

2025

Vol. I

# CROSSROADS

BY CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL &  
NATURAL RESOURCES





*Rose hips in the frosty morning.*







*Top: The bridge in winter.*

*Bottom, left: Mining cabin remains.*

*Bottom, right: Larry Haney loves hiking to Halverson Lake.*









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Top: Inversion over Halverson Lake.

Bottom: Sunrise on the trail.

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Top, right: Ranger Jenna Raino works on a basket.

Bottom, left: The sun is barely visible during the dark days of winter.

Bottom, right: Frost on this tree makes for a beautiful sight below the canyon wall.









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*Guffey Bridge with the maar volcano in the background.*

*Page 7:*

*Top: Frost on flowers.*

*Bottom: Halverson Lake is barely visible through the mist.*

*Photos courtesy Larry Haney,  
Celebration Park staff.*





# CROSSROADS

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**Cover:** Winter frost makes for beautiful photos.

*Photo courtesy Larry Haney.*

**P 19:** Special thanks to local photographer Jason Abbott for these three photos of the Owyhee backcountry. Mr. Abbott generously allowed us to print these incredible photos in our publication.

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR: Nicki Schwend

IT'S NOT OFTEN that the world feels truly magical; like an enchanted fairy-tale like place – I'm talking extra special, can't believe your eyes, "Am I really seeing this?" kind of magical. We see lots of dreamlike things on screens; on tv or in theatres where everything is out of this world. In fact, we're bombarded with magical images in media and literature. Colors are brighter, sunsets are epic, storms are larger-than-life, plants, animals and landscapes are exceptionally more interesting. It's easy to forget that images that movies, artists and writers create are based on real world things and places.

## Magic in the Real World

Take Star Wars for instance. Kashyyyk, the home world of the Wookiee's (Episode III: Revenge of the Sith) is based on Phang Nga Bay in Phuket, Thailand. The Rebel outpost Yavin 4 of Massassi (Episode IV: A New Hope) is the ancient Mayan ruins of Tikal National Park in Guatemala. The planet of Jakku and homeworld of Rey (Episode VII: The Force Awakens) is the Rub Al-Khali desert of the Empty Quarter of the Arab Peninsula.



*Left to right: The real Wookiee world in Thailand; Tikal National Park in Episode IV; Rey's homeland filmed on the Arab Peninsula.*

Hollywood takes images of the world we live in and manipulates them into landscapes literally out of this world – landscapes that leave our reality feeling lacking and boring in comparison. Our moon is big and beautiful, but once you've connected with a character living on a planet with multiple moons, our single moon seems to lose a little magic.

I think about this often when I drive down to Celebration Park. It can be easy to miss the magic that exists in our everyday world when we're bombarded with special effects and the imaginations of writers, producers, and other artists.

I've come to appreciate that places have magic in and of themselves, but also each season has its own type of magic to add to an environment. And instead of Hollywood manipulating the world we live in to make it more magical and unbelievable, you have to learn to look at a place and see the magic that's lost in the everyday, lost in the bombardment of the make-believe that tries to overshadow our reality.

The burrowing owls perched on the ground outside their homes along Swan Falls road; they're easy to miss if you're not paying attention, and quick to disappear if you change your behavior (like slow the car down to get a better look and try to take a picture). It's a fleeting piece of magic to see them in their adorable, fluffy, wide-eyed goofiness, but it is magical. To me, these owls are reminiscent of the porgs of Star Wars (who were actually real-life puffins turned into alien creatures using CGI). Aren't puffins magical enough? Of course, they are, but they're not alien enough to convince us we are on another



planet so they were given another appearance. The burrowing owls are the porgs of the Snake River desert. They're magical enough.

The cobalt milkweed beetles you find in the summer are out of this world in their iridescent color and look like a creature taken straight from the florescent and vibrant world of James Cameron's Pandora (Avatar). They're just tinier and they truly exist in the desert of southern Idaho.

I've been lucky enough to spot a rafter of almost 40 turkeys in the canyon, with enough lead time to slow the vehicle down far enough away to be able to approach



*Cobalt Milkweed Beetles*

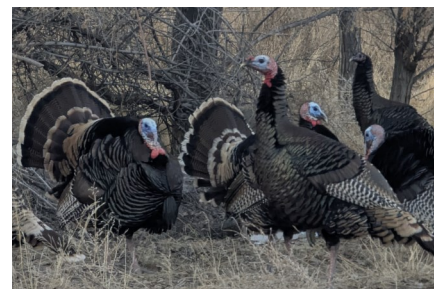
them at walking pace without scaring them off. As I watch these birds, they are both beautiful and weird and ugly at the same time. I couldn't help but wonder what Hollywood would do to them to make them foreign and magical. Turns out, they are the basis of the Star Wars creatures, the Nuna, of the swamps of Naboo. Thanksgiving dinner will never be the same.

It can be hard to see the magic of earth when you've seen the floating islands of Pandora in the Avatar Movie (based on the Zhangjiajie National Forest Park in China), or the elven city of Rivendell from the Lord of the Rings (based on the Lauterbrunnental valley in Switzerland). It can be hard to see the magic of earth plants when you've seen the sacred tree in Pandora (a CGI combination of New Zealand's glowworm luminescence on a banyan-forsythia tree hybrid). All of these were inspired by the real-world earth we live on and experience every single day.

