

OSP trooper keeping hunting fair

By George Plaven
East Oregonian

PENDLETON (AP) — Daylight broke one early November morning over the snow-dusted Blue Mountains near Ukiah, where the distant echo of rifle blasts signaled the start of elk season across eastern Oregon.

Dain Gardner, senior trooper with the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division, began his day at 5 a.m., noting the perfect hunting conditions that included below-freezing temperatures and just enough white on the ground to easily spy a well-trodden game trail or herd of elk.

“This is my office,” Gardner said behind the wheel of his patrol truck. “If you can’t enjoy the job working out here, there’s something wrong with you.”

Nov. 4 marked the first day of the second season for rifle elk hunting in Oregon, which runs through Sunday, Nov. 12. The first rifle season was Oct. 25-29, while archery season for deer and elk went from Aug. 26 through Sept. 24.

Elk season is a busy time for Gardner, and can send him anywhere around the Pendleton area all the way down to John Day, depending on the case. He spent that Saturday in the Ukiah Wildlife Management Area, where hunting was open to spike bulls only — bulls with

unbranched antlers.

No sooner than Gardner arrived at the Bridge Creek Wildlife Area south of town did he encounter his first dispute of the day, as two hunters each claimed they had shot the same elk. Cameron Sponseller, with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, was already on scene to assist with corroborating both men’s stories.

“This happens regularly out here,” Gardner said, joking that he ought to swap his uniform for a referee shirt. “We’ll get it figured out.”

After examining the carcass, Gardner and Sponseller determined that only one bullet actually hit the elk, making it a relatively open-and-shut case. But by simply taking the extra time and talking to hunters, Gardner said it helps to keep level heads and even tempers.

“We’re just out here trying to keep things fair,” he said.

Gardner, who lives in Hermiston and graduated from Umatilla High School in 1990, has 22 years of experience in law enforcement, including three years with the Hermiston Police Department. He joined the OSP Fish and Wildlife Division in 2003 and never looked back.

“I always wanted to do this job,” Gardner said. “As far as police work goes, this is where it’s at.”

Growing up, Gardner spent plenty of time in the

woods hunting and fishing and has developed a remarkable eye for spotting faint, faraway wildlife. Even a single prowling coyote cannot escape his radar-like vision.

Gardner’s supervisor, Sgt. Tim Brown, said that kind of local knowledge of hunting and fishing makes him a tremendous asset to the team.

“He’s passionate about the work he does, and it shows as far as his tenacity,” Brown said.

The dirt road through Bridge Creek Wildlife Area becomes increasingly rough as Gardner drives down into a draw, fog rolling off the surrounding hillsides. The radio is so far quiet, which is a good sign though Gardner knows how quickly that can change.

“We’ve had years where we’re salvaging double-digit

See HUNTING on page 37

YEAR-ROUND
FIREWOOD SALES
KINDLING
SISTERS
FOREST PRODUCTS
541-410-4509
SistersForestProducts.com

NOW BOOKING HOLIDAY APPOINTMENTS

R
Salon Renaissance
Tim & Ronnica Westcott
Jenny Duey
541-588-6611
220 W. Cascade Ave.

Playing in the band...



PHOTO PROVIDED

Two students of Tyler Cranor, Sisters School District Director of Bands, were accepted into the Western International Band Clinic in Seattle. Trumpeters Dalton Gonzales (right) and Max Springer (left) joined hundreds of high school musicians in this annual honor band for a weekend of rehearsals and performances.

CIRCUIT RIDER CARPET CLEANING
of Central Oregon
Sisters Owned!

Ready for your holiday guests?
Book now to ensure your carpets look their best!
“I could not believe how meticulous and thorough Peter was. My carpets are beautiful.” — Debbie Bucher

541-549-6471
35 Years Experience | Peter Herman, Owner
A labor of love

Brace Yourself for Fall

\$300 Discount
For the month of Nov. when you start a full comprehensive treatment program!
New patients only. Not valid with any other offer.

THE BRACE PLACE
Central Oregon Orthodontic Specialists
541-382-0410
410 E. Cascade Ave., Sisters
CentralOregonBracePlace.com

Smile by Ashlee & The Brace Place!

2017 Ram SLT 1500 4x4
CARFAX Certified! Best Price! No Hassles!
\$32,900
Upgraded wheels/tires. 13k miles. Power sliding rear window for Fido.

Buy or sell your car with locally owned...
Low miles • Newer than 2005
Sisters Car Connection
541-815-7397 102 W. Barclay Dr., Sisters

DON'T MISS OUT
on this week’s inserts in the Nugget:

Deschutes Public Library: Check out the events scheduled at the **Sisters Library** (and all Deschutes libraries) this December and January!

Bi-Mart #1: Enjoy the **Open House** through November 22 to shop as a non-member. Then sign up: just **\$5** for a **lifetime family membership** to enjoy all the great Bi-Mart deals!

Bi-Mart #2: You knew it was coming! **Black Friday Deals** start at **5 a.m.** on **Friday, November 24.** Two days of specials! On Saturday, November 25, Bi-Mart will stay open until 8 p.m.!

Hope for a child. Change for a nation.



Join us on **Giving Tuesday**
Help us reach our goal of \$5,000 on November 28 to benefit vulnerable children in Uganda

HOPE

Learn more and donate at
HopeAfricaKids.com

This ad sponsored by The Nugget Newspaper.