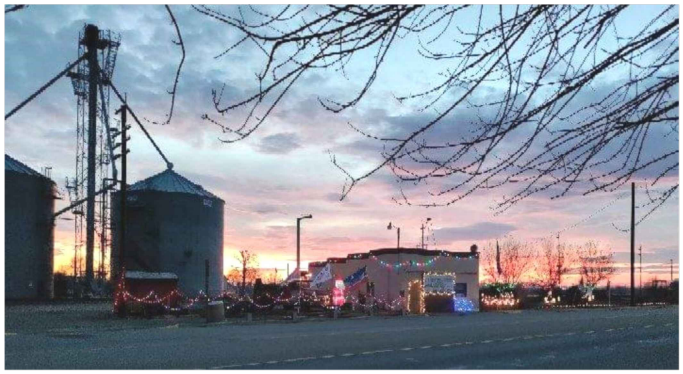
Historical Society of Middleton: One application requesting funding to continue a historical survey of downtown Middleton, a project started and awarded HPC funding in FY2022. **Total Request: $5,000**

Melba Valley Historical Society: Requesting funding to repair and restore one of the old hotel rooms in the Museum.

Total Request: $7,960

Notus Historical Society: Requesting funding for a Heat/AC unit for the Notus Museum.

Total Request: $6,000



Notus Historical Society lit up during the holidays.

Historic Preservation FY25 Grant Application Timeline

February 13th, 2024—Grant Workshop

- Provide instructions and overview of application process
- Provide advice and answer questions
- Applications will be available after this meeting

February—April, 2024—Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will offer advice, answer questions, and review draft applications.

April 30th, 2024—Applications due

Via mail: Canyon County
ATTN: BOCC/Jenen Ross
1115 Albany St.
Caldwell, ID 83605

OR via email: Jenen.Ross@canyoncounty.id.gov

May 14th, 2024 HPC Meeting—HPC will review applications.

June 11th, 2024 HPC Meeting—HPC decision on funding recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.

Upon approval of the Canyon County FY25 budget, notice of awards will be announced. Agreements will be mailed after October 2024.

Above, right: Two of the log cabin-style homes found in the Glen View Estates neighborhood.

Middle, right: State Bank of Middleton building, circa 1906.

Below, right: Melba Valley Museum, built in 1919.

CANYON COUNTY
Historic Preservation Grant Workshop—FY25

Join us for an informative workshop on the application process for FY25 Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) grants

Workshop will:

- Provide instructions and overview of application process
- Give advice and answer questions

Applications for FY25 Historic Preservation grants will be available ***after*** this meeting

Date

Feb. 13th, 2024

Location

Lake Lowell Office
12996 Iowa Ave.
Nampa, ID 83686

Time

6:30 PM

Larry Haney took these photos one wintery morning after the new year. It's fun to see the petroglyphs "pop" in the winter sun and the Snake River looks great in any light!

Above: Guffey Bridge in the distance

Middle: Anthropomorphic petroglyph among others.

Below: The sun rises through the tule and cattail reeds on the riverbank.

Apply now to work at Canyon County Parks'

CANOE SCIENCE CAMP

Canoe Science Camp Field Instructors will serve as outdoor educators and canoe guides for **Canyon County Parks'** summer 2024 **Canoe Science Camps** at Lake Lowell Park in Nampa. Field Instructors will work in an outdoor setting, teaching children about ecology, environmental science, canoe safety, and recreation. You will also learn and assist with curriculum design and program logistics.

This is a temporary full-time position.

Pay Rate: $18/hr ($4,320 for 6 weeks of work)
This position can also serve as a paid internship for undergrad students.

SCHEDULE

- **May 29-31 & June 3-7**—Training Week
- **June 10-14**—Canoe Science Camp 1st Session
- **June 17-21—C**anoe Science Camp 2nd Session
- **June 24-28—C**anoe Science Camp 3rd Session
- ***July 1-5 OFF***
- **July 8-12—C**anoe Science Camp 4th Session
- **July 15-16—S**taff Debrief and Camp Cleanup

Apply Today!

Applicants should apply for the position starting in March at www.canyoncounty.id.gov/human-resources.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Strong background in education, natural resources, environmental sciences, biology, or a related field
- Prior outdoor education and/or leadership experience
- Prior experience working with children in an outdoor setting
- Comfortable with the idea of paddling and steering a canoe and providing canoeing instruction to groups of students
- Background in lesson planning, curriculum design, educational programming, or ecology/biology preferred
- Must successfully complete a background investigation
- Valid driver's license required

IN THE WEEDS: RUSSIAN THISTLE

By Laura Barbour – Assistant Director

The iconic cowboy and the equally-iconic tumbleweed.

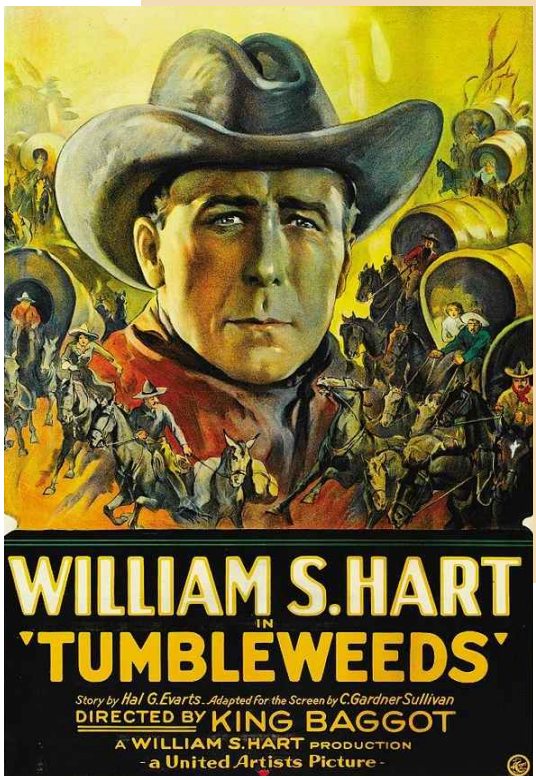
A figure on horseback emerges from the shimmering heat waves in the distance, a rugged and weathered lawman wearing a dusty badge and a steely gaze. He guides his horse with a firm hand, eyes scanning the town with a mix of determination and weariness. Dismounting in front of the dilapidated sheriff's office, he hitches his horse to the post. As he adjusts his hat, the scars etched into his weathered face are revealed. His eyes narrow as he takes in the abandoned town, his senses keenly attuned to the slightest sound or movement.

A sudden guest of wind sends tumbleweeds rolling down the deserted street.

