



*In Loving Memory of
Steve Altshuld,
the brilliant and creative
mind behind the layout of
this newsletter*

• If you find a baby bird, duckling, deer fawn or other critter, the best approach is to leave it undisturbed.

• Then if you wish, contact your nearest Fish and Game office. They are happy to take calls about apparently orphaned or injured animals, answer questions, and when necessary, retrieve animals.

• Do not plan to raise wild animals on your own. Young wild animals require special care and feeding that is beyond what the average household is prepared to manage.

• Possession of most species of wildlife taken from the wild is illegal in Idaho. Leave baby animals alone, Idaho Fish and Game warns



Elk Calf: IDFG/James Brower

Leave Baby Animals Alone, Idaho Fish and Game Warns

BY BRIAN PEARSON | REPRINTED BY PERMISSION

Spring is the peak of baby wildlife season. People are bound to see young wildlife, and you may see a baby animal that appears to be alone, with mom nowhere in sight. While our first instinct might be to rescue these cute, cuddly and seemingly helpless creatures, Fish and Game officials have a simple suggestion to people who discover baby animals that appear to be abandoned: The best thing you can do for them is to leave them be.

Every spring, Fish and Game receives calls from well intentioned humans who have “rescued” baby animals that they assume have been lost, abandoned or orphaned. While these people typically mean well, they are often doing more damage than good, and typically, mom was not far away to begin with.

Animal parents will periodically leave their young for an extended period of time for a myriad of reasons, whether it’s to search for food, to rest, or to divert attention from their vulnerable offspring, especially if they sense danger. When it comes to wildlife babies, wildlife mothers know best.

Mammals such as deer, elk, and pronghorn routinely leave their young in a secure location, moving off to feed and returning later - sometimes several hours later - to quickly feed their young and leave again. The young animals know instinctively to remain still in the places their mother left them.

“The best thing you can do for baby animals is to leave them be.”

As baby birds mature, they often leave the nest in their efforts to hone their flying skills. Adult birds continue to feed their offspring until the young birds can survive on their own, even if they fall out of the nest.

In the spring when wildlife baby boom is at its peak, you may have the good fortune to observe a nest of birds or a litter of young mammals with no adult in sight. Enjoy the sight, but remember it is best to leave young wildlife alone.

Brian Pearson is Conservation Public Information Specialist with Idaho Department of Fish & Game



Canada Goose Gosling: IDFG/Brian Pearson



Deer Fawn: IDFG/Brian Pearson

Swans of Island Park

BY RUTH SHEA

From atop her nest at Swan Lake, the Trumpeter Swan mother watches heavy traffic pass by. She cares tenderly for the tiny cygnets (young swans) beneath her wings. She and her life-long mate have won, and now defend, Idaho's best nesting territory. Over the past 40 years, Swan Lake has fledged more cygnets than any other territory in Idaho. This pair is one of the very few Trumpeters that are willing to nest so close to people. They tolerate people because their lake is unusually rich with food. As long as no one harasses them, they are willing to allow well-behaved admirers a rare view of their family life.

At Harriman State Park, Silver Lake also provides great swan nesting habitat. Often two or three pairs with their broods are seen on the lake in June. They also are unusually tolerant of careful observers. Most nesting swans, however, are very wary of humans. At the first sight of a visitor to their lake, they slip off their nest, leaving their eggs vulnerable to predators. Over the years, Idaho's swans have abandoned many territories because of human disturbance.

“Idaho has only about 20 nesting pairs of Trumpeter Swans. About half nest on lakes in Island Park.”

Idaho has only about 20 nesting pairs of swans. About half nest on lakes in Island Park. Many non-nesting “teenage” Trumpeters also find crucial summer habitat here. A century ago, Trumpeter Swans were nearly extinct in the Lower 48 states. The swans that summer in Island Park are direct descendants of the last remnant flock. Early Island Park residents helped save those last swans and they have been very special to the community ever since. Today, Island Park remains crucial to the restoration of Idaho's nesting population, as well as the recovery of flocks from western Canada that migrate to the Henry's Fork to winter here.

Unfortunately, Swan Lake sometimes dries out by late summer. Often the swan family risks their lives as they attempt to walk the cygnets across Highway 20 to reach the river. Swan experts see exciting potential to work with the Idaho Department of Transportation to solve this problem and improve Swan Lake for many years to come.

Ruth Shea, world expert on the swans of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, is Director of Northern Rockies Trumpeter Swan Stewards and a member of the Henry's Fork Wildlife Alliance Community Council.

