



The Golden Eagle

Newsletter of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society

May/June, 2018

Bird Brains: Big Things Sometimes Come in Small Packages

By *Crista Videriksen Worthy*

I love noticing the changes in bird vocalizations across the seasons. Beginning in late January and extending into mid-March, it became impossible for me to step into our backyard between sunset and sunrise and not hear great horned owls hooting at each other. These birds breed in winter. By late February, the goldfinches were beginning to vary their songs, sounding like springtime, even though they were still wearing their “winter clothes.”

As we know, mating behavior for most temperate songbirds is strongly seasonal. In late winter and early spring, male songbirds experience a surge of circulating sex hormones, driving dramatic increases in the size of the testes. After breeding season, the testes regress to smaller size. When you are planning to migrate hundreds or thousands of miles, or even just trying to survive the winter, why lug around enlarged organs when you don't need them? The other thing is that increases in sex hormones are associated with male territoriality and increased aggression toward other males. In the case of California quail, which live here year-round, migration is not an issue. But when the breeding season is over, it's more advantageous for the quail to gather in large coveys, rather than in pairs. They huddle together to stay warm, there are more eyes to spot danger in the form of Cooper's hawks, and the danger to any one bird is less if it's in a large flock. Squabbling with other males at this time would just waste energy.

Well, it turns out that the brain structure of temperate songbirds also changes over the year. Songbird brains include several anatomically distinct regions that are important to the ability to sing, mainly in males. Neurobiologist Eliot Brenowitz and colleagues at the University of Washington showed that these brain regions—the song nuclei—increased in size prior to the onset of breeding and song production, and regressed substantially afterwards, as the need for song waned. Why? Nervous systems are expensive.

Nervous tissue is some of the most metabolically costly tissue to use and maintain. For an animal with a limited total energy budget, investment in brain tissue comes at the expense of meeting other bodily needs. Therefore, it would be expected that natu-

ral selection would generally favor bigger brains, but be tightly constrained to the cognitive demands of each species. During mating season, songbirds use more complicated songs to attract mates and defend territories. Off-season calls, if any, are less complicated. They tend to be either simple vocalizations to keep flocks together or alarm calls. So, a temperate songbird saves energy by decreasing the size of that portion of its brain used for complex singing when it's not needed.

The field of neuroecology explores how brains—their size, structure, and information processing abilities—are shaped by species' different environmental and cognitive challenges. It's

generally assumed that more brain investment, as with larger brains, will correspond to greater cognitive capacity. It's also true that bigger animals generally have bigger brains. But when you go down to very small animals, relative brain size increases. It's almost as though minimum brain size hits a wall; the body can go on shrinking, but the brain cannot. This nearly universal rule is called Haller's rule. The idea is that each animal lineage has fundamental cognitive requirements that cannot be sacrificed. A tiny monkey may have a smaller brain, but still needs to be able to do monkey-type things, so a tiny monkey will have a relatively larger brain to its body size than a big monkey.

Interestingly, many social insects, like ants, will have smaller brains than you'd expect for their size. The theory is that, because they live in tightly-knit societies of closely-related individuals, all working together, the brain power is almost spread out among them, so each one can get away with a smaller brain. What's interesting about this is that researchers have discovered that in humans, body-size-corrected brain volume has declined during recent evolution. Over the past 20,000 years, human brains have lost about the equivalent of a tennis ball's worth of volume on average. One theory is that as human language allowed us to communicate knowledge; we were able to get by with smaller brains, thus saving valuable energy. We have been able to rely less on our physical organic brains and more on external, collectively shared cognition. Food for thought! Bet you never think about bird songs in the same way again!



Western meadowlark

Photo by Rick Bohn, USFWS

President’s Message

By Liz Urban

I feel like our chapter is really starting to build some great momentum, and I can’t thank our amazing volunteers enough for moving us forward. This year’s banquet was a great success, and I wanted to say a special thank you to all the wonderful people who have put time and energy into our biggest event of the year. We hope if you were able to attend that you enjoyed the speaker, the photography exhibit, and the chance to catch up with old friends and to meet new ones. It is always inspiring to see how strong our birding community is and that we are growing and engaging more people all the time.

