



The Golden Eagle

Newsletter of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society

July/August, 2016

One Person Making a Difference and Making Space for Birds

By Crista Videriksen Worthy

In our last issue I mentioned several classic books wherein the author lives in one place for at least a year and comments on the changing flora and fauna around him. Our editor, Niels Nokkentved, suggested I read another classic, *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod*, by Henry Beston. (I loved it!)

I immediately recognized his name because Beston wrote my all-time favorite quote, which I first saw 20 years ago, scrawled across the wall of a coffee-house bathroom, and I copied it onto a napkin:

“We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature and living by complicated artifice, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth.”

This paragraph sums up my feelings about animals better than I could ever hope to express. It also explains my frustration with people who have no problem “culling” families of wolves in

our wilderness areas, poisoning elephants to collect their tusks, or allowing their pet cats to cause mayhem in the local bird population. Humans evolved on this planet; we have a right to be here. But so do all the other species,



Hungry bluebird baby

Photo by Crista Worthy



Al Larson checks a bluebird box.

Photo by Crista Videriksen Worthy

no exceptions, and we should do our best to give them room alongside ourselves. I need no trophy on the wall; mine fly in and out of my yard by the hundreds, if not the thousands, daily. I need only stop and look out the window to appreciate them.

One man amongst us has done more than the rest put together to literally make room for birds. For over 35 years, Al Larson, “The Bluebird Man,” has constructed and maintained hundreds of nest boxes in Idaho for mountain and western bluebirds. Secondary cavity nesters, bluebirds across the continent are often outcompeted for nest sites by non-native European starlings and house sparrows. Due to the unwavering tenacity of the now 94-year-old and still dynamic Larson, bluebirds have been able to recover their numbers here. On June 4, a small contingent of GEAS members accompanied Larson along one of his “bluebird trails” in the Owyhees. Each nest box is numbered and Larson has meticulously recorded every egg and measured and banded every nestling in each one—over 28,000 so far. Larson led us to several nest boxes and opened them so we could look inside. One box had eggs; another held five week-old babies, each of which was gently measured, banded, and returned to the nest. Although Larson has the lat/long coordinates of each box, he don’t need no stinkin’ GPS to find the boxes—he knows them all. The coordinates are for the volunteers who assist him now and will carry his legacy into the future.

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President's Message

By Sean Finn

It's the time of year for hot summer days, long birding road trips and a changeover in leadership at Golden Eagle Audubon Society. With this letter I offer a fond farewell to my tenure as president. It was a fun year, and a very successful one at GEAS.

I want to thank the many board members, volunteers and chapter members for their contributions toward enhancing bird and wildlife habitat in southwest Idaho and to educating and informing our friends and neighbors about the beautiful and precious natural resources we have and love. I want to especially thank our outgoing board members: Kristin Gnojewski, Maria Minicucci and Gerrie Satz. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and will long be remembered! And, while I'm thanking people—a last thank you and 'best of luck' to Bruce Ackerman and Susan Werner! They're off to their new digs in Colorado and probably already showing great leadership and commitment to their new Audubon chapter.

Changeover means new blood and new spirit. Please join me in welcoming Liz Urban as our new Chapter President. Many of you know Liz, but whether you do or not, get ready for a fun, intelligent and passionate ride! Liz's effectiveness as a conservation education advocate precedes her and her leadership skills are not to be matched. I'm more than delighted to hand the reigns to her. Liz will be joined by new board members Alex Takasugi, Megan Llewellyn and Michele Crist, who is returning to an at-large board position. All three of these new leaders have already shown great skill in guiding aspects of our Chapter activities. Please join me in welcoming them too.

So as we go off our separate ways and seek new adventure this summer, let's all remember to be safe (that one elusive bird photo isn't worth life or limb, patience will be rewarded!), stay hydrated, and give a little bit back to the birds, wildlife and habitats we all love so much. Go easy on your playbacks (the bane of secretive but territorial males everywhere!), tread lightly on our precious lands and keep in mind that you can only enjoy the resources we have—join us and others in the great 21st century battle to save our natural spaces and species.

Now ... how many species are you up to??

