



PHOTO PROVIDED

The intriguing pachyderm will be the focus of Don Miller's Sisters Science Club talk at The Belfry.

ELEPHANTS: Club stages series of educational events

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a special interest in elephants, prompted when he first photographed them in 1983 at the Washington Park Zoo (now Oregon Zoo) in Portland. In addition to his photography, he has volunteered for desert elephant conservation work for Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA) in Namibia, Africa.

A life-size replica of an elephant foot will accompany Miller when he visits Sisters Middle School on Monday,

November 27. Elephants use their feet to convey information by sending and receiving seismic transmissions, Miller explains, enabling communication that extends among widely separated family groups.

A selection of Miller's photos will be available for purchase at The Belfry event, with part of the proceeds supporting the Sisters Science Club. Social hour begins at 6 p.m. with light fare, beer and wine available. The lecture begins at 7 p.m. Admission is \$5; Science Club donors, teachers and students are admitted free.

The Belfry is located at 302 E. Main Ave., Sisters.

HUNTING: OSP has jurisdiction over wildlife crimes

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numbers of elk in a weekend," he said.

According to OSP figures, 394 deer and 255 elk were illegally harvested statewide in 2016. That compares to 492 deer and 231 elk in 2015, and 504 deer and 222 elk in 2014.

Poaching will always be an issue wherever there is wildlife, Gardner said, though he is quick to point out the difference between poachers and ethical hunters who sometimes make mistakes. If a hunter mistakenly takes an animal out of season, he said they should report the incident so at least the meat can be salvaged.

"If they call in, we'll do everything we can for them," Gardner said. "If they don't and leave it to waste, we'll do everything we can to catch them."

OSP Fish and Wildlife is the state's main line of defense to uphold hunting and fishing laws. Troopers like Gardner are out on patrol year-round across the state, checking tags, gathering tips and generally making their presence known.

"Really, you just hope you're visible so somebody will think twice before they

make that bad shot or bad decision," he said.

By mid-afternoon, the radio crackles to life as Gardner is alerted to a mortally wounded branch bull elk not far from Mushroom Camp in the Umatilla National Forest.

It takes some time navigating the uneven Forest Service roads, but Gardner eventually meets with Sponseller, fellow OSP Trooper Ryan Sharp and Deputy Rick Carter with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. Carter was first tipped to the gut-shot elk by another hunter, and was forced to euthanize the animal.

The four men convened around the dead bull, and the dirty work began as they field-dressed the elk, removing its organs and dragging it out of the thick woods behind Carter's four-wheeler. It would eventually be skinned and butchered, and the meat distributed either to CAPECO in Pendleton, Agape House in Hermiston, or the Ukiah School District.

"Luckily someone called it in," Gardner said. "Otherwise it would have been left here to rot."

Despite the fact that someone clearly committed a crime, Gardner said there is very little evidence to pursue a case. Without finding a bullet or even a footprint, it is unlikely they will be able to catch the culprit.

"Really, we've got

nothing," he said. "I don't even have a reason to believe they tracked it that far."

Carter, a retired OSP Fish and Wildlife trooper, said it is unlikely an experienced hunter would mistake the three-point bull for a spike. It is a maddening situation, Gardner agreed, compounded by the fact that it was nearly left to waste.

"Somebody rushed a shot before they knew what was on its head," Gardner said. "And it happens every year."

Hunters are the number-one wildlife management tool in Oregon, Gardner said, and most of the people he meets are more than happy to help him catch those who break the rules.

"Out here, I come in contact with really super nice people," he said.

In fact, Gardner was recognized Oct. 17 with an award from the Oregon Hunters Association Columbia Basin Chapter for his work investigating two recent poaching cases, one in Baker County and one in Umatilla County, that both ended in convictions.

Dean Groshong, chapter president, said the goal is to preserve the hunting tradition for future generations.

"Everybody is basically responsible to help out and prevent any wrongdoing," Groshong said. "It's just not fair and not acceptable for people to break the law."

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