



# The Golden Eagle

Newsletter of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society

July/August, 2017

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## Two eagles key in saving endangered fox

By Crista Videriksen Worthy

There's been a lot of bad news lately for people who care about wildlife and the environment—pulling out of the Paris Climate Accord is just the latest example. So I'd like to share a happy story: the true tale of the rescue of an endangered species and its subsequent removal from the endangered species list. The species in question is a mammal, not a bird, but two eagle species play crucial roles in this saga.

Off the California coast, near Santa Barbara, lies a group of eight islands collectively known as the Channel Islands. On six of these islands roamed the Channel Islands fox, which looks much like a gray fox, but smaller. Long inhabited by Native Americans, the islands later hosted European explorers, ranchers, farmers, and the military. Non-native animals, such as pigs, sheep, deer and elk, were introduced. These animals ate much of the brush that provided cover for the foxes. Still, they were doing all right because the islands' top predator, the bald eagle, is known as a fish eater. Beginning in the mid-20th century, DDT was dumped off the coast. The chemical entered the food chain, making its way into fish and then the eagles, causing them to lay thin-shelled eggs that broke easily. Eventually the bald eagles vanished from the islands. With the baldies gone, golden eagles moved in and began to dine on the foxes and piglets, which had nowhere to hide. The fox population plummeted 90 percent in six years. By 2000, there were only 15 foxes each on San Miguel and Santa Rosa islands and 55 on Santa Cruz Island. In 2004 the Channel Islands fox was added to the endangered species list.

The race to save the foxes began several years before they were listed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service joined the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and Catalina Island Conservancy to hatch an aggressive plan that included the removal of the golden eagles. The last few eagles got smart and were difficult to trap, but eventually all were relocated to Northern California. Fortunately, DDT had been banned and had stopped leaching into the ocean. This allowed biologists to safely reintroduce bald eagles to the islands. In 2006, the first chick to

hatch unaided by humans on the Channel Islands in more than 50 years made national headlines; the popular nestcam is available at <https://www.nps.gov/chis/learn/photosmultimedia/bald-eagle-webcam.htm>.

Other efforts to help the foxes created controversy. Thousands of pigs were shot, which angered animal rights groups. But officials said eliminating pigs was necessary to force golden eagles to forage elsewhere and help the foxes recover. The foxes were temporarily captured, vaccinated, and bred in captivity. Funding came from public and private sources and included volunteer time. Officials did not have an estimate of the overall cost, but said the captive rearing and monitoring cost about \$20 million.

The islands' sizes and remoteness gave scientists better control over recovery efforts than had they been on the mainland. As they multiplied, the foxes were released back into the wild. In the spring of 2016, the Channel Islands fox was removed from the endangered species list.

At 12 years, this was the swiftest recovery of any land mammal in the

history of the Endangered Species Act. Populations have returned to self-sustaining levels and range from 700 foxes on San Miguel Island to more than 2,100 foxes on Santa Cruz Island and more than 4,000 overall.

"Years ago, you would not have seen a fox. Now, you go out there and you don't have to wait very long before a fox crosses your path," said Scott Morrison of The Nature Conservancy, which co-owns Santa Cruz Island. The baldies are doing well too, and their presence keeps golden eagles off the Channel Islands.

The fox's delisting brought the total number of animals and plants removed from the endangered species list during the tenure of President Obama to 19, more than in all previous administrations combined. Since 1973, when the act took effect, 37 species have been recovered.

We've had our share of success stories in Idaho: the peregrine falcon, captive breeding of the California condor, and Al Larson's incredible accomplishments of helping fledge more than 35,000 bluebirds in southern Idaho. All proof that great things can still be done to help our birds and other wildlife.



Bald eagle

Photo courtesy of Crista V. Worthy

**President's Message**

By Liz Urban

I wanted to start this column with a big thank you to our team of wonderful volunteers who made it possible for GEAS to participate in outreach events each weekend for the past five weeks in a row.

We talked to hundreds of people about our public field trips and offerings, engaged them in a fun egg identification display, and showed them the fledgling peregrine falcons through the spotting scope in downtown Boise during the Capital City Market. All of these events really reinforce how many people in our community are interested in learning more about birds, and we hope we can continue to find opportunities to educate and engage. Thanks to Amy Silver, Kristin Gnojewski, Pam Conley, Alex Takasugi, and Sean Finn for your dedication.