Sean Finn, president



GEAS CALENDAR

July-August 2016

Field Trip: Oreana Bluebird Trail	July 2
IBO Hummingbird Banding	July 2, 16, 28
IBO Songbird Banding	July 9, 17, 23, 30
GEAS Monthly meeting	July 26
Greenbelt Litter Patrol & Birding	July 31
IBO Hummingbird Banding	August 11
GEAS Monthly meeting	August 23
Field Trip: Idaho Bird Observatory	August 27
Greenbelt Litter Patrol & Birding	August 28

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News From the Board: May- June 2016

1. Election results are in. Thank you to those who voted. Please welcome our executive committee: President Liz Urban, Vice President Leah Dunn, Treasurer Lew Ulrey and Secretary Sue Norton. New at-large board members are Alex Takasugi, Megan Llewellyn, and Michele Crist. Thank you all for your service!
2. We recently had our first booth at the Boise Downtown Saturday Market. It was so much fun meeting new people, talking about birds, and ogling the peregrine nestbox through a spotting scope set on in the middle of the street.
3. The Board approved granting Chris McClure and Matt Podolsky to oversee building a database and entering Al Larson's more than 30 years of bluebird nest box data. It is perceived as a first important step in converting that data to knowledge about bluebird populations in southwest Idaho.
4. We had an unscheduled win-win with the Lucky Peak road this past fall and winter. Even though the GEAS Board committed \$500 to help repair the road last year, BLM made an unscheduled maintenance run and graded the road at no cost to us. So the road will be in much better condition for those who want to visit the IBO banding site. Please still use caution and tread lightly. It won't take much for the road to degrade again.
5. We were very sad to have to cancel a work day at Blacks Creek Bird Reserve due to a plague outbreak in south Ada County ground squirrels. There is an important message here—protect yourself with closed-toed shoes, long pants and lots of DEET if you're heading south of town. The plague issue should subside once the ground squirrels begin to estivate in mid-July.
6. GEAS submitted comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Gateway Transmission line Segments 8 and 9. Please visit the website (goldeneagle-audubon.org) to see our full comments.

Volunteer and Chapter News

Volunteer Thank You's

We would like to thank Jeanette Gaston, Matthew McCoy, Pam Conley, Thomas McGinnis, MJ Byrne, Larry Ridenhour, Tate Fischer, Sal Palazzolo, Megan Llewellyn, Liz Urban, Kristin Gnojewski, and Alex Takasugi for helping to plan the Blacks Creek workday. (Cancelled because of hot weather)

We also want to thank Kristin Gnojewski, Liz Urban, Pam Conley, Lew Ulrey, and Sean Finn for staffing the booth at the Boise Downtown Market on May 7. And to Liz Urban for her presentation at the May Monthly Meeting, and to Deniz Aygen for her presentation at the May meeting - thank you!

Sue Norton and Lew Ulrey organized the annual picnic in June.

The following people helped get the newsletter out last time: Niels Nokkentved, Jessica Fusek, Harold Ward, Leah Dunn, Alex Takasugi, Susan Hazelton, Ann Swanson, Lew Ulrey, Sue Norton, and Alexander Sapiens. Thank you to everyone.

Megan Llewellyn, volunteer coordinator.

GEAS Banquet-Auction Pays Off

The money has been counted, the thank you notes mailed, and the auction supplies have been stored for next year. The GEAS

auction committee has met to review the success of the 2016 annual banquet and auction. Everyone agreed that this year's auction was a big success; the silent auction displays were beautiful, and the desserts were especially yummy. Now it's on to planning for next year.

There are many positive outcomes from this event: cash to fund the projects GEAS sponsors, the opportunity to hear an excellent speaker, the option to purchase any of the many wonderful auction items, and, one of my favorites, the chance to taste a delicious homemade dessert or desserts. But I think everyone would agree that the most enjoyable part of this event is the opportunity to visit with other GEAS members and catch up on GEAS news.

With this in mind and with an acute awareness of the many hours of work it takes to execute such an event, the committee is reviewing all aspects of the auction/banquet. An analysis of the silent auction sales tells us that experiences and consumables are the most popular auction items. Baskets filled

with wine, jam, cookies, salsa, and beer are big hits, and auction participants vie to become the successful bidders. Airline tickets and birding destinations are also popular. However, many people who donate works of art are disappointed that their works do not often generate the value they attribute to the art work.