--Adapted from Chat GPT, prompted to "write the first page of screenplay for a Western movie"

This is the first scene of a film that doesn't exist, adapted from text written by AI tool ChatGPT. It is rife with common Western tropes, from the dusty lawman riding into town, to the windblown tumbleweeds rolling down the street. Tumbleweeds have become one of the most pervasive symbols of the American West, their carried-on-the-breeze nature associated with the drifting, unattached lifestyle of the cowboys. In the 1925 silent film *Tumbleweeds*, cowboys describe themselves as rambling "tumbleweeds," in their opening song. The tumbleweed motif was used so frequently in Western films, rolling across a desolate desert or deserted town, that it has become a cliché. But for all its resonance, the iconic tumbleweed (like the cowboy lifestyle it symbolizes) was not one of the first characters on the scene of the American West: both were third act arrivals, not appearing on the stage until the "Wild West" era of the mid to late 1800s.

Though tumbleweeds were historically associated with the cowboy protagonists of Westerns, they may have more in common with the rustlers and the outlaws with their black hats and unscrupulous morals. In a turn of plot more reminiscent of a Bond film than a cowboy movie, they have been exposed as "Russian invaders." The organism that we commonly call "tumbleweed" is also known as Russian thistle, *Salsola* (or *Kali*) *tragus*. It was likely introduced to the United States when it stowed away as a contaminant of agricultural imports, such as flaxseed. Because they are common crop weeds, and their seeds are similar in size to cereal grains, it was impossible to separate Russian thistle seeds from grain shipments, and they continued to be introduced and re-introduced to different parts of the U.S. Once they arrived, the new transcontinental railroad, as well as the growing network of irrigation canals and ditches, carried them far from their points of origin. Meanwhile, intensive grazing, mining, construction, and other human activities had disturbed the native ecosystems, leaving acres and acres of disturbed ground wide open to colonization by this well-adapted newcomer.



Tumbleweeds became so prevalent in the west that they made movies about them.

In fact, a tumbleweed is not so much a specific plant but a strategy for seed dispersal. There are several other non-native species known as tumbleweeds, including tall tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*) and several *Kochia* species. When tumbleweed plants dry, the entire above-ground plant abscises, or separates from the main root or stem, and blows away. Plants that use this strategy often have an umbrella-like shape that allows them to catch the wind. Russian thistle, the classic Western tumbleweed, is oblong-shaped rather than perfectly round. This means that it doesn't so much "roll along" but "tumble"—jarring seeds loose and scattering them on new terrain with each bounce. As a large plant can contain up to 200,000 seeds, it is highly invasive; it's able to colonize large swaths of land quite quickly. Parts of Eurasia are at similar latitudes, and have similar climates, to the Western United States, and therefore Russian thistle was quite well-equipped, upon arrival, to compete with native plants. It can germinate quickly, needs relatively little moisture, has a high tolerance for drought and salinity, and thrives on disturbed or eroded soils.

Tumbleweeds are highly flammable, contributing to wildfires every year.

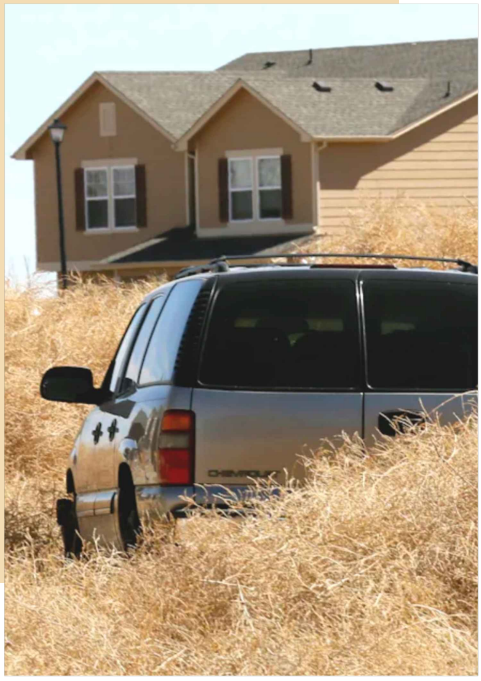
Tumbleweeds have become quite common across the West. Along with their fellow imports cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*), it has infiltrated much of the native sagebrush-steppe ecosystem, disturbing ecological processes and contributing to its decline. In disturbed areas, it can easily create a monoculture, forming a colony so dense that no other species can grow there. While young green plants can be browsed, they dry quickly and the hard, spiny tumbleweed that remains is inedible to livestock and wildlife. Additionally, Russian thistle is highly flammable, and can help wildfires spread across firebreaks, when flaming tumbleweeds are caught by the wind and carried far in advance of the main fire. Scientific research has shown that highly flammable invasive annual plants, such as cheatgrass and Russian thistle, are wreaking havoc on the fire regimes of Western landscapes, causing wildfires that are increasingly large, frequent, and intense.

In addition to its ecological impacts, Russian thistle is known to attack human infrastructure on occasion. Strong winds can cause thousands of tumbleweeds to pile up on roads and highways, sometimes completely blocking them while burying vehicles. In 1989, an army of tumbleweeds invaded the town of Mobridge, South Dakota. The tumbleweed crop had spread on recently exposed bare ground as water receded on nearby Lake Oahe during a dry, hot summer. Then, a violent November windstorm snapped the tumbleweeds free from their roots and slammed them into the town, forcing them into entryways and piling them into alleys and against houses and storefronts. Streets were blocked and many houses were buried up to their roofs. More recently, the city of Victorville, California (northeast of Los Angeles) experienced a tumbleweed invasion in 2018, when tumbleweeds that had piled against entryways blocked the residents of about 100 homes from exiting their houses.

Based on the narrative above, it's easy to typify Russian thistle as a stock character, the unmitigated villain of the piece. However, (like all good movie villains) Russian thistle is a complex character, not as one-dimensional as it first seems. While its invasion of the West has had devastating effects on our home landscape, it does have some redeeming qualities. Because it thrives in disturbed soils, such as mine tailings, it could help stabilize the soil and prevent pollution from spreading. Additionally, it can grow in soil with high concentrations of toxic heavy metals, absorbing them through their roots and

concentrating them into their tissues. Scientists have begun to evaluate the potential of Russian thistle in phytoremediation projects—using plants to clean up soils by removing hazardous materials. Russian thistle has been shown to actively absorb toxic heavy metal ions such as cadmium, chromium, copper, and lead.

The West has changed dramatically since the late 1800s, but the tumbleweed remains. In fact, Russian thistle is many times more widespread now than it ever was during the cowboy heyday. Perhaps one of the most successful strategies of the Russian thistle has been its ability to change with the West—and to change the West through its impacts on the ecosystems it invades. The classic narrative of the "Wild West" has always been one about adaptability, resilience, about tough and resourceful characters willing to do what they had to do to survive. Russian thistle has all these traits in abundance. Although it is not native to our environment, it has continued to adapt and evolve since its arrival, amassing an ever-increasing arsenal of survival strategies.