I would like to acknowledge the board members for being willing to try and address our capacity issues through some contract work. It’s through the support of our development and outreach associate, Lizzy Miskell, that we are able to offer more programs, create new educational materials, and reach more people. Her efforts getting the word out about our work are really paying off. We engaged hundreds of people in our “Library Bird Takeover” in March, had a great turnout at “Give an Hour for an Owl,” installing artificial nest burrows for burrowing owls at Blacks Creek, and for the first time ever, had well over 50 people attend our “bird walk in a park” series in April. Lizzy’s efforts complement all the volunteer effort we put into this chapter, and it’s fantastic to see all of our cohesive work really making an impact.

Together we have created a thriving chapter, and I can’t wait to see where the next year takes us. Thank you – whether you are a member, partner, volunteer, or all of the above – for sharing GEAS’s vision to create a better world for birds and for people.

Liz Urban, president

Idaho Gives Mini-birdathon, Thursday, May 3
 GEAS President Liz Urban will lead a series of short birding walks in Boise during this 24-hour community fund-raising event. For each species Liz and those who join her count, the GEAS board of directors will add a \$100-match to our fund raising campaign during Idaho Gives. Help contribute to citizen science, have fun birding, and double the money we raise to celebrate the Year of the Bird! Please check the GEAS calendar and our Facebook page for specific times and locations as the date approaches. Donations can be made for the 24 hours of May 3, ending at 11:59 p.m. To donate visit www.IdahoGives.org.

GEAS CALENDAR

May-June 2018

SIBA Field Trip: Jordan Valley	May 5
Field Trip: Montour and Sagehen	May 12
World Migratory Bird Day	May 12
Field Trip: Oreana Bluebird Trail	May 19
Monthly Program Meeting	May 22
Greenbelt Birding and Litter Patrol	May 27
Field Trip and Raptor Fest	June 2
Field Trip: Prairie Bluebird Trail	June 9
Picnic with Al at Daggett Creek	June 16
Field Trip: Silver City	June 23
Greenbelt Birding and Litter Patrol	June 24
Annual Picnic	June 26

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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News From the Board: March and April

- Native Plant Network: The plants are germinating! Many plants to be repotted soon. Re-potting will get in full swing by mid-April. We are looking for folks willing to grow/nurture the plants from June 1 to September. Guidance provided. Contact Sean at SFinn@goldeneagleaudubon.org if interested.
- The “Bird Take-over” at the Library at Cole & Ustick was a great success and engaged nearly 200 people in bird-themed programming, with hundreds more enjoying the NAS photo exhibit.
- Liz Urban taught an Osher Institute course on hummingbirds to 400 people in March. She donated her teaching honorarium to be used for GEAS education and outreach efforts.
- Dondi Black coordinated a conservation event at Blacks Creek Bird Reserve to install artificial nesting burrows for burrowing owls, and Idaho species of greatest conservation need. More than 30 people were scheduled to attend.
- Lizzy Miskell and Liz Urban attended the Serve Idaho Conference on behalf of GEAS.
- The GEAS Board intends to undergo strategic planning this fall to address the many changes our chapters has made and formulate a three-year directional document and mission.
- The board discussed the need for further fund-raising strategies and that we are seeking new leadership for the Banquet committee with the retirement of Susan Hazelton and Sue Norton as chairs.
- The board addressed the creation of a bird-friendly coffee club (see details in this newsletter), but will have to apply for a state sales permit to do so, delaying the start of the wholesale club until May.
- GEAS participated in the judging of

the statewide Junior Duck Stamp art contest, hosted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

- The fifth annual New Roots Program is scheduled from June 4-15 and will be provided, cost-free, to 30 refugee and immigrant youth.

Banquet Recap

The Red Lion banquet hall was packed for our March 10 Banquet, which featured an outstanding presentation by photographer Paul Bannick, an array of auction items and home-made desserts, and a traveling exhibit of the National Audubon Society’s photography contest winners. GEAS also recognized the following individuals for their contributions to environmental education and conservation in the greater community: Dr. Megan Jones, Educator of the Year; Kristin Gnojewski, Conservation Award; Alan Crockett, Volunteer of the Year Award.

Volunteer News

Annual Banquet Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to our banquet volunteers for creating a truly special evening of celebration and community. From baking the desserts and soliciting donations to planning every last detail, we could not have pulled off such a successful event without your support. Special thanks go to our banquet committee chairs, Sue Norton, and Susan Hazelton for all of their hard work.

