

BIRDS

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since 1989. According to the IBP website, MAPS data provides insights into questions such as "What factors drive avian population declines? Where are problems most acute, on the breeding or non-breeding grounds? What drives differences in trends between particular regions or habitats? What is the relationship between population change and weather, climate or habitat loss? What can we do to reverse declines?"

This summer EOU awarded eight Faculty Scholar awards, four full awards and four partial awards. Mahrt was a recipient of a full award for the second time. In 2015, she used a full award to continue her study of the Ashy drongo and its behavior in mixed flocks at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore that she began during her sabbatical in the 2012–2013 school year. This year Mahrt utilized the award to help pay for materials for the MAPS station, including the mist nets, which are typically made of nylon or polyester and are specifically designed to catch wild birds.

While Mahrt is a herpetologist, a biologist concerned with the study of amphibians and reptiles, she said she has a passion for birds.

"I really enjoy bird watching and understanding birds," Mahrt said. "Birds are one of those great ecological indicators of how well the environment is."

The Ladd Marsh MAPS station ran from June 11 to Aug. 2 this summer. Ten nets were set up every 10 days, and the volunteers worked for either six hours or until it got too hot each day.

In total, the station banded 180 birds. The MAPS station is the only one east of Bend. There were a number of MAPS stations that operated from 1992 to 2008 near Elgin.

The Ladd Marsh MAPS station now has the necessary materials, and the plan is for the station to be operated for at least the next 10 years.

"We want to keep going," Mahrt said. "It's fun because there's so much stuff that goes on at the same time, (and) it's so much fun to hold the bird in your hand and look at it real close."

In addition to support from the EOU Faculty Scholars program, the station received a Badgley Endowment grant from EOU. The Badgley Endowment fund was created by a donation from Esther Badgley, wife of former physics professor Ralph Badgley, in 1994. The fund supports faculty in the areas of biology, chemistry, geology, general science, physics and mathematics. The project also received support from the Friends of Ladd Marsh, a nonprofit that supports the conservation of the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area.

The six other participants in running the station were Cathy Nowak, Scott Findholt, Nancy Findholt, Arlene Blumton, Nolan Clements and Mike Mahoney.

There are hundreds of peer-reviewed articles that use data from MAPS stations.

"We're just one little piece of the picture," Mahrt said.

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MT. EMILY

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ideally," she said. Most times the grand jury has already decided there's enough evidence to start an investigation, she said, but sometimes the Safe Center is notified of a new case when the Union County District Attorney is still with the family, since the allegations are serious enough to have an immediate conversation.

Burns said it is best for the child if she has as much information as possible going into the forensic interview, which she conducts, so that only one interview is necessary. While they are able to interview the child as much as they need to, rehashing the story over and over again can be traumatizing for the child.

By the time the child and his or her loved ones, whether that's members of their family or not, get to the Mt. Emily Safe Center, there is generally a safety plan in place to protect the child from the alleged abuser. If that person is a relative living in the child's home, getting the child away from the home is priority.

Law enforcement, DHS and the employees at the Safe

Center figure out what the child needs at that moment. The center is equipped to provide a medical exam, a complete physical performed by a licensed physician approved to conduct these specific types of examinations, if the alleged abuse happened recently. If the incident occurred outside the window of obtaining forensic evidence, then the medical exam can wait, McDonald explained. The timing of the interview also depends on the situation.

Burns said what she does in the interview room is very methodical. She must build a rapport with the child quickly. Her questions must be asked in such a way that the child offers the information, and Burns must be careful not to lead the child in any way. A parent cannot be in the room with the child because many times, Burns said, children won't say things if their parent is watching.

"(The interviews) are far scarier for the parents than for the kids," McDonald said. "Kids can sense when their parent is scared. They don't want to upset their parents either."

Burns said she has to set the groundwork for the interview with the child. She

must make sure the child knows only the truth can be said during that interview, and she'll test the child with questions to make sure he or she understands that. Burns then will begin a conversation that will hopefully provide a disclosure of the abuse, and then Burns will end with talking about the child's family or friends or a lighter topic.

One of the challenging things for Burns is she can't show emotions during the interview no matter what is said. She said even if the child is crying, she isn't allowed to give comfort or display anything other than a stoic pose.

And in many interviews, once the first disclosure is made, others follow. "It's not usually one little thing," said McDonald, explaining that there are often multiple incidents, or one child's disclosure leads to the discovery of more victims.

According to the Department of Human Services website, by age 18, one in four females and one in eight males will be sexually abused. In 2010, Oregon investigated more than 29,000 reports of child abuse or neglect, and 16 percent of those cases involved sexual abuse.

McDonald said the Mt.



Audrey Love / The Observer

A student taste tests some of the locally sourced food the La Grande School District will be integrating into its menu this upcoming school year.

thus far, both nutritionally and financially, according to Carpenter.