A constant battle in the west.

There is some evidence that certain populations of Russian thistle are developing resistance to one of our most frequently-used weapons in the battle against them: the common herbicide glyphosate. And, in the early 2000s, a new "monster" tumbleweed was discovered in California's Central Valley. This new species, *Salsola ryanii*, is a hybrid of Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*) and spineless saltwort (*Salsola australis*), another non-native tumbleweed that is likely native to Australia or South Africa. Hybrid plant species are often allopolyploid, meaning that they contain an increased number of chromosomes compared with their parent species. *Salsola ryanii* is no exception, and the larger amount of genetic material it contains gives it hybrid vigor—increased size, growth rate, and adaptability. A single plant can grow up to 6 feet tall (about twice the size of the typical Russian thistle) and weigh up to 13 pounds. This larger size allows *Salsola ryanii* to bear a correspondingly larger number of seeds. Since its discovery, it has been rapidly expanding its range and even outcompeting other invasive tumbleweeds as it spreads across California. It is likely that this new tumbleweed species will become increasingly invasive in the coming years, posing a heightened threat to ecosystems across the West.

Tumbleweed seeds.

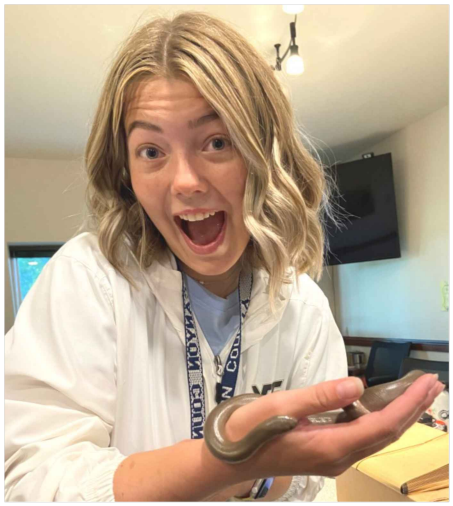
Today, the tumbleweed remains a symbol, albeit an ambiguous one. It retains a strong association with the West, both the old and the new—"the good, the bad and the ugly." It brings to mind desolate landscapes, wide-open and windswept, while reminding us of the role it has played in bringing about their degradation. It's a symbol of the impact we humans have on the places we live, for better and for worse. Recently, efforts have focused on restoration. Mitigating disturbance and selective control methods have shown promise in decreasing amounts of Russian thistle, allowing native plant communities to begin to recover. While they will forever be associated with Westerns, the West will be better off in the long run with fewer tumbling tumbleweeds. ■

Rubber Boas:
Coiling their Way into our Hearts

By Paige Calley—Canoe Science Camp Instructor

Pergie the Rubber Boa—visiting from Northwest Nazarene University, courtesy of NNU graduate Lily Brown.

"Snakes, why did it have to be snakes?" These iconic words uttered by Indiana Jones have been ones that I have often resonated with when spotting one of our reptile friends out on a hike. Recently, I have discovered and interacted with a certain kind of snake that has made me change my tune. Idaho, known for its stunning landscapes and diverse wildlife, is home to a number of species that play a crucial role in maintaining the delicate balance of its ecosystems. Among them, the rubber boa (*Charina bottae*) stands out as a fascinating creature deserving of attention.



Paige with Pergie the rubber boa.

The rubber boa, a native species of Idaho, is the smallest boa in North America and is one of only two boa species found in North America. Rubber boas typically reach a length of around 18-33 inches. Sporting a distinctive smooth, rubber-like skin, ranging in different shades of brown, these snakes are often characterized by their gentle nature and docile temperament. Rubber boas are also used by some therapists when helping patients overcome a phobia of snakes because of their demeanor. This nature of theirs is what makes them such a great ambassador for teaching about the importance of snakes in our ecosystems.

As an integral part of Idaho's food web, rubber boas act as both the predator and the prey, occupying a vital position in maintaining ecological balance. They primarily feed on small mammals, lizards, birds, and other snakes. By regulating the population of these rodents and other creatures, rubber boas help to prevent destructive outbreaks that can negatively impact crops, forests, and human health.

Rubber boas can be shy which leads them to become expert burrowers, capable of creating and utilizing complex underground tunnels. This ability to burrow and hide in crevices, along with their decreased activity in the daytime, is what makes them a challenge to spot. Their burrowing activities help aerate the soil, promote water infiltration, and increase nutrient distribution. This enhances the overall health of Idaho's ecosystems and benefits a wide range of plants, insects, and other organisms that rely on healthy soil conditions.

Misconception and fear surrounding snakes can often lead to unnecessary maltreatment. It is essential to create awareness about the importance of rubber boas and to recognize and promote the conservation of these remarkable animals to ensure that they have a continued presence in Idaho's ecosystems. By understanding their significance, we can work towards coexisting harmoniously with these fascinating creatures.

Rubber boas, with their gentle nature and remarkable ecological contributions, hold a special place in Idaho's biodiversity. As stewards of the land, it is our responsibility to safeguard these fascinating creatures and their habitats. By recognizing their importance and promoting their conservation, we can ensure a future where rubber boas continue to thrive and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Idaho's natural heritage. ■

This piece is part of a series where we've invited our summer Canoe Camp instructors to write an article on a subject of their choosing. Paige loved this little snake and chose to learn more about them!

Canoe Science Camp

We like to be able to say that we're getting better at things. Canoe Science Camp this year was one of those things. It just went smoothly. A great candidate pool led to great hiring this year and we couldn't have been happier with the staff we got to work with. Averey Koonce, a student at University of Idaho, Summer Calley, a teacher in Canyon County, Julia Guzman, a graduate of University of Miami (Ohio), Lily Brown, a graduate of Northwest Nazarene University (and current Celebration Park Interpretive Specialist), and Paige Calley, a student at Boise State University, all brought excellent experiences, knowledge, and attitudes to the summer camp.

Continuing from the success last year implementing boat safety certification through Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, we certified another nearly 50 kids in Paddlesports Safety, adding more knowledgeable recreational users to the waterways of Idaho. Thanks to Sgt. Jason Roberts of the Canyon County Sheriff's Marine Patrol for his help with this endeavor. Sgt. Roberts is always looking to certify more kids (and adults) in boat safety, so if you or your group would like to get certified, please reach out to Marine Patrol at 208-454-7531.

Another fun addition to this year's program was the expansion of "Meet a Scientist." For this, Instructor Lily Brown, with her Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Biology, brought in several interesting species of reptiles, including tree frogs from South America, a bull

Above: Instructors with their students out on Lake Lowell.

Right: Canoe Science Camp student David enjoying Pergie the rubber boa.

snake, and Pergie, the rubber boa. Students loved it when Lily showed them all the reptiles and then they were so surprised when she pulled this docile little snake out of her pocket!