Dessert Bakers: Alex Takasugi, Alice Crockett, Ann Swanson, Ann DeBolt, Suzanne Woodcock, Hope Denney, Jennifer Robbins-Smith, Jim DeWitt, Jo Henderson, Julie Morgan, Kathy Barker-McCoy, Kerry Cook, Leah Dunn, Libby Burtner, Steve and Lorilie Bouffard, Sean and Liz Finn, Sue Norton, Susan Hazelton, and Velma Vance.

Banquet Committee: Sue Norton, Liz Urban, Alexander Sapiens, Ann DeBolt, Ann Swanson, Danette Henderson, Hope Denney, Libby Burtner, Louise Maley, Sheri Robison, Susan Hazelton, Suzanne Woodcock, and Teresa Sabala.

Banquet Volunteers: Alan Crockett, Alice Crockett, Ben Wright, Caitlin Davis, Chris McClure, Dave Hazelton, Diana Dicus, Ben Dicus, Heidi Ware, Jerry Denney, Katie Callery, Leah Dunn, Matt Henderson, Alexander Sapiens, Liz Urban, Mark Urban, Matt McCoy, Michele Crist,

Sadie Ranck, Sean Finn, Teague Scott, and Tricia Howerton.

Additional Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to Kristin Gnojewski and Liz Urban for planning and leading programs for the Library Bird Takeover in March. Big thanks to Dondi Black for stepping into leadership roles, including coordinating another round of Climate Watch as well as initiating “Give an Hour for an Owl.” Thanks to Sean Finn for his leadership in the Native Plant Network (NPN) and the many volunteers who support this important restoration work. Thank you to Colleen Greenwalt, Libby Burtner, Scott Cowen and students at Lowell Scott for re-potting 1,000 native plant seedlings.

Thank you also to our newsletter

production team: Niels Nokkentved, Jessica Fusek, Leah Dunn, Hope Denney, Jerry Denney, Libby Burtner, Susan Hazelton, Ann Swanson, Louise Maley, Alice Crockett, Alan Crockett, Alexander Sapiens, Alex Takasugi, and Sue Norton.

Many thanks are owed to our banquet chairs Sue Norton and Susan Hazelton, as well as the rest of the banquet committee for all of their hard work in planning the event. Dozens of volunteers came together to make the Banquet a success—be sure to read the volunteer acknowledgements for a complete list. Sue and Susan are passing the torch of Banquet Chair for next year. Email us at info@goldeneagleaudubon.org if you are interested in joining or leading the committee.

Call for Small Grant Applications

The GEAS Grants and Awards Committee will accept applications for the summer and fall grant cycle through June 8. The board votes in July on grants, which are generally \$500 or less. We welcome conservation, education, or research projects to apply for consideration. The application can be found on the GEAS website under Programs and should be submitted via email to Libby Burtner: lburtner@goldeneagleaudubon.org.



GEAS EVENTS for March and April 2018

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 208-484-9132 or geasfieldtrips@gmail.com and Kristin Gnojewski at 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.

Saturday, May 5

SIBA Jordan Valley Bluebird Trail

Trip Leader: Al Larson

Contact: David Potter, joemorgan409@msn.com 208-365-8380

Time: 8 a.m. at the Marsing Island Park (below the bridge)

After carpooling to eliminate a few cars, we will travel up U.S. Highway 95 through Jordan Valley to Trout Creek Rd. where the SIBA Bluebird Trail starts. Al will check several boxes for bluebird activity with a lunch stop along the way. We will have other birding opportunities before and after checking nest boxes.

Saturday, May 12

Field Trip: Montour WMA and Sagehen Reservoir Bluebird Trail

Trip Leader: Al Larson

Time: 9 a.m. sharp at the Triangle Restaurant on Highway 52 at Sweet-Ola Hwy

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com 208-484-9132

Location: Those wishing to carpool should meet at 8 a.m. at the Park and Ride on State and Riverside Drive (SW corner of State and Edgewood, across from Starbucks) in Eagle, or 8:45 a.m. at Sweet-Ola Hwy/Montour junction on Hwy 52 between Emmett and Horseshoe Bend at the Triangle restaurant parking lot.

We will make a brief trip to Montour management area and then head for Sagehen Reservoir. We hope our lunch stop will be in the forest at nest box #1. We will continue on to the reservoir where the official trip ends. This is a great opportunity to observe wild flowers as well as birds! Dress for the weather and bring water, lunch, lawn chair and snacks; this is an all day trip.