For these reasons, the committee has decided to trim down the silent auction and reduce the number of items for sale. Stay tuned.



Wood duck

Photo by Jackie Robidoux

GEAS EVENTS for July and August

Field trip information is subject to change. Please check the website <http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org> and go to the Calendar and Field Trips section for the latest information or contact Alex Takasugi at 484-9132 or alextakasugi@cableone.net 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, July 2

SIBA Field Trip Oreana Bluebird Trail

Trip Leader: Al Larson

Contact: Letty Percifield lettyp@centurylink.net

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

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

Those wishing to carpool should meet at the St. Luke's Eagle Road Park and Ride (in St. Luke's parking lot along Eagle Road just north of I-84 across from the McDonalds/Chevron) at 7 a.m. or at the Walter's Ferry bridge over the Snake on Idaho 45 at 7:45. 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.

IBO Hummingbird Banding Project

Dates: Saturday July 2, Saturday July 16, Thursday July 28 and Thursday August 11, from 6:30 or 7 a.m. until 10:30 or 11 a.m.

Contact: Heidi Ware heideware@boisestate.edu phone 426-2223

Watch IBO folks banding hummingbirds near Idaho City.

Reservations must be made in advance and space is limited.

Reserve your place at no cost by registering at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hummingbird-banding-with-ibo-tickets-15310045759>

IBO Songbird Banding Project

Dates: Saturday July 9, Sunday July 17, Saturday July 23,

Saturday July 30 from 6:30 or 7 a.m. until 10:30 or 11 a.m.

Contact: Jessica Pollock jessicapollock@boisestate.edu 426-2225

Watch IBO folks banding songbirds at the Boise River site

near the Hwy 21 bridge at the end of Warm Springs Avenue.

Reservations must be made in advance. Reserve your place at no cost by registering at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/boise-river-banding-tickets-24688976393>

Tuesday, July 26

GEAS Monthly meeting: Cat Creek Energy project and its impact on birds and bats

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: M.K. Nature Center, 600 S Walnut St., Boise.

Cat Creek Energy applied for five permits in Elmore County to build a hydroelectric, wind turbine, solar and transmission line project on a major wildlife corridor at Anderson Ranch Reservoir. Site location is critical. Wendi Combs will discuss her conservation initiatives to protect the wildlife by stopping this project. Wendi Combs was raised in Fort Worth, Texas. She lived in Paris, France, for one year and in many states in the U.S.

before moving to Idaho. Wendi has been the legal and human resources administrator for The AIM Companies, a nutritional supplement company, in Nampa for the past 16 years. Wendi and her husband own a cabin at Anderson Ranch Reservoir in Pine, where she has learned to appreciate, respect and defend wildlife.

Sunday, July 31

Boise River Greenbelt Bird Watching and Litter Patrol

Time: 8 a.m. Please note new summer start time.

Location: Park behind the St. Als Urgent Care at Bown Crossing and Parkcenter Ave.

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132

We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going downriver, birding as we go, then pick up litter on our way back. Birds abound in the pond/river/riparian wooded habitat. We usually finish around noon. Bring gloves, water and binocs. No public restrooms are available.

Tuesday, August 23

GEAS Monthly meeting: Title: Feathers, Fowl, and Flight

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: M.K. Nature Center, 600 S Walnut St., Boise.

Steve Bouffard will give a presentation on feathers, fowl, and flight. Bouffard retired after more than 30 years with the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service, where he served as a refuge manager and wildlife biologist. Most of his experience was on refuges in

Idaho and Nevada. He leads birding trips for visually-impaired participants. Steve has been a birder since the early 1960s. He has

birded in China, Russia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, England and the USA.

Saturday August 27

Field Trip: Intermountain Bird Observatory

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Location: Meet at Hilltop Station on Hwy 21

Trip Leader: TBD

Half day trip to observe migrating passerines and watch the observatory staff mist netting and banding these small migrants.

A four-wheel drive vehicle, high clearance is recommended to navigate the road to the banding station at Lucky Peak; however,

reports are that the road is in much better shape this year after being graded last fall. We meet at Hilltop Station and carpool

to the top. Dress for wind, sun and capricious weather. Be sure to bring a little extra cash to purchase an IBO T-shirt or hat and

support this great effort. The staff also appreciates healthful snacks.