During this barrage of spring events our fiscal year also drew to a close at the end of May, and we had our annual election for board officers and members. We are pleased to welcome Libby Burtner as our secretary and both Alan Crockett and Sue Norton as our at-large board members. I thank them for giving their time to help advance GEAS's mission in the coming year.

I am also pleased to report that we had a successful fiscal year as well. Thank you to all those who supported GEAS in the past year with your donations or memberships. The GEAS Board feels very comfortable in our organization's ability to hire a part-time independent contractor for the initial time frame of one year to increase our capacity. This outreach & development associate position will greatly increase our chapter's ability to engage the larger community and improve the services we offer our volunteers and members. We anticipate flying this position by the end of this summer, so please keep an eye on the website if you or someone you know would like more information about this posting.

Liz Urban, president



**GEAS Board Election Results:**

The total votes for board officers in the May election were 29 for Liz Urban for president; 29 for Leah Dunn for vice president; 28 for Libby Burtner for secretary; and 28 Lew Ulrey for treasurer. For the two at-large board member positions Sue Norton got 24 votes and Alan Crockett got 13 votes.

**GEAS CALENDAR**

**July-August 2017**

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| IBO Hummingbird Banding           | July 1    |
| IBO Songbird Banding              | July 8    |
| IBO Hummingbird Banding           | July 15   |
| GEAS Monthly meeting              | July 19   |
| Greenbelt Litter Patrol & Birding | July 30   |
| IBO Hummingbird Banding           | August 2  |
| GEAS Monthly meeting              | August 16 |
| Greenbelt Litter Patrol & Birding | August 27 |

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Liz Urban, President<br>urbanhawk137@gmail.com       | 629-2146     |
| Leah Dunn, Vice President<br>ldboise@gmail.com       |              |
| Libby Burtner, Secretary<br>burtnerlibby@hotmail.com | 473-0870     |
| Lew Ulrey, Treasurer<br>lulrey@cableone.net          | 322-8246     |
| Sean Finn, Past President<br>a.gentilis@gmail.com    | 371-2740     |
| Michele Crist<br>mrcgoldeneagle@gmail.com            |              |
| Sue Norton<br>nortonsu@msn.com                       | 378-4248     |
| Alex Takasugi<br>alextakasugi@cableone.net           | 484-9132     |
| Chris McClure<br>chrimecc@gmail.com                  | 362-8241     |
| Matt Podolsky<br>matthew@wildlensinc.org             | 724-6388     |
| Alexander Sapiens<br>dr.sapiens@gmail.com            | 408-832-5400 |
| Amy Silver<br>amysilver819@gmail.com                 | 407-0423     |
| Alan Crockett<br>abrock.fu73573@msn.com              | 343-2969     |
| Al Larson (Honorary)<br>larson83703@msn.com          | 343-0959     |
| Levi Mohler (Honorary, Deceased)                     |              |
| Liven "Pete" Peterson (Honorary, Deceased)           |              |
| Bill Belknap (Honorary)                              |              |

**COMMITTEES**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Banquet:<br>Sue Norton, Susan Hazelton and Liz Urban | 378-4248   |
| Conservation:<br>Matt Podolsky                       | 724-6388   |
| Education:<br>Amy Silver                             | amysilver819@gmail.com<br>407-0423                               |
| Field Trips:<br>Alex Takasugi,<br>Kristin Gnojewski, | alextakasugi@cableone.net<br>484-9132<br>kgnojewski@cableone.net |
| Membership:<br>Leah Dunn                             | ldboise@gmail.com  |
| Program:<br>Alexander Sapiens                        | 408-832-5400<br>dr.sapiens@gmail.com                             |
| Publicity:   |  |
| Newsletter:<br>Niels S. Nokkentved                   | sparre47@gmail.com<br>377-3360                                   |
| Volunteer Information                                |  |
| Website:<br>Amy Silver                               | amysilver819@gmail.com<br>407-0423                               |
| Historian:<br>Jennifer Robbins-Smith                 | threehappycampers@hotmail.com<br>859-3298                        |
| Webmaster  |  |
| Grants and Awards<br>Michele Crist                   | mrcgoldeneagle@gmail.com   |