Saturday, May 12

World Migratory Bird Day

Time: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Location: Zoo Boise

Join GEAS at the zoo for a range of fun activities, including short bird walks, crafts for the family, a scavenger hunt, door prizes, and more.

Saturday, May 19

Field Trip: Oreana Bluebird Trail

Trip Leader: Al Larson

Time: 8 a.m. sharp from the Walter's Ferry Bridge

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com 208-484-9132

Location: Walter's Ferry Bridge over the Snake on Idaho 45 south of Nampa

Carpoolers should meet at the St. Luke's Meridian Park and Ride on Eagle Road across from McDonalds/Chevron at 7 a.m.

Don't miss a chance to explore Owyhee County with Al Larson. There will be lots of wildflowers in addition to the Bluebirds, other colorful breeders and probably a few late migrants as we climb through varied habitats towards Spencer Reservoir. Pack lunch and water for all day outing and don't forget the sun block.

Dress for variable weather conditions.

Tuesday, May 22

Monthly Program Meeting - The Flammulated Owl

Location: Sagebrush Room, Ustick/Cole Rd Library

Time: 7 p.m.

Speaker: Leon Powers

Leon Powers will talk about the flammulated owl population he studied in Idaho's Sublett Mountains. Powers, Ph.D. is professor emeritus at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa. In addition to various biology classes, he has taught birds of prey classes for 30 years. He is "Doc Hawk," nature writer for Boys' Life magazine, and he is the author of the nonfiction books, "A Hawk in the Sun," "Dead Owls Flying," "The Forgotten Expedition," "Doc Hawk Stories for Everyone," and his just released "Seven Summers," about flammulated owls.

Sunday, May 27

Birding on the Bethine and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

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

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com 208-484-9132

We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going downriver, 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.

Saturday, June 2

Field Trip and Raptor Fest

Time: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Location: Indian Creek Winery, Kuna

Celebrate Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area's 25th anniversary at this family-friendly event sponsored by the Birds of Prey Partnership with a field trip from 10 a.m. to noon followed by a festival at the winery from noon to 5 p.m.

Saturday, June 9

Field Trip: Prairie Bluebird Trail

Trip Leader: Al Larson

Time: 8 a.m.

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com 208-484-9132

Location: BLM parking lot at 3948 Development Ave. by the airport

Al will share his expertise and love for the bluebirds with us as we travel along his trail. We may see the bobolinks near Prairie if the hay is still uncut. There are varied habitats, beautiful scenery, and many of Idaho's breeding birds—all in one trip. Bring lunch, water, a lawn chair and sun protection for an all day trip. Restrooms are available at Willow Creek and Prairie.

Saturday, June 16

Picnic at Daggett Creek with Al Larson

Trip Leader: Al Larson

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com, 208-484-9132

Time: 8 a.m. sharp at the Daggett Creek Bridge

Location: Those wishing to car pool should meet at MK Nature Center, 600 S. Walnut in Boise, at 7:15, **continued on Page 7**

GEAS EVENTS continued from Page 4

or meet at 7:45 at the Daggett Creek Bridge, Milepost 24 on Highway 21

We'll meet at the Daggett Creek Bridge and spend the morning birding the area, which will be alive with many nesting species. Then we'll meander up Daggett Creek Road to Al's ranch and enjoy a picnic lunch with the hummingbirds at the feeders. Pack your picnic basket and lawn chair and join us for this great traditional favorite GEAS trip.

Saturday, June 23

Field Trip to Silver City

Trip Leader: Alexander Sapiens

Time: 7 a.m. (Park N Ride) or 7:30 a.m. (Walter's Ferry Bridge)

Location: Walter's Ferry Bridge on Idaho 45 south of Nampa
Carpoolers should meet at the St. Luke's Meridian Park and Ride on Eagle Road across from McDonalds/Chevron at 7 a.m.

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com 208-484-9132

We will leave from Walter's Ferry parking lot and travel to Murphy, stopping at the Owyhee County courthouse, then travel on to Silver City, where we can eat lunch or buy lunch and delicious pie at the Idaho Hotel. Bring water and lunch if you don't want to eat at the hotel in Silver City.

Sunday, June 24

Birding on the Bethine and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

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

Contact: Alex Takasugi geasfieldtrips@gmail.com 208-484-9132

We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going downriver, 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, June 26

Annual Picnic

Time: 5 p.m. to sunset.