One of the biggest points we try to emphasize at Canoe Science Camp is that anyone can be a scientist – even kids, and that science can be done anywhere – even in their own backyards! Instructors took kids onto the beaches and docks of Lake Lowell to conduct hydrology testing – leaning about pH and testing how much dissolved oxygen there was in the lake – and what those numbers mean for the fish. They also learned about and looked for aquatic macroinvertebrates (bugs) and how bioindicator species tell us information about the quality of the water. Students really enjoyed using magnification lenses to search the water samples, often shocked by just how many living things there were in the lake water!

As it's called ***Canoe*** Science Camp, we also made sure to include lots of canoeing, not just learning safety, but learning to really enjoy paddle sports, enjoying nature and being outside. Studies show that this generation of kids spends the least time outdoors of any generation. We hope to encourage kids to get outside, whether it's paddling a kayak, learning about animals, or just digging in the mud for bugs. For the creative-minded, we included lessons in art—painting, field sketching, and even writing in nature.

The biggest takeaway we hope students gained was that paddle sports are a fun, accessible, inexpensive way to have fun in Idaho. With the influx of less expensive sit-on-top kayaks and stand-up paddleboards, many more people are using Idaho waterways to recreate. We hope that kids who attend Canoe Science Camp take away good habits in safety, conservation and leave-no-trace, and hopefully a spark to continue pursuing science as they grow.

Above: Instructor Averey Koonce teaches students about pH and dissolved oxygen in Lake Lowell. Neutral pH and high oxygen levels create a good environment for fish to thrive.

Middle: Instructor Summer Calley and her boatmates practicing paddling on the water. While some students started out nervous, most were naturals at paddling!

Below: The kids loved being able to interact with Sheriff's deputies. These girls asked to be able to get in the patrol boat with the lights on and were delighted when they were told yes!

Our Friends' Big News:
Deer Flat Urban Refuge

By Devyn Hallamore— Community Conservation Ambassador, Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

In Spring 2023, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Martha Williams visited Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to announce a $1 million investment for community partnerships. The funding will be added to the Refuge's base budget annually and used to continue efforts that increase equitable access to nature and conservation programming. The investment is a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System's Urban Wildlife Conservation Program (UWCP), which engages communities in collaborative, transformational partnerships that support equitable access to nature-based experiences. During her visit, Director Williams shared, "Working in partnership with local communities and stakeholders is critical to the successful conservation of wildlife and to creating more outdoor opportunities in nature-deprived communities."

Locally, this collaboration takes place in the Treasure Valley Urban Conservation Partnership (TVUCP) – a growing coalition of community partners aiming to be an asset to the Treasure Valley communities they serve. Fostering community connections, the TVUCP empowers diverse community members by reducing barriers and increasing equitable access to conservation and other community-led efforts. Members of the TVUCP include Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Canyon County Parks, Cultural, & Natural Resources, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Nampa and Caldwell School Districts, Central Elementary's Family Community Resource Center, Peques Nature Club, and The Nature Conservancy of Idaho, among others.

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland speaks at the event to announce the new Urban status.

"Something I've learned in my career is that we can do more together than we can apart," said Eddie Owens, Refuge Manager at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. "The more we reach out and include our community, the more able we will be to successfully meet our mission to ensure a future where Americans benefit from fish, wildlife, plants, and the habitats they depend on." Refuge staff invite you to come by the Visitor Center (13751 Upper Embankment Road, Nampa, ID 83686) to learn more and get involved.

Volunteers plant sagebrush to commemorate the announcement.

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge was established by Theodore Roosevelt in 1909 to provide a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. The Refuge encompasses two units totaling approximately 11,617 acres. The Lake Lowell Unit is approximately 10,582 acres; it is an overlay refuge on the Bureau of Reclamation's Lake Lowell Reservoir irrigation facility and includes adjacent uplands. The Snake River Islands Unit encompasses approximately 1,035 acres on 104 islands in the Snake River. The Refuge provides opportunities for a variety of activities and is a popular recreation destination.

Humor:

Storm Woes

By Dylon Starry

I'm one of those people that likes to set up lawn chairs in the garage and sit and watch a big thunderstorm. They're awesome! In the same way we drive around and oooh and ahhh at Christmas lights every December, we sit and watch the lightning show, anticipating the next big boom of thunder. We watch the hail bouncing off the driveway and laugh as the French drain goes into beast mode and water fills up the yard.

But not anymore!

This summer was too much! We shouldn't be getting that kind of weather in Idaho! The first storm blew a massive tree out of position, pulling the root ball two feet up and leaving the tree pitched dangerously over the gasoline tank, so we had to cut it down. The next storm blew a tree over and punched it through the shop roof! Another storm shredded the life jacket loaner station at Celebration Park and a bolt of lightning snapped an entire limb off a tree and blew the bark off its trunk! Meteorologist Vin Crosby, who works for the Sheriff's Department, said that this is caused by the lake effect, which brings more weather into areas surrounding water. All in all, we had to have five trees cut down this summer and replace quite a bit of damaged buildings, infrastructure, and other plants around the county.

We're asking, please, for a mild winter!

Right: Some of the damage from storms this summer.

How IDAHO got its SMILE

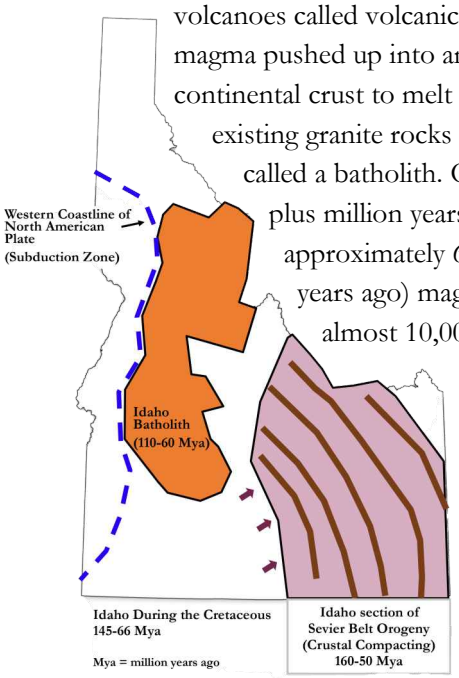
By Nicki Schwend, Director

If you look at a topographic map of the United States you'll notice that the state of Idaho has a 400-mile-long, approximately 50-mile-wide area of flat land running across the entire southern end of the state. This flat expanse is called the Snake River Plain and it curves in such a way that it has led to the nickname the 'Idaho Smile'. For a long time, geologists puzzled about the origins of the Snake River Plain as if it was a geological feature created entirely by the same process. Due to the uniformity and contiguous nature of its topography it was presumed that there was one single explanation for this distinctively flat region. It wasn't until 1959 when H.E. Malde recognized differences between fault lines in the eastern and western Snake River Plain that geologists began to comprehend there were distinct origin stories for the two halves of the smile. From this point forward, geologists have pieced together the evolution of the Snake River Plain by studying the Western versus the Eastern sides and the different volcanic and tectonic activities that created their respective flat topographies.