Sunday, August 28

Boise River Greenbelt Bird Watching and Litter Patrol

Time: 8 a.m. Please note new summer start time.

Location: Park behind the St. Als Urgent Care at Bown Crossing and Parkcenter Ave.

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132

We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going downriver, birding as we go, then pick up litter on our way back. Birds

abound in the pond/river/riparian wooded habitat. We usually finish around noon. Bring gloves, water and binocs. No public

restrooms are available.

Note: July and August Family Birding Walks have been cancelled because of the heat.

Monthly Program Summaries

GEAS monthly meeting, April 26.

Deniz Aygen, Watchable Wildlife biologist for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and coordinator of “Bird by Bird,” talked about the program and GEAS’s involvement. Some students and teachers from Kuna who are currently in the Bird by Bird Program talked about how they have taken what they have learned in the classroom and taught their families about birds, birdwatching, and being wildlife stewards. “Bird by Bird” is an Idaho program to teach children of all ages about birds and their habitats and provides them an opportunity to participate in citizen science by observing birds, monitoring behavior, and documenting data. Students get the opportunity to learn in outdoor environments about biology, ecology and the complex interrelationships between wildlife, habitats and humans. “Bird by Bird” is a partnership with Idaho Fish and Game, Intermountain Bird Observatory, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management Wild Birds Unlimited, and more.

GEAS monthly meeting, May 24.

Liz Urban made a detailed presentation on the New Roots Program, which involved 15 refugee students enrolled in the sixth-eighth grade in local Boise public schools for a 10 to 12 day summer camp in the area in 2015. This program provided food, water, materials and transportation at no cost to the students. Twelve students successfully completed the program that exposed them to the outdoor environment, ecology and conservation of the Treasure Valley. Liz also reviewed her plans for the summer program for 2016. This presentation was followed by a follow-up program called “WOW”—Wild Outdoor Week—for graduates of the New Roots Program who are now high school refugee students.

GEAS Submits Transmission Line Comments

GEAS is submitting a letter in response to the Gateway West Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Gateway Transmission line Segments 8 and 9, released by the Bureau of Land Management March 11, 2016. Board members urge the BLM to adopt Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative.

GEAS has a long history of supporting birds, wildlife and habitat in southwest Idaho, including a keen interest in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. We are aware of the difficult challenge BLM and stakeholders in southwest Idaho face in appropriately siting Gateway West’s Routes 9 and 8, and we applaud BLM’s commitment to a transparent and collaborative process. We believe that decisions to site the transmission lines should be based on the best available science, the needs and concerns of residents living in the vicinity of the proposed Routes, sound conservation practices that complement—not conflict—with the Bird of Prey Areas’s purpose, and tempered by common sense. GEAS believes that Alternative 1 is clearly the most desirable option.

The proposed route provides the least social and ecological disruption, and has the potential to enhance raptor breeding performance with appropriate modifications for tower configuration. Placement through the northern Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area can contribute mitigation to help recover native vegetation to the benefit of raptors and their prey. Most local stakeholders agree that this is appropriate route.

Please visit the website to see our full comments: <http://goldeneagleaudubon.org/Gateway-West-Transmission-Line>.



Evening grosbeak

Photo by N.S. Nokkentved

Continued from Page 1

Before and after visiting the bluebirds, we did a bit of birding. We sighted 66 species, from an immature golden eagle high above, to green-tailed towhees in a sage draw, to Wilson’s phalaropes in Spencer Reservoir.

Boise may be in the high desert, but between the Boise River, several reservoirs, small artificial lakes and a few marshes, residents can enjoy plenty of water birds. My friend Bill lives on Silver Lake, a reclaimed quarry near Garden City. Each year a family of wood ducks occupies the nest box he installed outside his window and over the lake. Once the ducklings hatch, the little fluff balls teeter for a few minutes at the edge of the box before launching into the lake to follow their parents and learn how to find food.