Location: Armstrong (formerly Municipal) Park Sweet Gum site
Join us for a potluck dinner to celebrate a year of achievements our chapter has made together, socialize with fellow members, and install our new board officers and Directors. We will provide some roasted chicken and drinks, but please bring a dish or beverage to share.

IBO Hummingbird Banding Dates

Join the folks at IBO in Idaho City as they band the little avian gems. Tickets, required, are available at the Eventbrite website, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hummingbird-banding-tickets-43001014191>. **Note changes:** This year, because of a cut in federal funding, IBO will charge \$10 for the tickets. Also, participants will no longer be able to drive directly to the house, and a shuttle is provided from Idaho City every 20-30 minutes.

Hummingbird dates this year: Thursday June 14, Saturday June 30, Tuesday July 31 and Saturday, August 11. All the sessions run from 7 to 11 a.m. and are in Idaho City. Sessions fill up fast, so reserve your place soon!

IBO Songbird Banding Dates on the Boise River

Visit the IBO folks as they band songbirds migrating along the Boise River. Attendance is free, but registration is required, and a donation of \$5 or more is requested. Details and registration are at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/summer-boise-river-songbird-banding-tickets-44624972494>.

Songbird dates this year are Wednesday June 6, Saturday June 16, Friday June 29, Saturday July 7, Sunday July 15 (start at 7 a.m.), and Saturday, July 28 and Saturday, August 4 (start at 7:15 a.m.) The registration web page has complete details of the activity, where to go, what to bring, etc.



Snow geese on a snowy spring day at the Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area

Photo by N.S. Nokkentved

Ballot

2018/19 GEAS Board of Directors & Officers Election

All current GEAS members please take a moment to vote for this year's candidates for the board of directors and officer positions. Board members serve three-year terms while officers are elected every year. Nominations may be made through May 22 when the election concludes at our monthly meeting.

Members may cast one vote either by mail, online, or in person. Ballots may be mailed to GEAS, P.O. Box 8261, Boise, ID 83707. Mailed ballots must be received no later than Tuesday, May 22nd to be counted. An online ballot is available through the membership portal (log in on the site to access). Members may vote in person at the May monthly meeting, at 7 p.m., May 22, at the Library at Cole and Ustick.

President (Vote for one)

- Liz Urban
- Other (write in name) _____

Vice President (Vote for one)

- Leah Dunn
- Other (write in name) _____

Secretary (Vote for one)

- Libby Burtner
- Other (write in name) _____

Treasurer (Vote for one)

- Alex Takasugi
- Other (write in name) _____

Board of Directors (Vote for four)

- Dondi Black
- Chris McClure
- Matt Podolsky
- Alexander Sapiens
- Other (write in name) _____

Banquet donors:

We would like to thank the following donors:
 Alan Crockett
 Alex Takasugi
 Alexander Sapiens
 Amy Silver
 Ann DeBolt
 Banana Ink
 Barbara Howard
 Barry Devine
 Bill Upton
 Bob Ellis
 Brenda and Mike Pulchalski
 Bruce Ackerman and Susan Werner
 Bryce Robinson
 Carol Casler
 Carol McDowell
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 David and Susan Hazelton
 Dawn Mitts
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 Deborah Erwin and Christopher Dresden
 Dondi Black and Jeff Bondi
 Ed and Muriel Shaul
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 Cathy Eells.
 Thanks also to the businesses and community partners for their donations in support of the silent auction:
 Bird House and Habitat
 Boise Co-op
 Chocolat Bar
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The World Center for Birds of Prey--The Peregrine Fund
 Cornell Lab Bird Academy
 Phone Skope
 Proof Eyewear
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 O2 Photography
 D&B Supply
 Dawson Taylor Coffee Roasters
 Dungeness River Audubon Center
 Firefly Garden Art
 Friends of Boise Zoo
 Idaho Botanical Garden
 Idaho Shakespeare Festival
 Edwards Greenhouse.



Candidate Biographies

President: Liz Urban

Liz Urban has been the GEAS president for the past two years and has served on the board for the previous four years. She is a member of the education, banquet, and small grants and awards committees. She is the director of the Audubon New Roots Program and is a Bird by Bird Program facilitator. Liz received her master's degree in natural resources in 2011 from the University of Arizona. She has worked on a number of avian research projects at Boise State University since arriving in Boise. Liz hopes to continue to develop conservation and education partnerships this year for GEAS to effectively expand our impact in the community and the environment.

