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Wildlife officials call off hunt

PORTLAND (AP) — Wildlife officials called off an aerial hunt of coyotes over antelope fawning grounds in southeast Oregon after only one disappointing flight.

"We felt after that initial flight that if we were not seeing enough coyotes to make an impact on the herd, we weren't going to continue to do it," said Jim Greer, wildlife chief for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife.

"It is somewhat controversial and we didn't think it was wise to continue," he said.

The one-day airplane hunt, which overlapped portions of three wilderness study areas on the border of Lake and Harney counties, drew strong protests from environmental groups.

A federal predator control agent killed five coyotes from a plane April 25 before Fish & Wildlife halted the hunt.

Greer said antelope reproduction had been poor in the past three years, partly because of high coyote numbers. A scarcity of jackrabbits also caused coyotes to target deer and antelope fawns, he said.

The state had asked the Animal Damage Control Unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct a hunt to curb coyote attacks.

Shooting coyotes from airplanes is a common predator-control tactic across the open spaces of Eastern Oregon, but Greer said the first day did not produce enough coyotes to justify continuing the aerial hunt.

Tom Hoffman, who runs the Animal Damage Control Unit in Oregon, says federal agents usually shoot six to 10 coyotes per hour while hunting from airplanes. The April 25 hunt bagged one coyote per hour.

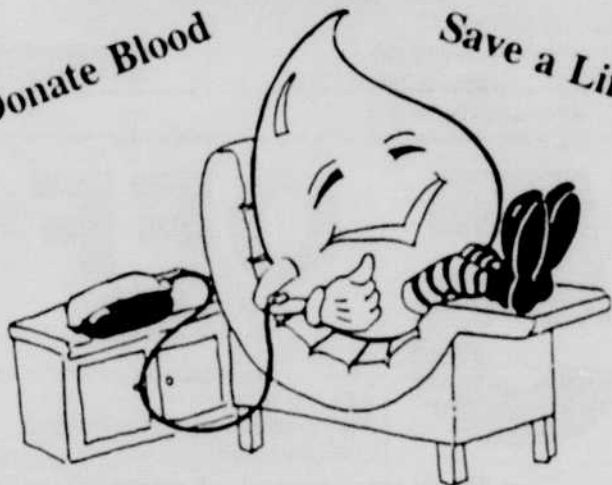
Environmental groups denounced the aerial hunt. "It was brought about because pronghorn numbers are low and (Fish & Wildlife) had an interest in increasing hunting tags," said Stuart Sugarman, a Portland lawyer and a board member of Oregon Natural Desert Association.

The aerial hunt took place over about 150 square miles of land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management near the Nevada border.

Paul Whitman of the BLM's Lakeview district said agency guidelines didn't limit predator control to individual animals if a group of predators is creating a problem.

"It is not necessarily just a single individual," he said. "It can be more than one animal."

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Nurse terrified of new assignment

PORTLAND (AP) — Channa Commanday has dodged bullets in Somalia, set up a clinic for Burmese refugees in Thailand and helped supervise a combat hospital in Pakistan.

Still, the Portland nurse is scared to death of her latest assignment: setting up a clinic on the Tanzanian border to aid refugees streaming out of Rwanda.

"I am terrified," Commanday said before leaving for Central Africa on Friday. "It's an overwhelming disaster."

As many as 250,000 Rwandans have crossed the border into Tanzania to flee ethnic fighting.

After more than a year in a remote region of Russia, Commanday returned to Portland last Sunday for some rest and relaxation, only to learn the next day she would be leaving for Tanzania at the end of the week.

When she got the news, Commanday was not even unpacked from her trip to Russia, where she provided health care to Americans at a missile inspection site 700 miles from Moscow.

The private International Rescue Committee asked her to go to the Tanzania-Rwanda border, where she will help train local health workers and midwives and implement an immunization campaign to prevent diseases.

Commanday has been involved in emergency medicine since 1975. She worked in the emergency department at Oregon Health Sciences University, developed the statewide trauma system and served as state director of Emergency Medical Services.

But she left to pursue her interest in international work. She signed up with Freedom Medicine, a humanitarian aid group that sent her to the Pakistani border to work with the Mujahideen of neighboring Afghanistan.

There, she supervised the emergency section of a combat hospital.

"Then the Gulf War started and it got dangerous for all the Westerners," she said.

They were evacuated to Thailand, then moved on to Cambodia.

Rather than head back to Portland, Commanday traveled to the border of Thailand and Burma, where she developed a clinic for young Burmese refugees.

In Somalia, she found herself in the middle of a stampede of hungry Somalis. She said men in a food supply truck shot in her direction as she tried to train health workers.

"I could never do this if I had a family," she said. "You have to believe in the rewards in order to do this."

"I'm going to Tanzania. I'm going to be hot. I'm going to have inadequate food and water. I will be uncomfortable. I will sleep on the ground and I will not get paid well."

And not to mention the culture shock of returning to the lifestyle in Portland.

"I still feel overwhelmed when I go to Fred Meyer," she said. "The overabundance of resources is what I always find shocking. It is very difficult."

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Permit may allow logging to resume

SALEM (AP) — Logging in much of the Elliott State Forest could resume this fall with a special federal permit after a forest habitat plan was approved Tuesday by the state Land Board.

State officials hope the plan will persuade the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to grant the state an "incidental take" permit allowing logging in habitat used by the northern spotted owl.

The federal agency is responsible for protecting the bird, which is listed as a threatened species.

Timber sales in the 93,000-acre forest northwest

of Coos Bay used to average about 50 million board feet a year. The sales earned an average of more than \$10 million a year for a state school aid fund.

But logging had dropped to almost nothing by last year because the owl and the marbled murrelet were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The state Forestry Department has been working for two years on the habitat plan endorsed Tuesday by the board made up of the governor, secretary of state and state treasurer.

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