Most recently I saw the magic at Celebration Park this winter. More often than not, the winter air is crisper and clearer than in other seasons, almost as if it embodies clarity and stillness; a sense of peace that stretches to the horizon. A heavy frost lays thick over the landscape covering everything in sight. With each turn of the steering wheel, the rising sun glistens off millions of tiny particles of frost covering the landscape causing a glistening effect so surreal you might as well exist in a magical snow globe. It is a moment impossible to capture in any meaningful digital form – no picture or video will do it justice. The only response can be to experience and recognize the magic that it is. Revel in the fact that you get to experience this fleeting miraculous moment of nature and place. A hybridization of a landscape's essence and the season combined to create a moment and a feeling so unique and fleeting that you feel hit with emotions of awe, shock, sadness, and pure ecstatic joy. You feel awe at the sheer rarity of what you are seeing, shock at the unexpectedness and humility of witnessing such a thing, sadness that it is fleeting and can never be repeated, and ecstatic that you are in the exact place and time to witness such a marvel. The world is full of magic if you open your eyes and mind to it – Hollywood and others just manipulate the magic that already exists. ■



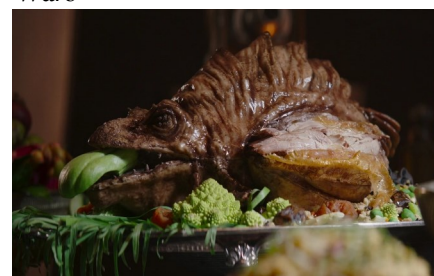
*Left to right: Burrowing Owls; a CGI porg from the planet Ahch-To in Star Wars.*



*Above: Wild Turkeys*



*Above and below: Nuna from Star Wars*







## CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

# DEPARTMENT UPDATE: ON THE GROUND

### Celebration Park Boater Improvement Project

Canyon County Parks, Cultural & Natural Resources received a grant from Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation for Snake River boater improvements at Celebration Park. The project required a hydrologic study (top picture) to provide the necessary flow information and river dynamics to predict potential effects of ten, fifty, one hundred, and even five hundred-year floods at the project location. This critical information has been incorporated into the final design plans that will ensure the long-term protection of these boater improvements.

### Celebration Park East End Parking

Celebration Park's East End is closing day use parking near campsite E13 (far eastern end of campsites) to provide a crucial turnaround area for recreational vehicles (RVs). This change (middle picture) will also reduce traffic through the camping area, and lower safety concerns for recreationists. Those wishing to access the Halverson Bar trailhead will find plenty of day use parking near the entrance of the campground (western side) in addition to expanded trailhead parking on BLM land before entering the East End campground.



### Atlatl Deck Update

The Celebration Park atlatl deck (bottom picture) is nearly complete. Construction crews worked throughout the winter to ensure the project is ready for spring field trips. The new overhead cover frames at the petroglyph deck and the bench seating around the atlatl range are both in place. The ADA walkways are finished, as well as the safety railing around the entire deck. All that remains is the overhead cover on the atlatl range, which is scheduled to be installed soon. Look for the final update next issue!



# CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

# DEPARTMENT UPDATE: IN THE OFFICE

## Social Media

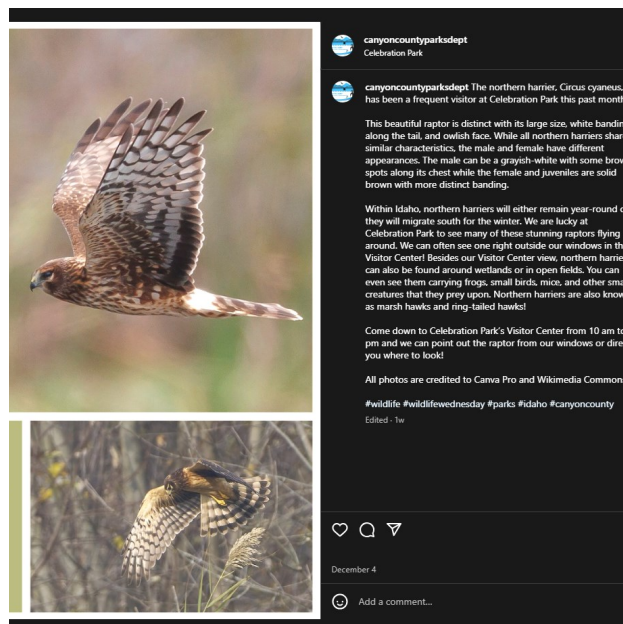
Visitor Services Specialist Lily Brown is putting her Wildlife Biology degree to work.. She's working to make regular social media posts highlighting events, wildlife, and more. She is excited to create 'Wildlife Wednesdays' where she will make posts about an interesting animal (top picture). Pictured here is a post on the northern harrier from Instagram. The Parks' Instagram account is @CanyonCountyParksDept and our Facebook is facebook.com/CanyonCountyParks. Follow us for updates!

## Raptor Poster

Interpretive Rangers Mark Stradley and Kristin Stone recently worked to create a new poster of birds of prey commonly seen in Celebration Park and the surrounding areas of the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. The poster features 18 birds of prey, highlighting characteristics and unique facts about each bird. It is now on display in the Celebration Park Visitor Center above the Backpack Loaner Station and will help visitors build interest and gain knowledge of the many fascinating birds of prey likely to be seen in the area. Several Rangers are well-versed in ornithology, so stop by with questions!

## Aerial Map Update

The Celebration Park Visitor Center has long displayed an aerial map of Celebration Park and the Snake River Canyon upstream to Swan Falls Dam. This aerial image was from 2003 and overdue for an update. At eight feet long, it takes up a lot of wall space and is used daily to point out trails, river rapids, areas of interest, and more. Outdoor Recreation Planner Alex Eells worked with County GIS specialist Hannah Burgard to create an updated aerial map (2023 images, middle picture) to match and improve on the old version. It is now on display and includes an inset close-up of Celebration Park and an elevation heat map of the canyon.







## CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

# DEPARTMENT UPDATE: EVERYTHING ELSE

### Dogbane Harvest

Interpretive Rangers are constantly on the lookout for plants for making cordage. Dogbane—a plant native to southern Idaho was used by Native Americans to make string or rope, otherwise called cordage. Dogbane grows upriver from Celebration Park on BLM land and takes a bit of an undertaking to find. Rangers Jenna Raino, Larry Haney, Jessica Clark, and Kristin Stone hiked miles to find and harvest dogbane stalks for cordage-making. These will be processed and made into cordage for educational “arti-fakes”—modern-made artifact replicas that are safe for kids and visitors to handle.