# News From the Board: May and June

- The Board encourages our members to make public comments regarding the review of national monuments before the July 10 deadline. Comments may be made at <https://www.regulations.gov> using ID DOI-2017-0002-0001.
- We raised more than \$2,000 during Idaho Gives at the beginning of May for our general fund, the New Roots Program, and the Native Plant Network. We also received an additional \$250 prize for placing on the “leader board” for small non-profit organizations. The Board also matched donations up to \$1,500.
- We hosted an additional fundraising effort during Idaho Gives for the Idaho Bird by Bird Program. The program doesn’t have the ability to raise funds directly because it is a partnership housed in an agency, so we were happy to help the program in which we have been a participant and supporter for years. The program raised about \$800 on Idaho Gives, and we will continue to look for ways to support the program in this capacity.
- The Board heard a presentation on the effort to eliminate or limit the sale of toxic yew in the state at our May meeting. We are very supportive of additional education to consumers on the risk having yew in landscaping can pose to humans and wildlife. We will keep apprised of this effort and provide support when deemed appropriate.
- The New Roots Program received a Forest Education Grant from the Idaho Forest Products Commission to teach about trees during this year’s program.
- The Terry Day House committee continues to work with a coalition of organizations to express our interest in seeing the space utilized by the community.
- We signed onto a National Audubon Society letter to Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter asking him to respect the years of collaboration and science-based management recommendations that were created for the protection for the greater sage-grouse.
- We offered a chance to float down the Snake River with the Wild Science Explorers to 9 New Roots Program participants and look forward to partnering again in the future.
- GEAS will have an outreach table at the Hyde Park Street Fair in September.
- An amazing seven people from our Board of Directors will attend the National Audubon Convention in Park City in July.

## Golden Eagle Audubon Society thanks its generous donors.

Listed below are those who contributed during the quarter ending May 31, 2017:

### \$1 - \$100

Bruce B. Ackerman  
 Amazon Smile  
 Julie Benton  
 Elizabeth Burtner  
 Jill Chrisman  
 Brenda Dismuke  
 Leah L. Dunn  
 Shirley J. Ewing  
 Barb Forderhase  
 Linda Fink  
 Kristen Gnowjewski  
 Kristen Hasselblad

Charles D. Herrington  
 Kathy Hopkins  
 Sara Kersting  
 Kathryn Keith  
 Lynelle Perry-Kolsky  
 Malcolm Manchour  
 John McCarthy  
 Donna P. McCulloch  
 Vicki McGrane  
 Gay Munday  
 Frances J. Rutter  
 Marjorie Sandor  
 Alexander Sapiens

Wiley Shell  
 Debby J. Smith  
 Karen Steenhof  
 Mark Urban  
 Amy Weatherly  
 Liza Weekes  
**\$101 - \$500**  
 Kirk Lewis  
 Elizabeth Olberding  
 Robin A. Takasugi  
 Larry Ridenhour  
**\$1,000 - \$1,500**  
 Urban family

## A Flock of Long-billed Curlews was spotted at Blacks Creek Bird Reserve!

They are on the move, but keep an eye out for them.



Brought to you by the Idaho Bird by Bird Classrooms and GEAS

## GEAS EVENTS for July and August, 2017

**Field trip information is subject to change.** Please check the Calendar and Field Trips section on the website <http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org> for the latest information or contact Alex Takasugi at 484-9132 or [geasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:geasfieldtrips@gmail.com) and Kristin Gnojewski at [kgnojewski@cableone.net](mailto:kgnojewski@cableone.net).

**Field Trip Etiquette:** We set up car pools to take as few cars as possible, while making sure everyone has a window. Please give the driver of your ride gas money and arrive 10 minutes early.

### June 19-July 2

Event: National Audubon Society's Roadshow of 2016's Best Avian Photography

Time: During regular library hours.

Location: Boise Main Library, Hayes Auditorium on the first floor.

### Tuesday, July 19

GEAS Program Meeting: Golden Eagles, Todd Katzner

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Trophy Room, Idaho Fish and Game Headquarters. Golden eagles are an elusive and iconic predator of northeastern North America.

