

ODFW

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winter of 2016-17 than those in Union County. This means Wallowa County had a more robust deer population entering the winter of 2017-18 and was thus in a better position to absorb losses.

Matthews said the population in Wallowa County is solid enough the number of tags allotted for hunts there by the state has not been altered significantly for the 2018 season. Erickson said the same holds true for Union County.

Matthews said high predation may be responsible for the low fawn winter survival rates. Coyotes, cougars and wolves are among the biggest predators of deer fawns, he said.

The Enterprise ODFW biologist noted coyotes are among the most serious threats to fawns. Erickson agreed, noting coyotes pose not only a threat to fawns, but also adult deer. He noted a local study involving radio-collared adult does is providing evidence of this.

"We often find only a little fur and coyote tracks everywhere (at the site where radio-collared does were killed)," Erickson said.

Predation is playing a role in reducing overall mule deer numbers in recent years in Union and Wallowa counties.

"We are experiencing a slow but steady decline in mule

deer," Erickson said.

The population of white-tailed deer in Union and Wallowa counties is not declining, however. The reason may be they "are better at evading predators," Matthews said.

Whitetails tend to live in agricultural areas where there are fewer predators, Erickson added.

Erickson and Matthews spoke at one of 19 public meetings the ODFW is conducting across the state on big game hunting regulations. The meetings are being conducted to give people a chance to hear about proposed changes to 2019 hunting regulations.

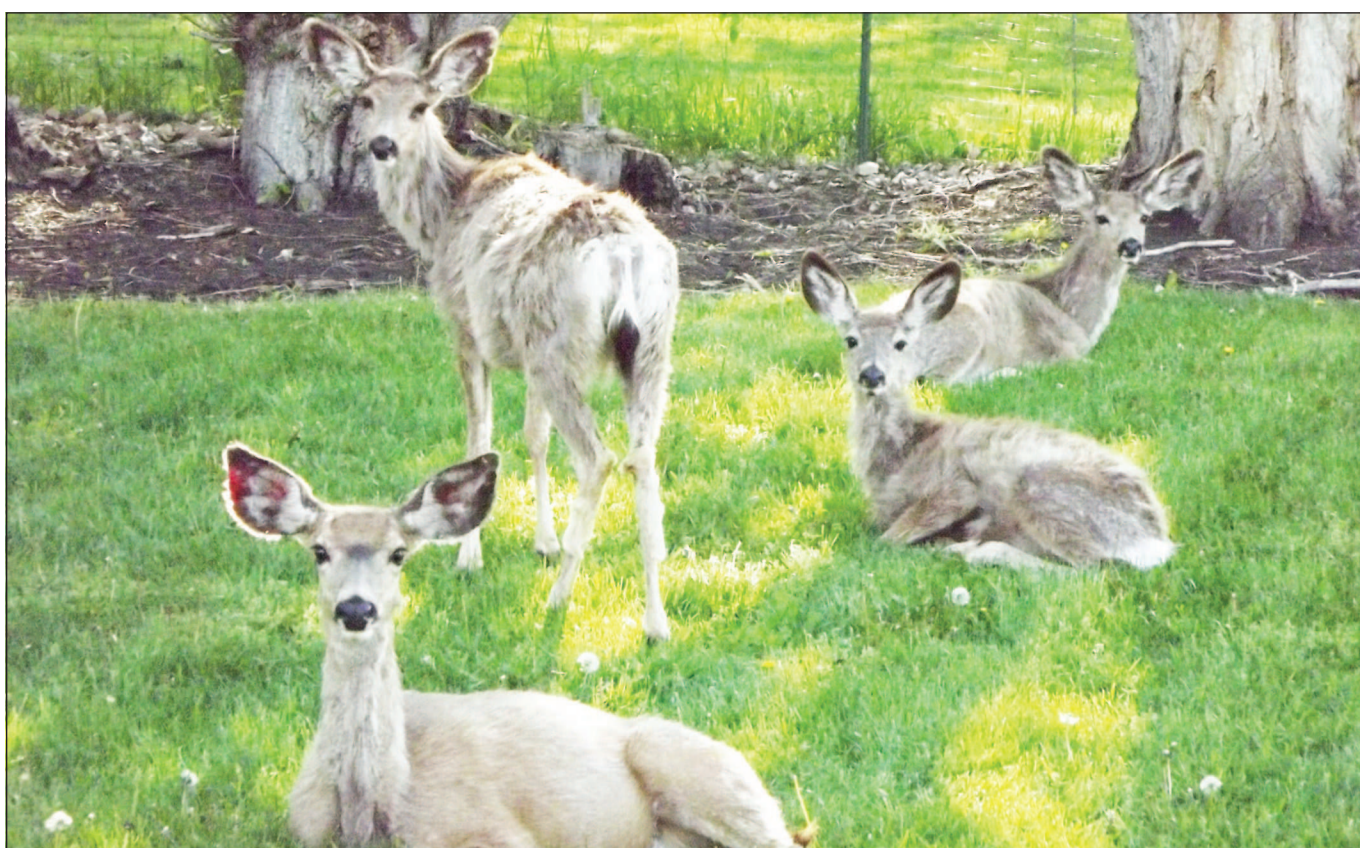
Erickson and Matthews said few changes regarding hunting regulations in Union and Wallowa counties are planned because of stable big game populations. One of the changes that may be made in Wallowa County include the addition of a bighorn sheep hunt in the Hat Point area southeast of Imnaha.