### Eagle Scout Benches

Local scout Jett Wood of Boy Scouts of America Troop 160 recently completed his Eagle Scout Project at Celebration Park. Wood diligently planned, raised money, recruited volunteers, built the benches to specification, and managed the whole group the day of installation. Outdoor Recreation Planner Alex Eells worked with Wood throughout the project. Eells said, “Projects like this help improve the aesthetics of our parks and leave a long-lasting legacy.” Wood built a total of eight wooden benches for the aptly named Boy Scout Camping Area.



### Boise State University Archaeology Field School

This fall, Celebration Park hosted the Boise State University archaeology field school. For two months, the class ventured to the Park every Friday to learn about excavation, GIS mapping, and more. Parks staff shared their knowledge of history and local archaeology with the students through educational tours, and had fun on the atlatl range. Canyon County Parks and Boise State University have regularly partnered to offer this type of opportunity to Anthropology students.



# Southwest Idaho RC&D Annual Meeting & 2024 Highlights

THE ANNUAL MEETING for the Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D) was held December 17th, 2024 at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game Southwest Regional Office in Nampa, Idaho. Eighteen people were in attendance and enjoyed keynote speeches, project updates, and a catered barbeque lunch. Keynote speakers were RC&D President Tom Bicak and Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) Bureau Chief Nic Zurfluh.

Bicak gave a presentation on a successful RC&D project from the past: The Idaho Cupule Stone. The Cupule Stone is a 7,500 lb. petroglyph boulder that once sat near the Snake River off Map Rock Rd, south of Nampa, Idaho. Tom and the Parks Department took it upon themselves acquire the unique cultural rock from private hands. An unfortunate incident left the boulder submerged in the Snake River, and an acquisition became a rescue operation. The presentation covered how and why it was rescued and moved, what 'cupules' are (a distinct and rare type of petroglyph), and why historic preservation matters today.

ISDA Bureau Chief Nic Zurfluh discussed the recent discovery and subsequent eradication efforts of the quagga mussel on the Snake River near Twin Falls, Idaho. Originally brought from the



*RC&D President Tom Bicak speaks on the Idaho Cupule Stone.*



*A salient reminder of the devastation quagga mussels can cause.*

Black Sea in the ballast tanks of ships, quagga mussels are a dangerous invasive species to southwest Idaho. They reproduce quickly, causing damage to infrastructure, especially agriculture, as they attach to surfaces, clogging pipes and restricting water access. Zurfluh highlighted Idaho's quick response to the quagga mussels. In a matter of weeks from discovery, treatments were being applied to the affected areas of the river.

In addition to these keynote speakers, others presented on RC&D projects. Abigail Hackett presented the Clarvida Crisis & Support Centers as an RC&D project. There is now an adult and





*Inside the new Clarvida Youth Support Center.*

#### **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Wildfire Fuels Reduction Projects of the RC&D**

- **Surprise Valley Neighborhood Association** addressed fuels reduction in an overgrown draw 'park' surrounded by condos and homes. Willows were cleared 12-15 feet above the ground and flammable dead material was cleared throughout the trees and draw.
- **Warm Springs Mesa Neighborhood Association** reduced wildfire fuels on nearly 21 acres through hand thinning and grazing. It was estimated that 94,000 pounds of fuels were removed.
- **Highland Nines Neighborhood Association** completed goat grazing in areas of concentrated cheatgrass and other invasive species in common areas, as well as fuels thinning and spraying of pre-emergent.
- **Mayfield Springs Neighborhood Association** was added as a new addition for fuels reduction efforts in 2024. The RC&D will act as fiscal agent, working to bring increased wildfire mitigation to this new and developing neighborhood.

youth Crisis and Support Center in both Ada and Canyon County. The RC&D is now the fiscal agent for these centers that operate 24/7 for anyone experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

K.C. Shedden of Highland Nines Neighborhood Association (Boise) presented on continued efforts using BLM funds to combat wildfire fuels in their Wildland Urban Interface. 2024 was an intense year for wildfire in Idaho. The Valley Fire, estimated to have cost \$5.2 million, burned 9,904 acres, and came within one mile of Boise. It primarily burned the Idaho Department of Fish and Game-managed Boise River Wildlife Management Area—the winter habitat for the largest herd of mule deer in the state. Shedden highlighted before and after images of their 2024 efforts, and gave an overview of what they hope to accomplish in 2025-2026.



*ISDA Bureau Chief Nic Zurfluh talks about quagga mussel eradication efforts on the Snake River.*





*Left to right: Guffey Bridge from below—photo courtesy Kristin Stone; Skunkbush, possibly, or maybe fragrant sumac; Paw prints in the snow. Bottom: A very busy day at Celebration Park.*



CANYON COUNTY PARKS, CULTURAL  
& NATURAL RESOURCES

# ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

CELEBRATION PARK  
5000 VICTORY RD. MELBA, ID



MAY 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2025  
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

## About Our Event!

May is Idaho Archaeology and  
Historic Preservation Month!

Join us at Celebration Park on  
Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> for hands-on  
learning with experts in various  
primitive technologies.

### Petroglyph & Bridge Tours and Atlatl Range

Tour the petroglyphs and bridge  
trail with an Interpretive Ranger,  
and try out the atlatl on our  
newly-constructed covered range!

## JOIN US!

### Model T Classic Car Show - Parking Lot ◀

Check out classic cars (some over 100 years old!)  
from the Idaho Model T Club.

### Flintknapping - Crossroads Museum ◀

Have you always wanted to try making an  
arrowhead out of obsidian? Here's your chance!

### Historic Artifacts - Museum ◀

Get hands-on with artifacts (and replicas) with  
Retired BLM Archaeologist Dean Shaw

### Cordage Making - Shop Deck ◀

Try your hand at making cordage (rope) the way  
people have for thousands of years.

### Bridge Building - Visitor Center Deck ◀

The statewide theme for Archaeology &  
Historic Preservation Month is historic bridges.  
Try making one of your own!