Meanwhile, this is the fourth year “Mr. and Mrs. Mallard” have joined the quail in gobbling birdseed twice a day at my house. I’m fairly certain it’s the same pair. This year they arrived April 2. They live in a small marsh 200 yards from our house. They fly a pattern over the house, like airplanes, before setting up a final approach to land along the back of the lawn. Then they waddle straight over to the seed. They usually beat me to it in the morning, so we have negotiated that if I walk slowly enough, they will waddle out of the way until I throw the seed down and go back inside. As of June 7 they were still coming. Soon they’ll have ducklings, and I won’t see them again until next year.

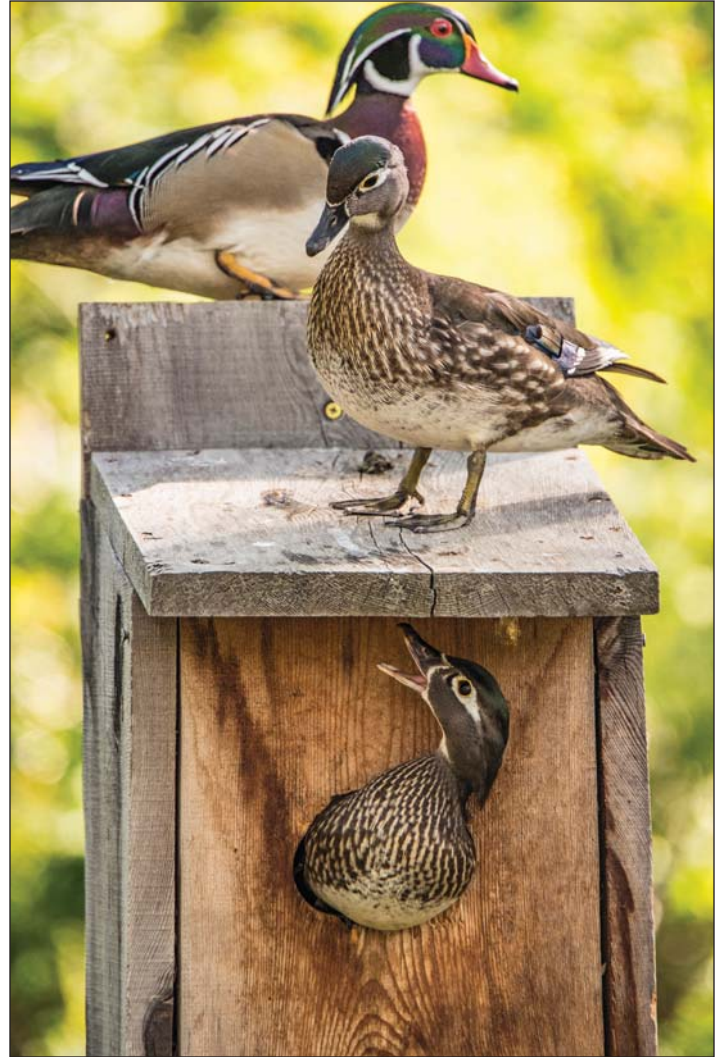
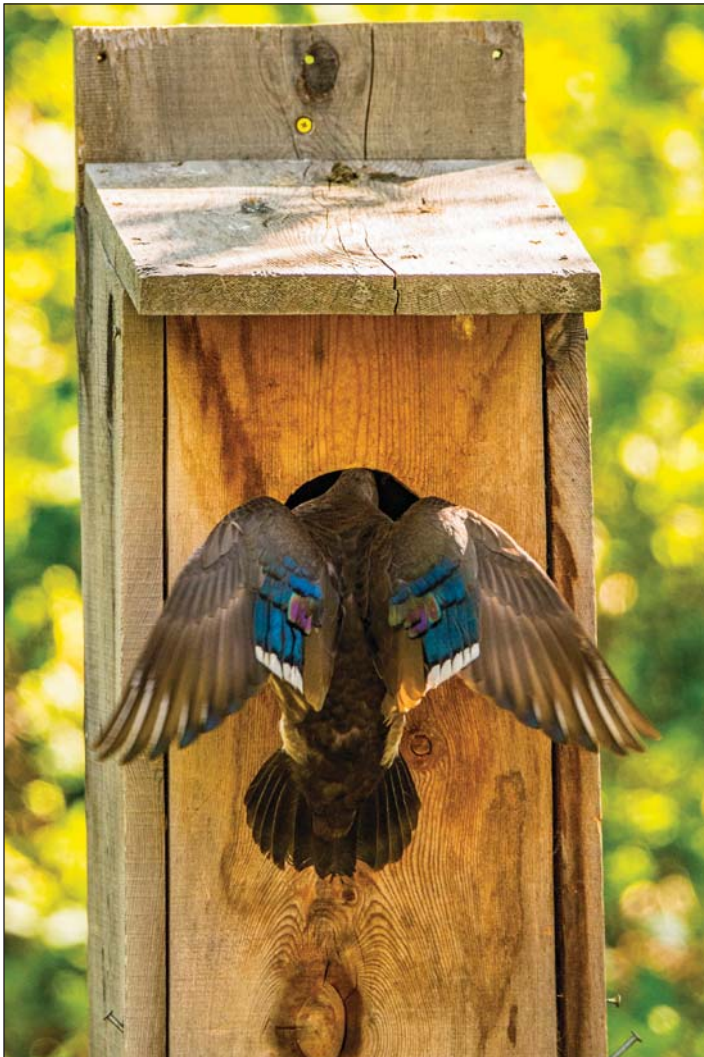
A True Story of Springtime At Wood Duck Box No. 9 On Loggers Creek