Vice President: Leah Dunn

Leah Dunn is an ecologist with more than 15 years of avian ecology experience working with various non-profits, state, and federal agencies. She works with Boise State University and the U.S. Geological Survey for the National Gap Program. Leah's work on bird conservation strategies with the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative, the Department of Defense and several others has provided her with birding opportunities ranging from the Arctic Circle to the Sonoran Desert. She hopes to continue to serve as a board member of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society and she hopes to contribute to GEAS's conservation goals and local efforts. Leah has served on the GEAS Audubon board for six years.

Secretary: Libby Burtner

Libby is a retired RN who served in the U.S. Air Force as a nurse for 8 years, and rounded out the other 32 years of nursing in hospitals, clinics and schools. She has always been a back-yard birder, but ventured out beyond those borders about five years ago. She is also a Master Naturalist, a docent at Birds of Prey and an avid photographer. Gardening, learning Spanish, reading, travel and mail art round out her interests. She is willing to take on secretarial duties for a second year.

Treasurer: Alex Takasugi

Alex grew up in Indiana, where her backyard bordered on thick woods where she spent as much time as she could get

away with, roaming and enjoying the wildlife. She was always interested in birds and joined the local Audubon chapter as a teenager, as well as creating one of the best feeding stations in the neighborhood. She says she will never forget seeing her first wood duck and hearing her first wood thrush in southern Indiana. When she went to work at Hewlett-Packard in Boise 30 years ago, the birding went on hold. After retiring from HP, she resumed birding and became determined to learn as much as she could about the ecosystem she had initially found to be so brown and dead. Now a total desert rat, she wants to give something back and do what she can to preserve the birds and other living treasures of this area through learning – she took the Master Naturalist course, among others – and volunteering, whether it's citizen science projects, removing noxious weeds or picking up trash. She is delighted to meet all the active, engaged folks in our birding community, and hopes to continue our good work together.

Board of Directors:

Dondi Black

Dondi has a biology degree from the University of Montana and a master's in environmental engineering from BSU. She has been an avid backyard birdwatcher for more than 15 years in Boise. She has re-landscaped two urban yards for birds and pollinators. She is passionate about restoring habitat for birds and other wildlife. GEAS's projects at Blacks Creek, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve and the Native Plant Network inspired her to get more involved. Dondi is currently GEAS's Climate Watch coordinator.

Chris McClure

Chris's fascination with birds began in high school when he took an ornithology course. Since then, he has earned a bachelor's degree in environmental economics from the University of Georgia and a doctorate in biology from Auburn University. In graduate school, he studied methods to improve studies of bird habitat use. He and his family moved to Boise three years ago when he was hired by Boise State University where, in collaboration with the Intermountain Bird Observatory, he helped to study the effects of road noise on birds. He is the director

of the Peregrine Fund's American Kestrel Partnership, a hemisphere-wide effort of citizen and professional scientists to identify the causes of declines in American kestrel populations. He looks forward to working with the GEAS to promote conservation of birds and their habitat.

Matt Podolsky

Growing up in the Northeast, Matt developed a love for thick deciduous forests and the weathered, ancient peaks of the Northern Appalachians. He attended college in upstate New York and spent a summer hiking 600 miles of the Appalachian Trail. It was in the West where he discovered his love for birds while participating in an SCA internship at Lassen Volcanic National Park in Northern California. Several years later he returned to the western states to work on the condor project in the remote desert of northern Arizona and southern Utah. He moved to Boise several years later to become a part of the Peregrine Fund's captive breeding program for California condors. He fell in love with Boise and decided to start a nonprofit. Since founding Wild Lens Inc. in 2011, he has produced and directed several full-length films. He also created the half-hour documentary, "Bluebird Man," about honorary GEAS board member Al Larson. In this time, he also has produced numerous short videos, working closely with almost every conservation-oriented organization in the Treasure Valley.

Alexander Sapiens

Alexander Sapiens is an emeritus professor from San José State University who has been birding for 10 years. He has been birding in more than 20 states and 10 countries. Through travel, study and active participation, he has become an experienced birder and photographer. He has taught birding classes for AARP in their New Knowledge Adventures program for the past three years. Alexander has been a member of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society for the past nine years. He has served one three-year term on the GEAS board of directors and has participated on the banquet, conservation, and education committees. He has been the GEAS program manager for more than one year.

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GEAS promotes environmental awareness through field trips, local programs and volunteer work.

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