### Mining Cabins Hike - 9:30 am-2 pm ◀

Meet BLM archaeologist Cameron Hugin at the  
Visitor Center for a hike to the cabins at Halverson  
Bar. Bring water, lunch, and sunscreen!



Contact us  
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# OWYHEE TALES: WINTER

by Merri Melde—Interpretive Ranger

**S**TAND IN THE MIDDLE OF CELEBRATION PARK'S ICONIC GUFFEY BRIDGE spanning the Snake River and you're straddling the history that intertwines Canyon County to the north and Owyhee County to the south.

Close your eyes and picture the lives of Paleo peoples 12,000 years ago, the fur trappers in the 1700s, the westward-bound Oregon Trail emigrants, the miners, the cowboys, the homesteaders in the 1800s, and the present-day outdoor nature lovers.

Canyon County's Celebration Park is known to be the ancestral grounds of the Shoshone, Bannock, and Northern Paiute tribes, where they likely sheltered along the Snake River, a constant water source. Excavations in Canyon and Owyhee Counties show corroborating evidence of nomadic Archaic and Historic native people.

Owyhee County was the first county organized by the Idaho Territory Legislature in 1863. Encompassing high desert sagebrush steppe and the Owyhee Mountains, it's now the second-

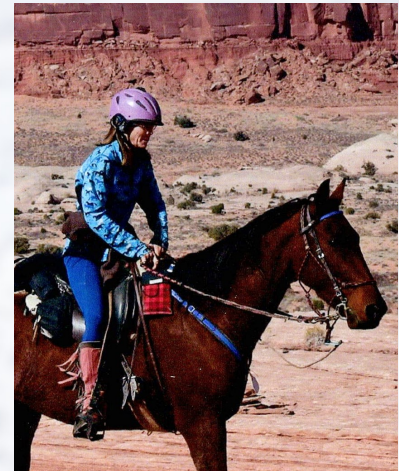
largest county in Idaho and one of the least-inhabited, with only 1.4 people per square mile. You'll see a lot more jackrabbits than people out on the Owyhee Front.

There's still a taste of the Old West in Owyhee County. It's cattle and horse-riding country. Little has changed over the previous millennia, except the fences that crisscross the land and farmland in the valleys, settled and watered by irrigation. Beyond privately-owned land which lie mostly along creeks, uninhabited Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land reaches all the way to Oregon, Nevada, and beyond.

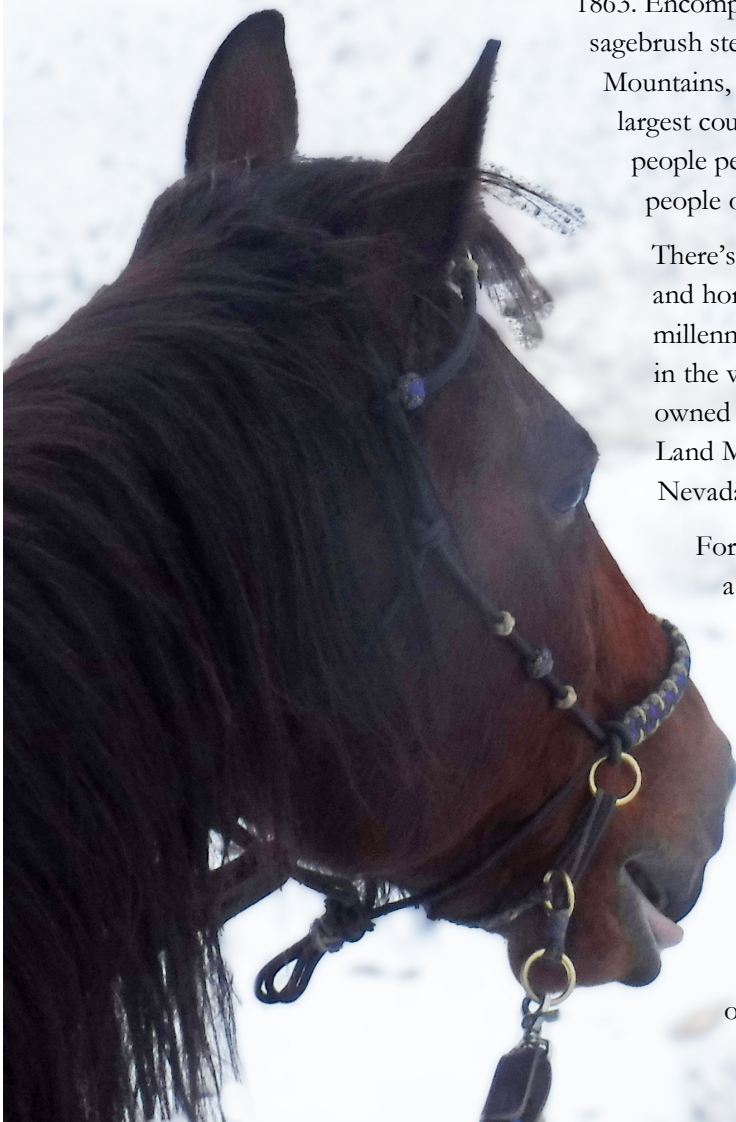
Fortunately, it no longer takes six days for a wagon trip from a homestead in Owyhee County to the closest town for supplies (including having to be ferried across the Snake River). Yet, just as it was in the Old West, horseback travel is still the best way to explore parts of the Owyhee country. A horse will take you places you'll never see from the highways and dirt roads, to secret places in the Owyhees that few people know about.

\*\*\*\*\*

December. Twenty-five degrees. Stillness. A light blanket of snow covering the ground. A ghostly shimmer to the air



*Merri is an avid horse rider, traveler, outdoorsperson, and a great Park Ranger too!*



---

*Hillbillie Willie the horse enjoys a winter walk.*





*The Owyhee country is vast and beautiful.  
Photos courtesy Jason Abbott.*

there's a good chance that people who used this cave as a temporary refuge also sheltered along the Snake River at Celebration Park. I'll chalk this discovery up to another secret find, a mysterious relic from the past, a speck in the vast 7,697 square miles and thousands of years of the Owyhee Country. ■

as low clouds shroud the Owyhee mountains and fog plays in the draws. No humans around. Jackrabbit and coyote tracks tell stories of the hidden wildlife.