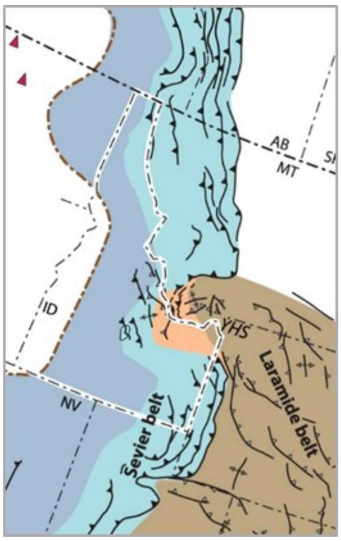
Geologists today have come to understand the creation of the Idaho Smile according to the following chronological processes and events:

Important Events of the Cretaceous (145—66 Mya)

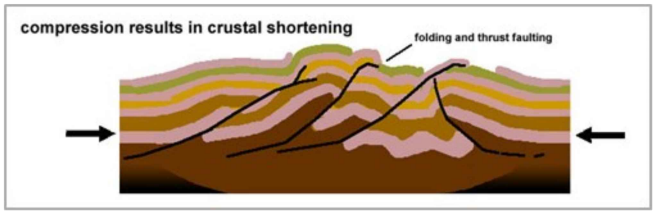
During the latter part of the Cretaceous period, Idaho was actually part of the western coast of the North American Plate (yes, Idaho was once oceanfront property!). At this time, the ocean floor of the Farallon Plate was being subducted underneath the westward-moving North American Plate. This means the ocean floor (and ocean water) were being pushed directly underneath land that would later become Idaho, and that ocean floor was being melted or 'recycled' into the extremely hot mantle. This subduction process led to magma pushing up into and through the earth's crust, causing both a thickening of the crust and also creating mountains; where the magma pushed to the surface volcanoes were formed. Volcanoes often line the edges of subduction zones to create belts or lines of volcanoes called volcanic arcs. In Idaho, the magma pushed up into and through the continental crust to melt and mix with the existing granite rocks and create what's called a batholith. Over a period of 50-plus million years (between approximately 60—110 million years ago) magma intruded into almost 10,000 square miles of Idaho to form what we now know as the Idaho Batholith. This geologic feature is essentially a giant underground



igneous mountain, composed primarily of granitic type rocks that covers most of central Idaho and forms the northern boundary of the Western Snake River Plain.



At this same time, east-central Idaho was undergoing different mountain-building events, a process called orogeny, in which the earth's crust is being compacted, folded and deformed to create mountain ranges. Southeastern Idaho is part of the Sevier orogeny (primarily forming around 120-80



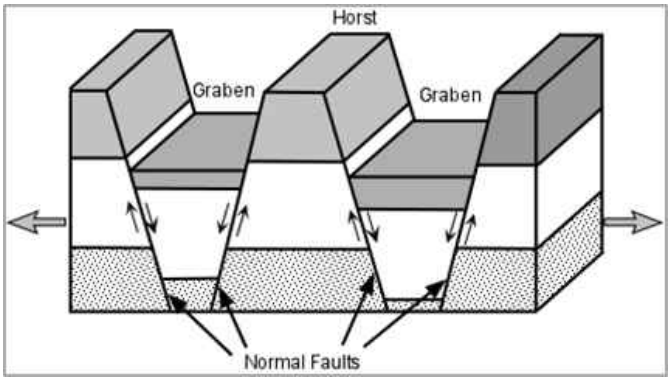
Mya), a 'fold-thrust belt' of mountains that runs the length of North America (Alaska to Mexico). This belt includes the northwest-southeast parallel running mountain ranges of east -central Idaho located north and south of the Snake River Plain. Until around 10 million years ago, parallel mountain ranges ran across southeastern Idaho.

Today the Pioneer Mountains, Lost River Range, Lemhi Range and Beaverhead Mountains to the north of the Snake River Plain are cut off from the Bannock Range, Portneuf Range, Blackfoot Mountains, and Caribou Range to the south, where they once had been connected through to each other.

Important Events of the Miocene 23—5 Mya

Had the mountain ranges of eastern Idaho never been bisected by the Idaho Smile, the entire area would be a part of the modern-day Basin and Range Province. This physiographic region, not to be confused with the hydrographic Great Basin (water related boundaries), is the result of crustal extension. The thick mountainous crust (formed during crustal compacting of the Cordilleran & Sevier Orogeny) began to collapse and spread apart in an east-west direction after the compacting tectonic forces ceased and were replaced with tectonic extension. With the expansion of the crust in eastern Idaho, faults formed along the western boundaries of the parallel mountain ranges causing some land to sink while other land rose. The term Basin and Range is also sometimes called horst and graben where the horst refers to uplifted blocks of land (mountains) and the graben refers to land that drops down to form a valley or trench between the uplifted horsts. This crustal extension in eastern Idaho started approximately 17 Mya.

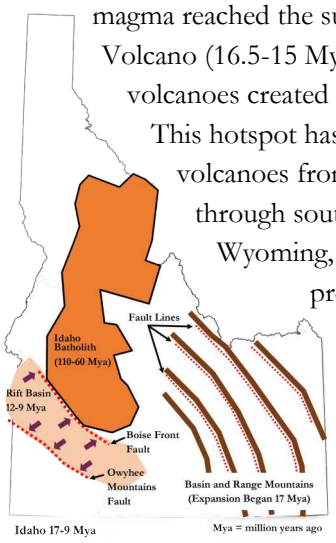
Beginning 12 million years ago the area to the southwest of the Idaho Batholith began to rift, initiating the first stages of creating the Western portion of the flat Snake River Plain. Land between fractures in the earth's crust began to move apart from each other to create a rift valley. These fractures, or faults are known as the Boise Front Fault and the Owyhee Mountains Fault, and from 12—9 million years ago the rifting created a valley approximately 60 miles wide. Not only did the valley widen, but it also dropped in elevation as