By Alice Crockett, with photos by Steve Bly

In the spring, wood duck pairs search for nesting cavities in early morning. For wood ducks, or woodies, holes in trees and bird boxes are potential homes. Mr. Woody, resplendent in colorful plumage and with a beckoning call, will stand outside a potential home while Mrs. Woody inspects the site.



In this true story, Mrs. Woody settles into Box No. 9 and begins to pluck the down feathers from her breast for her new nest. This is in preparation for her upcoming egg-laying of up



Miss Woody swoops down and perches atop Box No. 9 to see what is available for her. Could she possibly entice Mr. Woody? Or is she practicing “egg-dumping” meaning she lays her eggs in Mrs. Woody’s nest, hoping to leave them to be raised by Mrs. Woody?

Inside, Mrs. Woody will lay eleven eggs, usually one a day. After her last egg is laid, incubation will last 27 to 30 days. All her ducklings will hatch on the same day. They will see their mother and imprint immediately. Within 24 hours after her ducklings hatch, Mrs. Woody will leave the nest and begin calling to her young. Woodies are one of the few duck species that have strong claws for gripping. The ducklings will use their clawed feet to climb to the box’s opening, then jump, one by one, into the water and head toward their mother. Today, Mrs. Woody is waiting for them in Loggers Creek. As they splash down, she calls them to her.



The commotion brings another visitor—a sinister visitor who is up to no good in a carnivorous way. A wild mink, hungry for ducklings, hears splashing at Box No. 9 and approaches. The mink cannot climb to its expected dinner. Metal flashing on the upper part of the pole stops the mink from climbing up to the box when it is full of ducklings.



But now dinner is in the water. Thank goodness for photographer Steve—he chases the mink away and saves the day!

The ducklings have had a soft landing in Loggers Creek. There are times when woody ducklings jump to land and have to travel to water. They may jump from heights of more than 50 feet without injury. The little woodies instinctively know what to eat once they have jumped from their nest. They need protein and feed on crustaceans, small fish, insects and larvae. As they grow, they'll add aquatic plants, nuts and fruit to their diet. After the hatch, Miss Wood Duck peers into Box No. 9.



At evening time, Mrs. Woody will find shelter for herself and her ducklings for the night. The ducklings will need about seven more weeks before they learn to fly. During this time, they will follow their mother for safety and to find food. Ducklings become fledglings after two and a half months. By early autumn, the fledglings will begin to put on their adult plumages.

As the Bard said, "All's well that ends well."

Alice Crockett is a Golden Eagle Audubon member and retired librarian.

Photographer Steve Bly is an International Photography Award Winner and member of American Travel Writers for 24 years.

Three-point Landing:



Canada goose touches down on the Boise River.

Photo by N.S.Nokkentved

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.
- For newsletter submissions, send an e-mail to Niels S. Nokkentved at 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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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
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- Student membership \$15
- Individual membership \$20
- Family membership \$35
- Golden Eagle Lifetime membership \$500

I would like to donate an additional \$ _____

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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.

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