Todd Katzner will review the status of golden eagles in eastern North America and discuss his team's research into their population dynamics, their flight behavior and the risk they face from wind turbines. For thousands of years these birds have migrated along and wintered in the Appalachians. In the past decades a new potential threat has emerged on their flight routes—wind turbines. Though turbines have killed hundreds of golden eagles in the western states, there are no records of this species being killed by wind turbines east of the Mississippi. These birds migrate using a complex and seasonally-specific combination of updrafts, behavior that allows researchers to predict the altitude at which they will be flying, and these predictions are used to form the basis for models to understand risk to birds from operation of wind turbines. Golden Eagles are a good “umbrella” for conservation because protecting eagles delivers broad biodiversity benefits through preservation of habitats and ecosystems that support many other species. These birds migrate through the Appalachians in numbers far greater than previously recognized and their presence is a sign of the recovery of eastern forests. Katzner is a research wildlife biologist with the USGS Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center.

### Sunday, July 30

Birding on the Bethine and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Park at the Greenbelt parking area southeast of the Bown Crossing Library

Contact: Alex Takasugi [geasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:geasfieldtrips@gmail.com) 484-9132

**Please check the online calendar for cancellation,** Parks and Rec officials have told us to stay off the Greenbelt until further notice—when the water has gone down. We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going down river, birding as we go, then pick up whatever bits of litter we find on the way back. Birds abound in the pond-river-riparian wooded habitat. We usually finish around noon. Bring water, binocs and maybe a plastic grocery bag in case we see any trash (it's usually minimal) No public restrooms are available.

### Tuesday, August 16

GEAS Program Meeting: How Birds are named, Terry Rich.

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Trophy Room, Idaho Fish and Game Headquarters.

Terry Rich's presentation on how birds are named or misnamed is based on the article published in the August 2016 issue of *Birding Magazine* entitled, “Missing: The Black-tailed Tanager.” What are the most common adjectives used to describe the roughly 4,600 bird species that occur in the Western Hemisphere? Rich will look at common and rare color descriptors—buffy vs. cherry, for example. And which parts of birds most often caught the attention of early taxonomists? The head, the tail, the belly, the wings? Rich was the nongame bird program coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management from 1992 to 2000. Then he served as the Partners in Flight National Coordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service from 2000 to 2014. Since 2014, Rich has been the senior ornithologist for Solutions for Bird Conservation. He has a master's degree in zoology from Idaho State University, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in public policy from Boise State University. He is an avid birder, and serves on the boards of the Great Basin Bird Observatory and American Birding Association. He is co-author of *Field Guide to Boise's Birds*.

### Sunday, August 27

Birding on the Bethine and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Park at the Greenbelt parking area southeast of the Bown Crossing Library

Contact: Alex Takasugi [geasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:geasfieldtrips@gmail.com) 484-9132

**Please check the online calendar for cancellation.** Parks and Rec officials have told us to stay off the Greenbelt until further notice—when the water has gone down.

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### IBO Hummingbird Banding Dates

Saturday, July 1; Saturday, July 15; Wednesday, August 2

Time: All run from 7 to 11 a.m.

Location: Idaho City

Join the folks at IBO in Idaho City as they band the little avian gems! You will need to obtain a ticket, free of charge, by going to the Eventbrite website at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hummingbird-banding-with-ibo-tickets-32626335247>.

Sessions fill up fast, so reserve your place soon!

### IBO Songbird Banding Dates on the Boise River

Saturday, July 8

Time: Starts at 6:50 a.m.

Location: Boise River.

Visit the IBO folks as they band songbirds migrating along the Boise River. Attendance is free, but a \$5 donation is requested, as that is what funds this activity. Details and registration are at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/boise-river-songbird-banding-tickets-33228239559>. The registration web page has details of the activity, where to go and what to bring.

## Blacks Creek featured in airline magazine

Our local Important Bird Area got some much appreciated press in the April edition of Alaska/Horizon Airlines in-flight magazine, Alaska Beyond.

The article, written by Kathryn True, features bird watching walks in the Northwest. True featured Seward Park in Seattle, Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge in Portland, and our own Blacks Creek Bird Reserve. The article describes a loop hike around the reservoir and describes some of the birds that may be seen there.

Take a gander at the original article at: <http://www.paradigmcg.com/digitaleditions/hem-0417/files/52.html>, and let it inspire you to visit the Reserve. While there, visit the bursting demonstration garden just west of the main parking area. Marvel at the high water, higher this year than anyone can remember! Enter your bird sightings on the e-Bird hotspot.

Remember to tread lightly, pack out what you pack in and say hello to all the new visitors the magazine feature attracts to our Jewel of the Desert.