Ride out of the little community of Oreana and you'll end up in the drainages which meander down from the Owyhee Mountains, emptying into the Snake River. Follow the obscure deer and cow trails—they'll inevitably lead you to water—and wind through the washes along the towering rhyolite cliffs.

Up here in this wild country, camouflaged by snow and concealed by a thick natural screen of ordinary skunk bush, lies Bachman Cave. Not a true cave, but a rock shelter, it was dug up numerous times in the 20th century, including by a rancher around 1900 who used it as a stable and living quarters. The back of the cave wasn't tall enough for his horse, so the story goes, so he dug it down and piled the dirt and debris outside.

Two official archaeological excavations in the 1970s unearthed rich numbers of material culture, including lithics, faunal remains, mussel shells and various other perishables, red ochre, and a wide variety of stone and bone tools. The stone tools included projectile points, blanks, preforms and other modified stone flakes, ground stones, hammer stones, and pot sherds. Undisturbed cultural deposits, including hearths and charcoal-stained and burnt sediments, remained intact.

Analysis of the findings indicated that the cave was occupied for the last 600 to 7,000 years by small groups of Archaic peoples; probably by hunting parties, or by people moving between larger, more permanent camps on the Snake River and high meadows in the Owyhee Mountains. It's doubtful the shelter was used for more than a few days at any given time. I like to think

*P. 18 photos courtesy Merri Melde.*



# Brick Beam & Beyond

## Three Grants Restoring History in Fiscal Year 24

by Chelsee Boehm, Historic Preservation Officer

OCTOBER 1ST ALWAYS MARKS the start of a new budget at Canyon County. For those with Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) grants, that means wrapping up previously funded projects. From completing construction projects to finishing reports, it's the end to a long year of hard work.

For Fiscal Year 2024, the Board of County Commissioners awarded \$50,456 to projects across the county. Below is a highlight of a few of those projects.

The **Caldwell Historical Society** received \$11,780 to complete a National Register of Historic Places nomination for Luby Park Rose Garden and Pump House.

The idea for a Caldwell rose garden is often attributed to Dr. William Boone, founder and former president of



*Aerial view of Luby Park in Caldwell.*



*An old postcard depicting the Caldwell rose garden, c. 1930s.*

Albertson's College of Idaho. Planting started in the 1930s. Rock walls were added and local businesses donated funds for the roses. By 1939, there were 4,200 individual plants with varieties of roses including Old European Roses, Noisettes, Damask Perpetual, and Polyanthas.

The park was named in 1959 for former Caldwell Councilman and chairman of the City's Parks and Recreation Department, Max Luby.

Nominating a site to the National Register is an extensive process, so a determination on its listing will be forthcoming.





*Before renovations in the hotel room.*



*After renovations were completed.*

The **Melba Valley Historical Society** received \$7,960 to repair one remaining hotel room in the Melba Valley Museum (a.k.a. the Melba IOOF Lodge). Constructed as the Gardner Hotel, the building was completed in 1919 and expanded in 1922. In 1927, the Melba Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Lodge purchased it for \$300.

The lodge performed extensive renovations—including removing many of the hotel rooms—to accommodate the buildings use as a meeting hall. The IOOF transferred the structure to the Melba Rebekah's Lodge #105 in 1999, who later deeded it to the Melba Valley Historical Society. The building also happens to be the county's most recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places and the first from Melba!

By renovating the remaining hotel room, the Melba Valley Historical Society can teach about the varied history of the building and the wider story of Melba.

The **Historical Society of Middleton** received \$5,000 to complete Phase II of a reconnaissance survey of downtown Middleton. During such a survey, professional historians evaluate buildings in a specified area to determine which might be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. The final report includes a detailed history of Middleton and information about each of the properties in the project area.

The survey will help the Historical Society of Middleton to plan future preservation efforts. Phase I of the historical survey was completed with HPC grant funds in 2022. ■



*Two homes from the project area in Middleton.  
Photos courtesy TAG Historical Research & Consulting.*



# ARTIFACT SPOTLIGHT

# RABBIT FUR BLANKET

by Jessica Sweeney—Interpretive Ranger

A QUIET HUSH FALLS OVER CELEBRATION PARK as the nights grow long, and the days short. It is during these colder temperatures different kinds of visitors begin to arrive. The Snake River Canyon, where Celebration Park rests, is a place where winter weather is relatively mild; snow is shallow and what little accumulates melts after a few days. Animals from all over take advantage of this milder temperature and the unfrozen river water to survive. From the archaeological record, the Shoshone, Bannock, and Northern Paiute peoples and their ancestors did the same; gathering together in larger groups starting in the fall, and staying in places along the river for the winter.

While the Snake River Canyon has relatively temperate winters, the area still gets icy cold; each winter brings a slightly different combination of frost, ice, and snow. Just as we need to bundle up today, the indigenous people of the past needed warm winter clothing. A long-standing solution to winter chill in the Great Basin and parts of the Southwest was the rabbit fur blanket or cloak.

Evidence for the process of making rabbit fur blankets dates back to the Archaic period, roughly 10,000-1,500 years ago in the Great Basin, though it is highly likely to have been brought over the Bering Strait earlier by hunter-gatherers during the Upper Paleolithic. It is a craft that persists and is practiced by indigenous people of the desert west to this day.