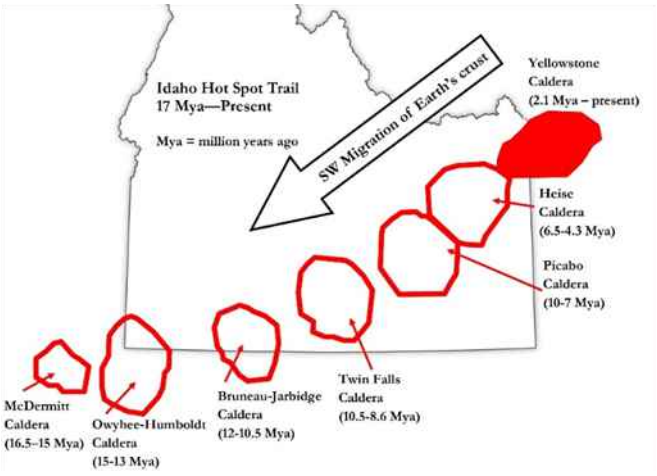
the land 'fell' or sank into the widening gap. Many of us refer to the 'Treasure Valley' on a regular basis, thinking only about it in terms of the cities and towns we've created along the Snake River without realizing we are in a rift valley. The Treasure Valley is a rift valley (though rifting has stopped) just like the East African Rift, the Baikal Rift Valley in Russia, or the Rio Grande Rift of today. Perhaps we should be calling ourselves the Treasure Valley Rift instead of simply the Treasure Valley.

Across the state, while basin and range extension was occurring in eastern Idaho, a hotspot called the Yellowstone hotspot formed at the Oregon, Nevada border just past the southwest corner of Idaho. It was here that a plume of

magma reached the surface, creating the McDermitt Volcano (16.5-15 Mya), the oldest in a sequence of volcanoes created by the Yellowstone hotspot. This hotspot has created a chronological line of volcanoes from the Oregon, Nevada border, through southeastern Idaho to the Wyoming, Montana border where the present-day Yellowstone volcano sits. Looking at maps, this gives the perception that the hot spot is moving in a northeastward direction leaving a trail of migrating volcanoes behind, however, the hotspot is stationary and it is actually the crust of North America moving in a southwest direction that has caused the hotspot to surface in new locations as the crust has moved over it. This trail of volcanoes and eruptions is what led to the central and eastern Snake River Plain that bisected the basin and range mountains of southwestern Idaho, clearing a wide path between them.



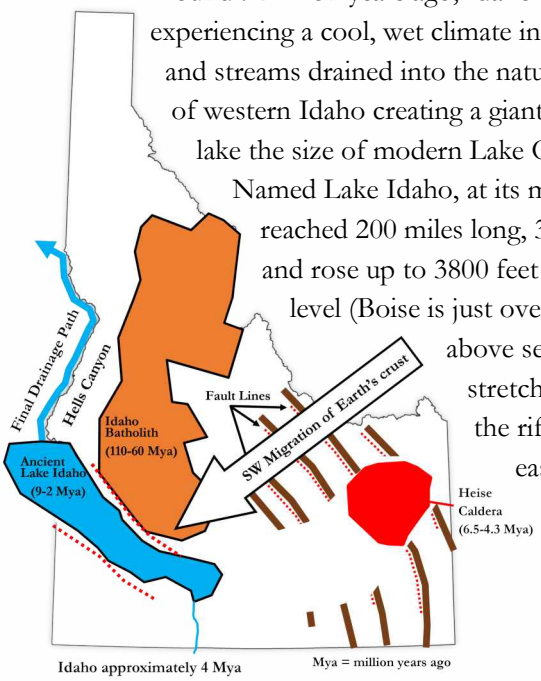
(Side note: The Island chain of Hawaii is a trail of chronologically-lined volcanic islands created by the Hawaiian Hotspot plume below the Pacific Plate.)



The Yellowstone hotspot has left a chronological line of ancient calderas spanning 16.5 million years. Calderas are formed after a volcanic eruption where magma is emptied from the chamber and the volcano collapses leaving a large depression or cauldron-like crater on the landscape. After the McDermitt Caldera came the Owyhee-Humboldt Caldera, then the Bruneau-Jarbidge Caldera edging deeper into Idaho. Around 11 million years ago it was the Twin Falls Caldera that began the process of bisecting the basin and range mountains of southeastern Idaho. The Picabo Caldera and Heise Caldera continued the process of bisecting the mountain between 10—4 million years ago. The current Yellowstone Volcano emerged two million years ago and exists today in a dormant state. The last major eruption happened 631,000 years ago. Eventually, a new volcano will form to the northeast of Yellowstone and the Yellowstone volcano will get less and less active as it is displaced from the hotspot.

Ancient Lake Idaho (9—2 Mya)

Around 9 million years ago, Idaho was experiencing a cool, wet climate in which rivers and streams drained into the natural rift basin of western Idaho creating a giant freshwater lake the size of modern Lake Ontario. Named Lake Idaho, at its maximum, it reached 200 miles long, 35 miles wide and rose up to 3800 feet above sea level (Boise is just over 2,700 feet above sea level). It stretched through the rift basin, from eastern Oregon into south-central Idaho and existed from 9—2 million years ago, fluctuating in size and capacity over the approximately 7 million years it existed. For the most part, this rift lake drained south into Nevada, yet sometime after 4 million years ago its waters rose to a level that caused overflow at its northern shore. The lake water drained north, then westward to connect with the Columbia River. This is one of the major events that helped to carve Hells Canyon, currently the deepest canyon in North America (2,000 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon in Arizona). By 2 million years ago the lake was drained and 'replaced' by the Snake River.

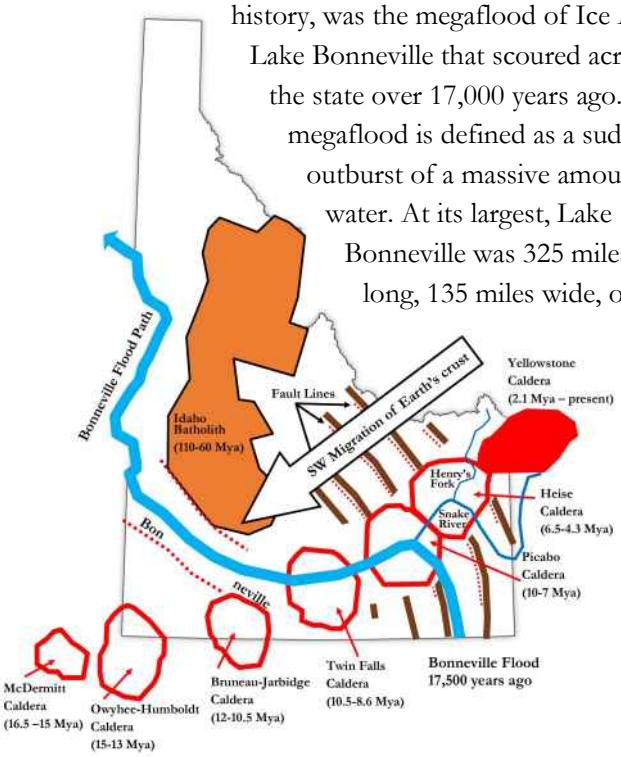


The headwater of the modern Snake River, or the 'Snake' as many people refer to it, starts at the southern boundary of Yellowstone National Park (Wyoming). From here, it flows south through Grand Teton National Park and the town of Jackson before briefly altering course. Twenty miles south of Jackson, the Snake heads northwest through the lowlands of the Swan Valley area between the Snake River Mountains and the Caribou Range. Just south of the town of Rexburg, the river reaches the flat expanse of the Snake River Plain

and the Henry's Fork feeds into it. The Snake then resumes its travels west through the low-lying topography of the Snake River Plain. At the Oregon border, the Snake River abruptly turns north through the Hells Canyon and eventually drains out to sea, just as the water from Lake Idaho had.