Great gray owl

## The Native Plant Network blooms!

The newly initiated Treasure Valley Native Plant Network set some roots, unfurled some fronds and bloomed into a functional partnership this spring and summer.

Introduced as a vision in the March-April newsletter issue that grew out of GEAS's work at Blacks Creek Bird Reserve and other conservation sites around the valley, Network participants worked out details and proved the concept that a coalition of caring citizens, school children and teachers, and volunteer professionals could work together to create an inventory of native plants available for natural area restoration around southwest Idaho. We still have a long ways to go and more nature lovers to bring in, but thus far we've succeeded in germinating, nurturing and caring for more than 600 locally-sourced native plant seedlings in our first season.

The Network consists of K-12 classrooms, local NGOs, and a commercial nursery that all are dedicated to providing native habitat for birds, pollinators, other wildlife and people. Key GEAS partners in this endeavor include the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, Idaho Botanical Garden, Edwards Greenhouses, Liberty Elementary, Sage International, Star Elementary, Eagle Academy High School, Borah High School and the College of Western Idaho Horticulture Department. Their leaders and teachers: Tim Breuer, Eric Willadsen, Ann DeBolt, Gretel Care, Amy Silver, Kristin Gnojewski, Michelle Axtell, Kasey Burkholder, Gina Lockwood, Jeremy Thompson and Leslie Blackburn, are instrumental in making the Network function. The Network is still in its infancy – a seedling if you will – and will always remain a team project. We would be delighted to have anyone join us. The magic of the Network structure is that volunteers contribute what they can, and no one is pressed to do more than they're able.

So, what did we do? Besides aligning initial partners and reaching out to other interested parties, the Network was able to germinate and grow sagebrush, rabbitbrush, bitterbrush and yarrow seeds for local places needing a little restorative TLC. Edwards Greenhouses, Idaho Botanical Garden and GEAS board members got us started by prepping seeds collected by Willadsen and DeBolt. We learned some lessons in the process but succeeded in germinating hundreds of seedlings over the winter and early spring. The next phase involved K-12 students. We visited four classrooms and, while teaching the students about the need for and value of native plants, the children got their hands dirty transplanting seedlings to individual pots. The delicate seedlings were transferred to Eagle Academy and CWI Horticulture for care over the summer. We lost about 25 percent of the seedlings to mortality, but most survived transplanting.

Next challenge: the brutal Boise summer. This first round of seedling production is the proof of concept. As the summer develops, we are exploring appropriate seed collection protocols and ethics, building a web site, reaching out to more partners, seeking new resources and preparing for the next year of seedling production. We will begin planting this year's crop this fall.

Did I mention volunteer help and participation are needed? Tasks vary in time required, some are very easy, and we're also very interested in your unique ideas and contributions. Please join us in this citizen conservation initiative. Anyone interested may contact Sean Finn at [a.gentilis@gmail.com](mailto:a.gentilis@gmail.com) or Eric Willadsen at [ewilladsen@ltnv.org](mailto:ewilladsen@ltnv.org).

## Federal land managers visit Boise to discuss natural resource issues

Two federal land managers, on a recent visit to Idaho, said they opposed transferring federally managed public lands to the states, intended to “move resources to the front line,” and favored locally-based decision making.

On June 2, U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue spoke to a mix of land managers, private landowners, university faculty, conservation and agriculture-focused NGO representatives, the public and the media at Boise State University. After brief introductions, the secretaries fielded questions about natural resource management philosophy and policy in the West.

Perdue, a former governor of Georgia, spoke about the need for collaboration, citing the Trump administration’s desire to promote rural prosperity. Zinke emphasized the need to rebuild infrastructure on public lands managed by the Interior Department, particularly the in the national parks.

When questioned about the administration’s emphasis on supporting and subsidizing fossil fuel production, Zinke referred to birds getting “chopped up” by windmills, and cited an estimate that 650,000 to 750,000 birds are killed by windmills annually. He did not compare bird mortalities from other sources. Zinke said the administration intends to push back against some regulations imposed on fossil fuel producers as part of an “all of the above” approach to energy security.

Zinke and Perdue both emphasized the desire for collaborative conservation, even though the activities of many federally supported conservation partnerships, such as resource advisory councils and landscape conservation cooperatives, have been suspended or eliminated from the president’s 2018 budget.