*A Mohave man wearing a rabbit skin cloak.  
Photo courtesy Library of Congress.*

Rabbit fur blankets have been located primarily in two main types of archaeological sites, graves and caches, each typically located within sheltered contexts such as caves and rock shelters. In the context of graves, rabbit fur blankets were used as a shroud for the dead of all ages, such as the cape found in Spirit Cave, Nevada dated 9,400 years old. Cache sites contain stores of different materials for later use; like those used to make rabbit fur blankets, other textiles, and tools such as nets. The earliest Great Basin assemblages of plant and animal-based textile materials were excavated at Fort Rock Cave and Paisley Caves, Oregon; and Spirit Cave, Nevada. With dates back to the early archaic, the Great Basin techniques likely diffused into the Southwest as assemblages appear later there.

The Great Basin and Southwest have the oldest collection of perishable artifacts in North America, including most of the finds related to the production of rabbit fur blankets, due to being landscapes “where preservation of perishable fibers is enhanced by arid climates and dry habitation microenvironment.” Melinda Leach’s article “*Ancient Twined Garments of Fur*,

<sup>1</sup> Both blanket and cloak can be used interchangeably due to the fact that the process of creating each object is the same. For the rest of the article, rabbit fur blanket is the general term used, unless referencing a specific artifact, in which case that will be noted in the text.



*Feather, and Fiber: Context and Variation in the American Desert West* provides insight into Archaic sites and Historic ethnography. Archaeological sites provide context for artifacts, informing how and where they were made and used, based on whether the artifacts were located in households, trash mounds, caches, temporary camps, or storage features, etcetera. These details provide invaluable insight into the methods in which these objects were manufactured, stored, used, and discarded.

Artifacts also need to be analyzed according to the style of individual people or general culture of those who made them. Like other artifacts, the details and methods of how rabbit fur blankets were made depended on the cultural preferences, along with personal preferences of the people making them. Some of the blankets were woven on standing looms, others horizontal on the ground via pegs. How long or short a cloak was also depended on the people who made it. For example, the Great Basin Shoshone created long cloaks that reached their feet, while people in the Southwest created capes, and eventually used split turkey feathers once domestic turkeys were introduced. Each group that adopted the garment created and styled it in their own fashion. So how exactly did the various peoples of the desert west make these blankets from start to finish?

To make a rabbit fur blanket a few basic materials are needed. The three general materials are cordage, furred rabbit skin, and a way to weave them together. However, each group in the Great Basin and Southwest had their own way of sourcing these materials based on the species that lived in their home landscapes, typically in the form of rabbit drives. Celebration Park is considered to be the far northern edge of the Great Basin cultural area, so the remainder of this article will focus on materials and species local to Southwestern Idaho.

Dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*) is the most frequently cited plant species harvested for fine fiber in the Great Basin, milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) being the second. Unlike today where procuring and processing the materials needed to make woven garments is relatively easy, making cordage before modern technology was a much longer, labor intensive series of steps. With dogbane this included gathering the plant stalks, processing the stems for fiber, and then twisting them into usable string (cordage). During the archaic period especially, caves in the Great Basin were places to store these supplies, and often returned to. This allowed people to make various objects during seasons when



*A rabbit hunt by Euro-Americans, ca. 1922.  
Photo courtesy Univ. Utah J Willard Marriott Digital Library*



*Mary Johnson holding a rabbit-fur blanket.  
Photo courtesy the National Museum of the American Indian.*



*A rabbit drive.  
Photo courtesy Library of Congress.*



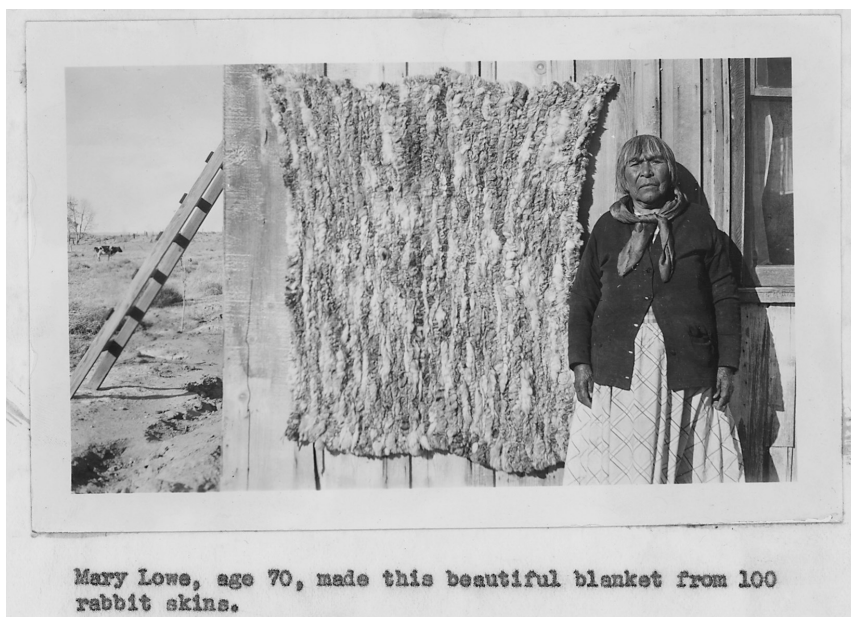
the plants were not available. Cord is used to create the structure of the weave, in other words the warp that runs vertically on a frame. The second material needed was the rabbit fur skins.

Rabbits were an important resource, not just for their warm fur, but also for their meat. Every fall, when rabbits were at their fattest, communal rabbit drives were held by large groups of people, which made the labor to skin and process a multitude of rabbits for food and fur easier. Of the five species from the Leporidae family native to Idaho, three were primarily hunted during rabbit drives: desert cottontails (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), white-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus townsendii*), and black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*). Other small mammals were used as needed, but rabbits were the most common. The rabbits were chased across the landscape into a net or fence where they were killed by clubs or arrows. After that the processing began, a task shared by everyone present.