We intend to work closely with Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and Trumpeter Swan experts with the goal to ensure that upgrading Hwy 20 will not damage Swan Lake, Idaho's most productive nesting site. With good planning, ITD could avoid damage and actually improve this highly visible and well known swan habitat in Island Park.



Trumpeter swan on nest with young cygnet: Alan Sachanowski

OUR MISSION

Educate and advocate to protect and conserve the native wildlife and its enjoyment by the public in the Upper Henry's Fork Watershed.

When Wildlife Tangles With Fence

BY KRIS MILGATE

Kelvin Burton has an interesting photo on his phone. It's a mule deer buck with its rack tangled in wire and its antlers running down both sides of its neck.

"He's been that way for a quite a while, at least a month," Burton said. "The herd split up and he disappeared for a while then he showed up again."

When the wired buck showed up again in late February, Burton, who lives east of Idaho Falls, contacted Idaho Department of Fish and Game. They sent a biologist to sedate the buck and remove the wire, rack and all. The buck ran free after removal, but this probably won't be its last run-in with wire. There's acres of it strung across the West.

"We've done four fence removal projects in the last five years and we've hauled away two to three truckloads of wire at each project."

*-Joselin Matkins
Teton Regional Land Trust*

"We've done four fence removal projects in the last five years and we've hauled away two to three truckloads of wire at each project," said Joselin Matkins, Teton Regional Land Trust executive director. "The ones we remove are no longer functional. They're just out on the landscape, not

marking a boundary anymore, and animals can get caught up in those and get injured or trapped."

Fencing meant to keep cows in also keeps wildlife out. That's why the Land Trust recruits volunteers to help remove obsolete fencing. If left standing, and strung far, barbed wire can block wildlife migration routes, especially if animals can't jump over it or slide under it. That's why height standards for wildlife friendly fencing are established. Four strands of wire fencing should start 18 inches above the ground and stop 40 inches above the ground. Most of the older range fencing was built before the standard was established.

Burton, a life-long hunter, suspects the buck accidentally collected the wire when its antlers were on top of its head. When shed season arrived, the antlers didn't drop to the ground. They slid down around the deer's neck with the wire.

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*Kris Milgate is an Idaho outdoor journalist and CEO of Tight Line Media www.tightlinemedia.com. Her productions have won many awards and rank among National Geographic's Top 10 Wild to Inspire list. She previously worked in TV news and created East Idaho Outdoors Magazine. She has just published her first book, **My Place Among Men**.*



Wire wrapped around the deer's antlers also wrapped around the buck's neck when its antlers shed and slid downward. IDFG had to remove the whole tangle: Idaho Department of Fish and Game



A mule deer buck with wire tangled in its antlers was temporarily sedated so Idaho Department of Fish and Game could remove the wire. Idaho Department of Fish and Game

CHAMPIONS FOR WILDLIFE

We are the only citizens organization devoted solely to protecting healthy wildlife populations in the Upper Henry's Fork Watershed.



Scan with QR Code Reader app on your smart phone to go straight to our website:



SCAN ME

Tangled with Western Tanagers

BY CHARLIE LANSCHÉ

The first flashes of vibrant yellow and red in the lodgepole canopy signaled the arrival of summer in Island Park. Each June, just ahead of the solstice, migrating western tanagers appear in the conifer forests of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. This year was no exception and a couple of weeks ago we began to see the unmistakable markings of the male western tanager. At first it was a few evasive sightings high in the forest canopy. Yet by mid-June, these sharply beautiful birds appeared to be everywhere in the Caldera in numbers I've not seen before.



Tangled with Western Tanagers (Charlie Lansché - C. M. Lansché Images)

Late one evening last week I noticed perhaps 20 western tanagers catching insects along the banks of the upper Henry's Fork of the Snake River. I decided to sit still with my camera in the riparian grasses and brush camera in hopes of capturing a few images of these photogenic travelers who spend winters as far south as Nicaragua. It wasn't long before several preoccupied bug-hunting tanagers began to pluck insects from the plants and rocks, moving into telephoto range. Then to my astonishment one colorful male moved to within a foot of my leg before hopping onto my boot, curiously staring into my eyes. A couple of days after this close-up experience the tanagers seemed to vanish, perhaps moving to cooler northern breeding areas.

Island Park resident Charlie Lansché is a landscape and wildlife photographer who is equally at home with songbirds as he is with grizzlies.

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