It was clear that, while both secretaries are working through a re-visioning of their respective departments that neither had clear objectives on how their visions would unfold.

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## For the sake of wildlife and children, don’t buy or plant yew

Many Idaho residents, landowners and park managers are unaware that Japanese and English yew shrubs are highly toxic to people, pets, and wildlife.

Though experts have known all along of the threat yew bushes pose, the danger has been largely overlooked in Idaho until this recent winter. Locals know this past winter was one for the record books in terms of snow accumulation and cold. Many of our beloved big game animals were forced through hunger to wander into neighborhoods and parks in Boise and throughout southern Idaho. A few unlucky ones stumbled across seemingly palatable ornamental yews. The shrubs appear as a spot of greenery in a sea of snow banks. For those animals that partook, it was the last thing they ate. Just a handful of yew needles can kill a bull elk, and so they did: 101 cases of yew-caused mortality of deer, elk and pronghorn were documented in Idaho last winter.

Yews plants are fairly easy to identify in part because most people recognize them from ornamental settings. Yews are typically 5- to 8-foot shrubs, but they may grow more than 50 feet tall. Shrubs are typically erect and conical, though prostrate forms are common too. The narrow, evergreen needles typically have two yellowish bands on the underside. Female yew plants have red berries that can attract children in the summer and the seeds are poisonous when consumed. During the winter months,

the leaves of the plant hold the highest concentration of the alkaloids that cause to livestock and wildlife fatalities.

The 2016-2017 wildlife mortalities, confirmed as yew poisoning by Idaho Fish and Game, alerted many to the year-around danger yews pose. In an effort to document yew poisoning, concerned residents turned up dozens of records including children, livestock and wildlife. Fortunately, the human victims all received quick medical attention and survived. A citizen effort, led by Angela Rossmann of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness, petitioned the state government to do something about the danger posed by yew. The Idaho Department of Agriculture initiated a negotiated rule making process to evaluate how best to deal with the yew. The rule making process is expected to be contentious. Idaho residents and concerned parties are encouraged to submit a letter to the ag department. For more information go to: [https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg\\_tacu.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_tacu.pdf).

In the meantime Golden Eagle Audubon Society encourages members to identify yew plants in their yard, especially those that are accessible to wildlife and people, and remove and burn them. Don’t purchase or plant yew for the sake of wildlife and children. Talk to neighbors and let them know. The wildlife, livestock and parents in your neighborhood will appreciate it.



## The Antiquities Act and national monuments protect national treasures

*By Mackenzie Case*

Since President Theodore Roosevelt signed it into law in 1906, the Antiquities Act has granted presidents the authority to designate national monuments as “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.”

In the past 111 years, June 8 marked its anniversary, almost every president since Roosevelt has used the act to establish more than 100 monuments, ranging from small sites of historic or cultural significance to large landscapes of ecological value. While its original purpose was to protect artifacts and historical features or antiquities from looting and development, its purpose has evolved to include other features, including scenic vistas, distinctive geological features, and habitat and wildlife.

Some monuments, such as the Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, also cite wildlife conservation, including protecting more than 200 species of birds, including bald eagles and peregrine falcons and neotropical birds in the area’s riparian areas, as a factor in its designation. The nearby Bears Ears National Monument also lists wildlife in its proclamation to justify protection. This scenic monument contains habitat for a diverse mix of bird species, including raptors and birds that rely on the unique undisturbed desert landscape. The monument includes a significant portion of critical habitat for the threatened Mexican spotted owl, as well as habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher.

On April 26, President Donald Trump issued an executive order calling on the Secretary of Interior to review and offer policy recommendations on certain national monuments. On May 5, the Interior Department announced the first-ever formal review of 22 terrestrial national monuments and five marine national monuments. National monuments are often popular tourism destinations, and research suggests they are an asset to local economies, so it may seem odd to some that they are now at risk of reduction or even elimination. Public land politics, however, are a powerful force, and national monuments are no exception.