The rabbits were skinned, but not tanned, and the hides were cut in a spiral in order to make the maximum length of useable fur. There were two methods used to turn the hide into rabbit rope; either the strips of fur were folded in half, sticky sides together, or they were wrapped around cordage. Either method created a very long fluffy rope, similar in look to a pipe cleaner, but much softer. The rabbit rope was left to dry, and then continuously wrapped parallel around a frame. Cordage was then used to weave between the rabbit fur rope pieces. The rabbit fur rope and cordage served as either the warp (vertical, lengthwise) or weft (horizontal, crosswise) of the blanket. Depending on the size of the blanket or cloak the weaver would need anywhere between twenty and one hundred rabbits. This particular kind of garment has been used for over 10,000 years, and continues to this day with contemporary indigenous craftspeople.



*The rabbit fur blanket currently on display in the museum at Celebration Park was made by Yvette Towersap, a Shoshone-Bannock Tribal member.*



*Historic photo of a native woman and her rabbit fur blanket. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.*

Celebration Park is fortunate to have purchased a hand-made rabbit fur blanket from Yvette Towersap, a Shoshone-Bannock craftsperson. Made in the traditional style, it is now on display in the Canyon Crossroads Museum. The museum is open to the public by request at the Visitor Center (open 10 am to 2 pm daily). ■

#### Works Cited:

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# MIGRATE ADAPT OR DIE:

## How Wildlife Survive Winter in a Landscape that Wants to Kill Them

by Lily Brown—Visitor Services Specialist

WINTER IN IDAHO IS OFTEN FICKLE – snowing one minute and sunshine the next. However, despite the frequent weather changes, the temperatures remain consistently cold, even dipping into the negatives. Here at Celebration Park, we are lucky to have heated buildings, warm clothes, and often hot coffee to help keep us warm and safe through the winter. While humans have created tools to help us survive the extremes of winter, wildlife has gone a different route. Wildlife have created various methods or adaptations to survive the cold. These methods include hibernation, torpor, migration, and can be viewed as physical and/or behavioral adaptations.

There are several methods for surviving cold weather, but one of the most widely known is hibernation. Animals such as the black bear, ground squirrel, lizards, bats, and many species of insects have adapted to hibernation or torpor as their primary means to survive the winter. Hibernation and torpor are often thought of as the same, but there are distinct differences between the two. Torpor is when an animal enters a state of reduced metabolic activity that helps them conserve energy. Animals can fluctuate between being in torpor and being minorly active. Hibernation, on the other hand, is extended periods of torpor that may last weeks or months. To put it simply, torpor is similar to taking a nap with your body reducing its needs to only the most vital, whereas hibernation is using the same technique for long periods of time. Animals who use torpor or hibernation can slow their heart rates and major metabolic activities to the bare minimum. This method enables them to survive the cold weather, which would otherwise harm them. When spring arrives, these animals will slowly “wake up” when their body increases their heart rates and metabolic activities back to a range where they can be physically active.





A second common method for surviving the winter is migration, both long and short-range. Migration is the seasonal movement of animals and insects between regions that have better resources (like food), or better environmental conditions (like warmth). Migration is common among birds, large mammals, and monarch butterflies. Many waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds will migrate for the winter. For example, red-winged blackbirds who are frequently seen in Idaho during the spring, summer, and fall are rare to find during the winter. This is because the majority will migrate south reaching as far as Central America. The southern areas are warmer so they offer a wider range of food, easier temperatures, and other key resources that are essential for survival. However, not all birds migrate to stay in sunny climates. The bald eagle migrates to larger bodies of water to increase their resources for food. Here in Idaho, we often see a greater number of bald eagles in the winter than in other seasons because they group around bodies of water such as Lake Lowell or the Snake River. These birds of prey are increasing their resources and ability to survive the winter by fishing out of places that will have more resources than other locations.



*The red-winged blackbird is common in all seasons but winter.  
Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.*

Besides long-distance migration, many animals within Idaho will go through short migrations to help get through the cold months. These quicker migrations often manifest as a change in elevation. The most noticeable example of shorter migration is seen with deer, elk, and other large mammals. In the summer deer and elk are more often found in the high country where the weather is cooler. Once the snow starts and freezing temperatures arrive, entire herds will migrate to lower elevations. These lower ranges are generally warmer and have unfrozen water and more vegetation to help with survival.





In addition to hibernation, torpor, and migration animals often develop physical adaptations that assist with cold weather. These adaptations include thicker fur, greater fat storage, changes in color, specialized feet or hooves, and many others. One classic example is the snowshoe hare which undergoes many winter adaptations. In the summer and late fall, snowshoe hares are often brown or tan with sleek fur, however, when the cold weather begins, these hares will grow a thicker coat and their fur color naturally transitions from brown to white. This change in color helps the hare to camouflage in the snow-covered environment and avoid predation. The hares will also pack on fat through the summer to create an energy storage that can be accessed throughout the winter. Instead of hibernating, Snowshoe hares will continue to forage in the winter and move about their environment. They are able to move through the snow with specialized feet that are large and wide-spread to avoid sinking in the snow. Their feet act as snowshoes and help them move quickly even when there are several feet of snow.

Added behavioral adaptations can be seen in feeding habits, shelter choices, and activity. For example, when deer migrate to lower elevations in winter they will also change their feeding habits from grasses which are scarce to grazing on shrubs, bark, and tree branches. By adapting to eat plants that do not disappear in the winter, the deer are able to survive. Many birds who remain in cold climates will also change their eating habits to more seeds and seek insects or plants that are buried under the snow. Some animals change their shelter types in the winter. Deer and elk may shelter in dense forests or brush to help avoid the most extreme of weather and cold. Beavers will create dens through the spring and summer so that they can stay in their homes through the winter and avoid freezing. Animals may also change their activity during short periods of time. Some animals will lower their activity levels in the middle of summer days when temperatures are at their highest, yet deer and elk are more likely to come out of their shelter during midday or early evening to seek food when temperatures are warmest.