Snake River & Bonneville Flood (17,000 ya)

Another critical event in shaping southern Idaho's geologic history, was the megaflood of Ice Age Lake Bonneville that scoured across the state over 17,000 years ago. A megaflood is defined as a sudden outburst of a massive amount of water. At its largest, Lake Bonneville was 325 miles long, 135 miles wide, over



1,000 feet deep, and covered a large part of Utah, and just into Nevada and Idaho. Like Lake Idaho, this lake existed during a wetter and colder climate at the end of the last Ice Age, between 30,000 and 13,000 years ago. At some point a lava flow diverted the Bear River to drain into Lake Bonneville instead of the Snake River, significantly increasing the amount of water that collectively flowed into the lake. Over time, the lake water eventually reached Red Rocks Pass in southeastern Idaho, where it either burst through or overflowed and rapidly down-cut though the softer sedimentary layer at the pass. Like pulling the plug in a bath, within a matter of weeks, approximately 1,100 cubic miles of water, or the equivalent of Lake Michigan, catastrophically flooded into and through the Snake River's path, through Hells Canyon to the Columbia River and out to the Pacific Ocean. The Great Salt Lake we know today is the 'puddle' left behind from Lake Bonneville.

Evidence of this megaflood are found scattered along the Snake River in the form of rounded basalt boulders that were once the bed-load of the flood. These basalt rocks were ripped off canyon walls and tumbled downstream in the water, rounding their shapes. In areas where the floodplain opened wide or when the force and velocity of the flood diminished, the 'melon gravel' as they are called, were deposited across the landscape with the heaviest and biggest dropping out first. In several areas, such as at Celebration Park, there is an obvious sorting of boulder sizes from large to small where the Snake River Canyon widens after a narrow stretch of canyon.

Continued Extension and Volcanism

Idaho has continued its extensive stretching, as is evident by relatively recent earthquakes and continued volcanic activity in the state (not just at the Yellowstone Volcano).

Idaho ranks high in terms of its earthquake activity. Most of Idaho's earthquakes are the direct result of basin and range extension and volcanism. Eastern Idaho's basin and range mountains (north and south of the Snake River Plain) are lined by range-front faults on the southwest boundaries of the mountains. As the crust expands, the valleys drop and ranges rise in elevation along these fault-block lines. Every now and then, this crustal expansion happens very suddenly in the form of an earthquake. The historic Borah Earthquake on October 28th, 1983 near Challis Idaho resulted in the valley and mountains shifting around 9 feet apart vertically. The valley dropped around 8 feet, while the mountains rose 1 foot). This registered as a 6.9 magnitude earthquake along

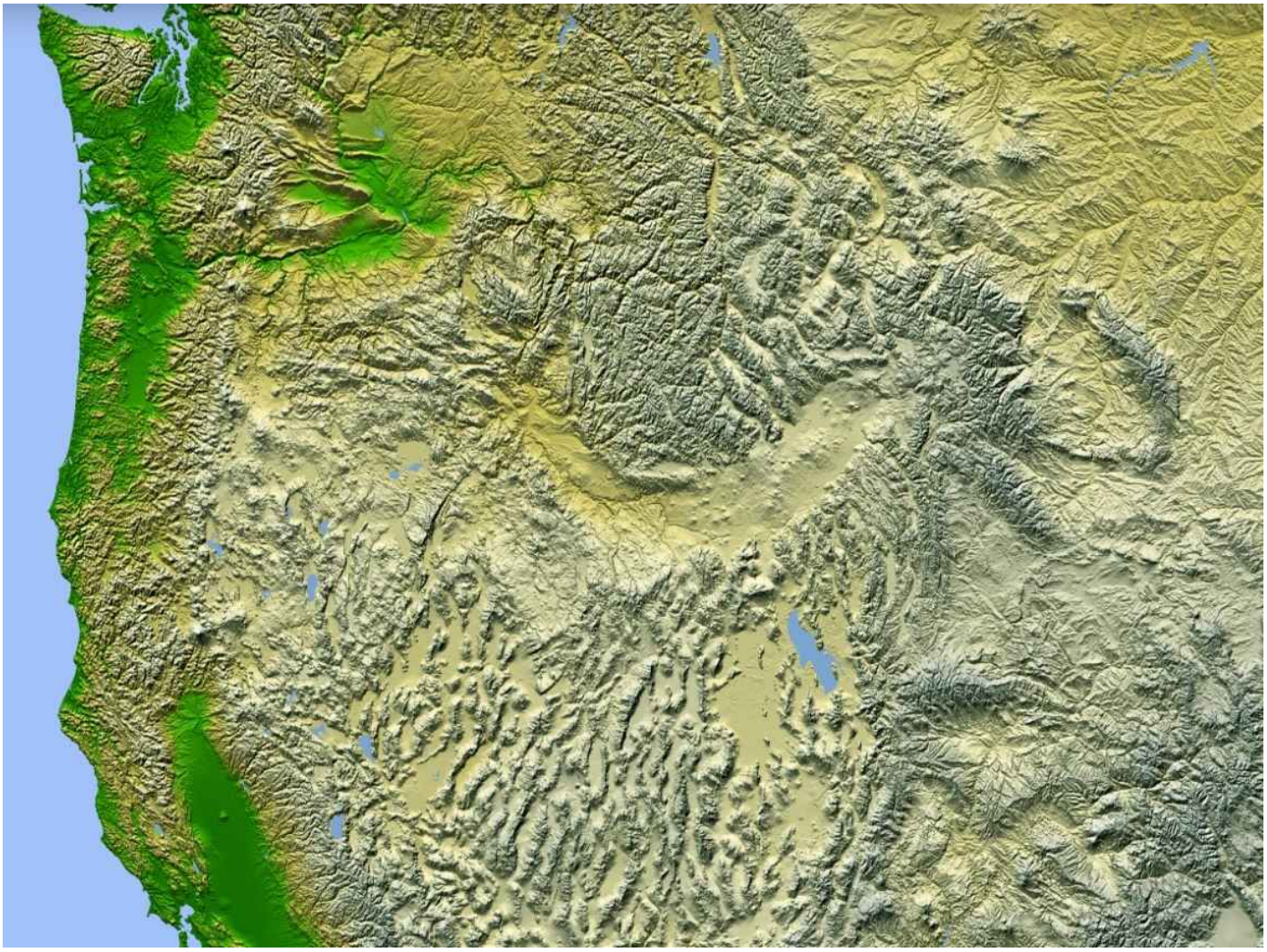
the Lost River Range Fault and left a 21-mile visible scar. The most recent memorable earthquake was 6.5 magnitude earthquake near Stanley, Idaho on March 31st, 2020. Due to the basin and range expansion with fault-blocks along the ranges, Idaho is naturally susceptible to earthquakes.