National monuments are and have long been a source of political tension. For example, Jackson Hole National Monument, now Grand Teton National Park, was so controversial locally that in 1950, Congress passed legislation that prohibits presidents from establishing new monuments in Wyoming, though Congress can still do so. Monuments, such as Grand-Staircase Escalante, are an epicenter of many decades of political tension. The area was recommended for protection as early as 1936, but local concerns prevented the area from becoming a monument until 1996 under President Clinton. More recently, Bears Ears National Monument, designated by President Obama in December 2016, faced similar contentions. Advocates and opponents of the moment remain equally vocal and passionate about the issue. Despite these political battles, no president has ever attempted to rescind a monument through the Antiquities Act, and the legal authority to do so is questionable at best.

While many monuments were designated to protect historical and cultural sites, they can also protect important habitats for birds and other wildlife, including threatened or endangered species. Some also connect larger landscapes and ecosystems to other protected areas, further contributing to keeping habitats intact. Additionally, some monuments are designated

and managed with wildlife conservation as the primary goal. President Obama expanded the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in January 2017 with biodiversity protection as a key factor. This monument’s proclamation highlights protecting crucial habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl and other bird species.

Monuments, regardless of their primary designation purpose, can also protect wildlife and habitats indirectly by preventing development and resource extraction. Idaho’s Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, perhaps best known for its unique volcanic geological features, is just one example. At first glance, it might appear to be a hauntingly beautiful but nearly lifeless, a rocky landscape with sparse vegetation. However, the area provides habitat for a variety of desert plants and wildlife, including many bird species from shrubland specialists to migratory birds. Ironically, though the monument made the Trump Administration’s review list, the local community strongly supports Craters of the Moon becoming a national park. This unworldly landscape, like many other monuments, attracts diverse visitors from recreationists to bird watchers.

The comment period for Bears Ears National Monument already has ended, and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke recommended reducing the monument’s size. Anyone interested, however, may still comment on the review of other national monuments through July 10, adding to the already overwhelming support in maintaining these irreplaceable and uniquely American treasures. Submitting thoughtful comments that emphasize why national monuments are important, as well as their role in supporting birds and other wildlife, is an important action, as they are part of a public land system that belongs to all Americans.

*Mackenzie Case is a GIS and policy analyst at Boise State University. She holds a master’s degree in public administration with an emphasis on natural resources and energy policy.*

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### ***A note from GEAS Vice President Leah Dunn:***

I recently visited Bears Ears National Monument to support the local community, and of course, to get in some birding. It was not my first visit to the area, and I have hiked the adjoining Dark Canyon Wilderness. While I soaked in the stunning views, however, I had an overwhelming feeling of responsibility to engage. I would like to encourage GEAS members to take action as well, to speak out, to support our public lands, and to consider commenting in support of national monuments.

**To submit comments on national monuments, go to <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOI-2017-0002-0001>. Written comments may be submitted to: Monument Review, MS-1530, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW., Washington, DC 20240. Deadline to comment is July 10.**

Golden Eagle Audubon Society  
PO Box 8261  
Boise, ID 83707  
Electronic Service Requested

Non-profit Organization  
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Boise, ID  
Permit No. 181

The Golden Eagle Audubon Society publishes *The Golden Eagle* six times a year.

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- For membership/subscription information, renewals, or change of address, e-mail [membership@goldeneagleaudubon.org](mailto:membership@goldeneagleaudubon.org).
- For newsletter submissions, send an e-mail to Niels S. Nokkentved at [sparre47@gmail.com](mailto:sparre47@gmail.com). The deadline for newsletter submissions is the second Sunday of the month.

### We invite you to join the Golden Eagle Audubon Chapter

Membership in the local chapter includes a one-year subscription to *The Golden Eagle*, and all my dues remain with the local chapter and support local activities.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Student membership \$15
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- Golden Eagle Lifetime membership \$500

I would like to donate an additional \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Golden Eagle Audubon Society. Mail to: Golden Eagle Audubon Society, PO Box 8261, Boise, ID 83707, **or pay by credit card on our website [www.goldeneagleaudubon.org](http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org) (click support GEAS).**

Please contact us for information on membership scholarships.

To join the National Audubon Society visit <http://www.audubon.org/> and use chapter code G00 for Golden Eagle Audubon Society, or write to: National Audubon Society, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250.

The Golden Eagle Audubon Society is southwest Idaho's chapter of the National Audubon Society.  
GEAS promotes environmental awareness through field trips, local programs and volunteer work.

Post Office Box 8261, Boise, Idaho 83707  
[www.goldeneagleaudubon.org](http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org)

Chapter Code: C5ZG000Z