All of these methods; hibernation, torpor, and migration, or physical and behavioral adaptations allow wildlife to survive during the winter. Animals do not have the same tools for survival as we do, however, they have their own unique ways to stay warm and healthy, especially in winter, that work just as well as us staying in a heated home. Idaho is blessed to have such an abundance of wildlife that stays throughout the winter as well as returns in the spring. With this abundance, we are able to enjoy wildlife year-round and are able to observe all of the amazing ways they have learned to survive. ■



*P. 25: The yellow-bellied marmot hibernates all winter. Photo courtesy Canva Pro.*

*P. 26: Monarch butterflies migrate between Canada and Mexico. Photo courtesy Canva Pro.*

*P. 27: The snowshoe hare turns white in winter, displaying excellent adaptation. Photo courtesy Canva Pro.*





CANYON COUNTY  
PARKS AT



**CELEBRATION  
PARK**

# STORIES IN STONE

A place-based archaeological field trip that allows students to connect to place through exploration, observation, and hands-on experience.

Students will be immersed in the rich cultural and natural history of southwest Idaho. They will leave with a better understanding of how ancient cultures and lifeways of southwest Idaho relate to their own lives today.

Students will learn about:

Archaeology on the  
**PETROGLYPH  
FIELD**

Ancient Tools in  
**LITHIC  
LIFEWAYS**

Mining History on  
**GUFFEY  
BRIDGE**

Hunting on the  
**ATLATL  
RANGE**

## Information

- ✓ 10:00 AM—2:00 PM
- ✓ 4th Grade and up
- ✓ Students should bring a lunch
- ✓ One lesson indoors, three outdoors

## Celebration Park

5000 Victory Rd.  
Melba, ID 83641

## Registration Link

[www.canyoncounty.id.gov/field-trips](http://www.canyoncounty.id.gov/field-trips)



**More Information:**

[parksprograms@canyoncounty.id.gov](mailto:parksprograms@canyoncounty.id.gov)

(208) 455-6022





CANYON COUNTY  
PARKS AT



**CELEBRATION  
PARK**

# WILDLAND FIRE FIELD TRIP

A place-based ecological experience designed to teach students how they interact with fire in the natural ecosystem of Idaho, the sagebrush-steppe. While this program teaches fire safety, it also explains the impacts of fire in our local ecosystem.

Students will explore the Park's fire regime and learn about fire behavior. They will also learn about wildland firefighting tools and methods. Students will leave with a better understanding of how wildfire regimes relate to their lives in Idaho.

Students will learn about:

Fire Management

**FIREFIGHTING  
TOOLS**

How Fire Works in

**HANDS-ON  
FIRE LAB**

Fire Regimes on a

**FIRE  
ECOLOGY  
HIKE**

Hunting on the

**ATLATL  
RANGE**

## Information

- ✓ 10:00 AM—2:00 PM
- ✓ 5th Grade and up
- ✓ Students should bring a lunch
- ✓ One lesson indoors, three outdoors

## Celebration Park

5000 Victory Rd.  
Melba, ID 83641

## Registration Link

[www.canyoncounty.id.gov/field-trips](http://www.canyoncounty.id.gov/field-trips)



**More Information:**

[parksprogramms@canyoncounty.id.gov](mailto:parksprogramms@canyoncounty.id.gov)

(208) 455-6022





CANYON COUNTY  
PARKS AT  
**LAKE LOWELL  
PARK**

# LAKE LOWELL FIELD TRIP

A place-based ecological experience designed to teach 2nd & 3rd graders about the ecology and history of Lake Lowell and southwest Idaho.

Students will learn about trophic levels, biomes, and the nature of their relationship with the ecosystem. They will also learn about macroinvertebrate identification, water quality parameters, and indicator species.

Students will learn about:

Trophic Levels in  
**FEEDING  
FRENZY**

Aquatic Bugs during a  
**MACROINVERTEBRATE  
INVESTIGATION**

Ancient Hunting in  
**ATLATL &  
ARCHERY**

## Information

- ✓ 10:00 AM—2:00 PM
- ✓ 2nd & 3rd Grade
- ✓ Students should bring a lunch
- ✓ All lessons are outdoors

## Lake Lowell Park

12996 Iowa Ave.  
Nampa, ID 83686

## Registration Link

[www.canyoncounty.id.gov/field-trips](http://www.canyoncounty.id.gov/field-trips)



**More Information:**

[parksprograms@canyoncounty.id.gov](mailto:parksprograms@canyoncounty.id.gov)

(208) 455-6022





For over 10 years, Canyon County Parks, Cultural & Natural Resources and Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation and Development Council have raised money through grants and donations to provide partial funding to school groups for transportation to Celebration Park and Lake Lowell Park.

"Field trips are the bread and butter of what we do at Canyon County Parks," said Parks Director Nichole Schwend. "By offering these bus scholarships, we hope to bring as many students from all walks of life to our parks, in the hopes of helping to create the next generation of stewards of the cultural and natural resources in our region."

This semester, bus scholarships helped bring students from Nampa, Caldwell, Middleton, Boise, and Idaho City.

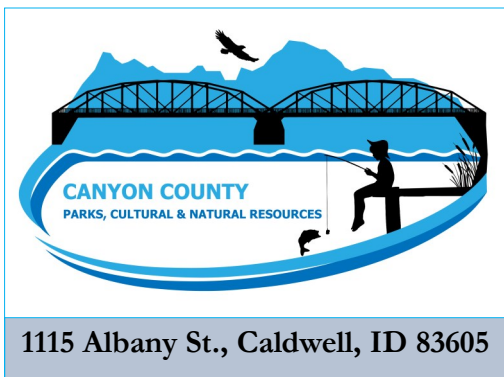
# Spring 2025 BUS SCHOLARSHIPS



## Recipients:

Skyway Elementary, Caldwell	Gem Prep Charter, Nampa	Heritage Community Charter School, Caldwell	Grace Jordan Elementary, Boise	Birch Elementary, Nampa
Mosaics Public School, Caldwell	Joplin Elementary, Boise	Sherman Elementary, Nampa	Middleton Heights Elementary, Middleton	Basin Elementary, Idaho City





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*Parks staff at the Four Rivers Cultural Center on a tour of the museum.  
Photo courtesy Ranger Kristin Stone.*