Crustal extension along the flattened Eastern Snake River Plain has led to continued volcanic activity instead of the range-front faulting just discussed. The thinning crust in the flat plain area has created faults or fissures that enable magma to reach the surface mostly in the form of lava flows, cinder cones, and spatter cones. Called volcanic rift zones, these rifting fissures are filled with volcanic activities and have created landforms such as the Craters of the Moon National Monument, and lava fields like Hell's Half Acre, Cerro Grande, or the Wapi. These rift fissures are oriented northwest to southeast just like the range-front faults of the basin and range surrounding the Snake River Plain. Craters of the Moon is just 15,000 years old and has a history of eight primary eruptive periods and over 60 lava flows that currently cover over 600 square miles. As the earth's crust continues to stretch across the Snake River Plain, volcanic activity will continue to 'fill the gaps' and areas like Craters of the Moon will certainly be active again in the future.

Returning to Idaho's Smile

Now that you know the geologic history of the entire Snake River Plain, you can appreciate the Idaho Smile with a smile of your own. ■

Test yourself: Can you find Idaho?



BUS Scholarships

FALL WINNERS ANNOUNCED

10 Schools

A lottery system took 28 schools requesting to be considered for the bus scholarships and picked 10 at random to receive $150 to help fund transportation to and from Canyon County Park field trips.

Wide Reach

Winners included schools in Canyon and Ada Counties - allowing students from all across southern Idaho to experience Canyon County Parks programs.

Generous Donors

These awards were made possible by generous grants and donations by individuals and groups committed to ensuring that the educational opportunities we provide are accessible to the greatest possible number of teachers, schools, and students in our region.

CONTACT US

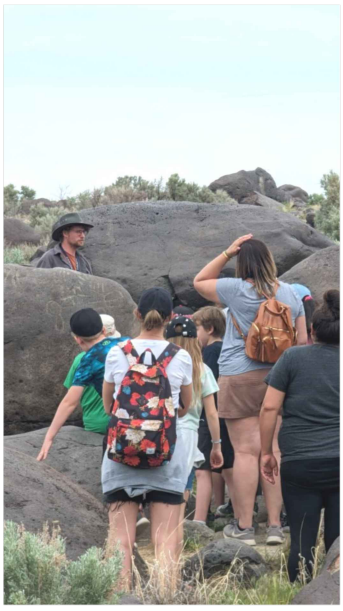
1115 Albany St.
Caldwell, ID 83605

208-455-6022
www.canyoncounty.id.gov/parks

Fall Field Trips

Another season done and looking forward to the next! This fall marked another wonderful field trip season full of excitement, lots of learning, and high praise for our staff and programs. One teacher said, "We had so much fun today at Celebration Park! We wish we could put in an atlatl range at our school and have your staff come run it!"






School	Date	Number
Hillcrest	9/6/2023	68
Idaho Virtual Academy	9/8/2023	75
Whittier	9/11/2023	75
Trail Wind	9/12/2023	90
Zion School	9/13/2023	15
New Plymouth	9/14/2023	85
Horizon Elem	9/15/2023	96
Highlands Elementary	9/18/2023	45
The Village Charter School	9/21/2023	30
Siena	9/22/2023	120
Reed Elementary	9/25/2023	115
Roosevelt Elementary School	9/26/2023	60
St. Joseph's	9/29/2023	45
Roosevelt Elementary	10/2/2023	110
Amity	10/3/2023	75
North Star Charter	10/4/2023	84
Pioneer	10/5/2023	120
Adams	10/6/2023	60
St. Mary's	10/10/2023	13
GAPP Exchange	10/10/2023	20

School	Date	Number
Longfellow	10/12/2023	50
Peace Valley Charter	10/13/2023	16
Reagan	10/16/2023	110
Collister	10/17/2023	50
Dennis Technical Ed. Center	10/18/2023	100
Middleton Hs	10/19/2023	30
Chapparal	10/20/2023	80
Liberty	10/23/2023	42
Montessori Academy	10/24/2023	14
Pierce Park	10/25/2023	32
Christine Donnell	10/26/2023	96
Hillsdale	10/27/2023	120
Nampa Christian	10/30/2023	75
Taft	10/31/2023	35
Morley Nelson	11/1/2023	65
Amy Reynolds Homeschool	11/3/2023	10
Valley View	11/6/2023	61
NNU	11/7/2023	11
Iowa	11/9/2023	85
Future Public	11/10/2023	56

TRAINING: Rescue Throw Bag

One of the worst feelings, to me at least, is being unable to help in an emergency. While I've never been at the park during a water emergency, they do happen – every year the Snake River claims lives. Because of this, we strive to keep all Parks staff as well-trained as we can, and we do first aid and CPR every year. This year, however, we offered training to Interpretive Specialists on rescue throw bags. These bags, available for boaters and other water recreationists, are simple tools consisting of a 75-foot rope inside of a mesh bag. The idea is that when someone is caught in the current, the rope can be thrown in order to bring them back to shore safely.

The training consisted of two parts: on-land and in-water. On-land training means watching videos, discussing techniques, and practicing throwing the bags, quickly preparing to re-throw them, and how to re-pack the bags for future use. Staff practiced throwing in different ways and different circumstances.

On the recommendation of Caldwell Fire and Canyon County Sheriff's Marine Patrol, we conducted the in-water portion of the training in one of the Lake Lowell irrigation outlets. This was recommended by both agencies as the safest place to do in-water training in actual water current.

Four volunteers went into the water and all staff practiced controlling the situation, throwing the rope bags, and reeling in their victims. This training really emphasized that repetition is necessary, and that it's not always as easy as just throwing someone a rope.

While we always hope recreationists will be safe and never need rescued, accidents and bad choices happen, and we are proud to have our staff trained in this important skill.

Above, right: Interpretive Specialists had to practice the skill on land before being ready to try it on water.

Middle, right: The seemingly-simple skill of throwing a bag at a victim gets a lot trickier when you're actually in the situation!

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PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

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