Matthews said there is a herd in the area filled with a number of bighorn sheep who are 10 to 15 years old.

"If we don't give hunters the opportunity to harvest them, they will die of old age," he said.

Matthews and Erickson both said that elk populations in the counties were bolstered by the mild winter of 2017-18 because it improved calf survival.

Union County emerged from the winter with elk calf ratios of 27 per 100 adults in



Dick Mason / The Observer

Mule deer winter survival rates in Union and Wallowa counties were up this year according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

the Starkey Unit and 29 per 100 in the Catherine Creek Unit. The ratios a year ago were only 12 per 100 cows in the Starkey Unit and 22 per 100 cows in the Catherine Creek Unit.

Elk calf survival rates in Wallowa County, which were down significantly after the winter of 2016-17, are also up this year.

The ODFW's efforts to simplify game regulations were also discussed at the meeting. Erickson endorsed this effort.

"Regulations have become

too complicated and convoluted," he said.

A list of the proposed simplifications being proposed is available at <https://bit.ly/2MsgpKl>.

The ODFW is now accepting public comments on these proposed simplifications and other regulation changes. Comments may be sent to odfw.commission@state.or.us. Final 2019 Big Game Hunting Regulations will be adopted at the Sept. 14 Fish and Game Commission meeting in Bandon.

ELGIN

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of completing community service as an alternative form of payment. Working with the public works director and the Public Safety Committee to help develop the program, she expressed hopes it would help avoid keeping people locked in the system for an extended period of time and clear out cases that have been pending so they can be moved through compliance more efficiently.

"We're very excited about the potential (of the) program," the judge said.

Elgin Fire Chief Kevin Silvernail presented to the council a request from the EMT crew to create a scholarship honoring 19 years of service by EMT Tracy Christopher, who plans to retire.

Silvernail said Christopher has "pioneered the (EMT) service through a lot of tough times." The motion was made to create a \$250 scholarship for an Elgin High School student planning on entering the EMT field or another medical-related field.

Progress to install the Indian Valley Estates subdivision sewer and water system continues to move forward. The preliminary engineering report was presented to the council by public works and the city engineer. Initial data analysis is pending, updates have been

made to the geodatabase with the city's existing sewer information and a topographic survey has been completed. The next phase, including the design and construction of a domestic water distribution system and a sanitary sewer collection system, is set to begin pending contract signatures and further review of pending data. The motion to authorize the agreement for the design and construction of Indian Valley Estates Utilities system was also passed.

The library has been awarded an almost \$2,000 grant from the La Grande Library Foundation to be used toward updating its shelving and will receive the grant when full funds become available. A yard sale will be held July 21 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to raise money toward the grant.

New business included the Calico Arms Land Purchase Agreement concerning the city's purchase of two tax lots located at the industrial park has been completed and the initial lease signed. Further signatures will be required and Mayor Duffy motioned to table the topic until the next council meeting for further review of the contract.

City council meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Elgin City Hall, 180 N. Eighth Ave.

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