"The state only allocates so much funding for food service, so (we) looked at how we could maximize those funds while maintaining some of the local projects we were doing," he said of the shift to Taher. "We bought pigs from the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show, and our greenhouses at the high school provide lettuce to the food service program, so we needed a company that would embrace those types of ideas."

Carpenter hopes the dietary changes will not only impact students nutritionally, but affect their attitudes about school for the better.

"We want kids to come to school and feel like (they're) eating well," he said. "(With some other) food service programs, it's

about 'how cheap can we feed kids,' and that translates into how they feel about coming to school and how much they enjoy school. When they come and they feel like they're getting really good food, (and) they love their teacher, etc., all of a sudden (they) love coming to school."

Carpenter expressed a similar optimism for the fate of the resource fair.

"Its popularity will allow us to keep it going," he said of continuing the fair in the future. "I'm really appreciative of all the agencies that help take care of our community, and we want to work with them to make sure we're making families in La Grande better."

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FAIR

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The event was inspired by a similar resource fair put on by the Baker School District. Originally conducted as mini-events at individual schools in the La Grande district, it was combined into a "one stop shop" in order to reach more people and provide more vendors at a central place and time.

Scott Carpenter, director of educational programs and fair organizer, said they prepared for a couple hundred students and their families to utilize this year's fair.

"It's a way for us to network community resources to support families for the start of the new year. We just want to make sure kids are ready to go," Carpenter said. "We have such a generous community (and) most of the time people are calling me saying, 'Hey, can I be part of the resource fair.'"

Kelly Balnick, Youth in Transition liaison for the La Grande School District and fellow fair organizer, mirrors Carpenter's sentiment.

"We do it so that we can help the students and the families in our community," Balnick said, pointing out that "kids get tons of free (supplies) that they wouldn't have gotten otherwise."

Attendees also got a taste of the year to come through the schools' new food service provider, Taher, which will work with the district to integrate more homemade, locally sourced food options for school meals, projecting that up to 70 percent of meals will be made in-house. The change in provider has been a positive transition

DISTRICT

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Mendoza. However, the area is a public right-of-way, where city land use codes state that school buses are not allowed to load and unload students. The new school had technically been in violation of the land use codes since it opened.

The new pickup and drop-off site and route is on school district property, and there is no issue involving city codes.

Mendoza is encouraged with how work on the route has gone.

"We have a good plan. We are hoping for the best. Our focus is on safety," Mendoza said.

A community member told the board Wednesday that he is worried that the route's lane will not be wide enough for school buses to safely pass through. Mendoza told The Observer Thursday a test drive

of a school bus on the 350-yard route that morning indicated space is not an issue.

"There is lots of space to spare," Mendoza said of the test drive, which had been scheduled prior to Wednesday's meeting.

Concern was also expressed at the board meeting about the vulnerability of a transformer on a platform along the route. Joseph Waite, the school district's bond and facilities manager, said this will not be a problem because a bus would have to jump a low curb to make contact. Waite said buses will be traveling between 5 and 10 miles per hour on the route and that a bus would have to be traveling at least 35 miles per hour in order to be at risk of hitting the transformer.

Steps taken to prepare the bus route include adding signs, removing structures around a turn and paving the last 200 yards of the route have been

taken.

Mendoza said on Thursday school district staff will be assigned the responsibility of supervising the bus route when students are being dropped off and picked up.

Mendoza emphasized that much planning went into designing the new route. Those who provided input to the school district included a traffic safety engineer, the Oregon Department of Transportation, Mid Columbia Bus Company (which serves the La Grande School District), the La Grande Police Department, the Union County Sheriff's Office, the City of La Grande and civil engineering firm Anderson Perry and Associates.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, the school board approved a supplemental budget of \$3.32 million, which will be added to the school district's 2018-19 budget. Most of this money will be used to pay for heating,

air conditioning and ventilation system upgrades in school buildings. The school district received this money in the form of a loan from a local bank.

The \$3.32 million was added to the district's budget after its 2018-19 budget was adopted in April because the cost of the needed upgrades was not known yet. The school district was then having Johnson Controls, an international company that makes heating, air conditioning and ventilation equipment, evaluate the HVAC needs of the school district, said Chris Panike, the school district's business director. Johnson Controls' evaluation determined that more HVAC upgrade work was needed than the district had budgeted for.

The school board had previously authorized the school district to borrow the \$3.32 million. Wednesday's vote authorized the school district to spend this money.

of children is a 24-hour obligation."

La Grande Police Sgt. Jason Hays agrees. From 2007 through 2017, the number of reports of child abuse has risen 110 percent, he said. In 2007, there were seven identified occupations that were mandatory reporters. In 2017, there were 27 occupations.

School employees, dentists, clergy, attorneys, firefighters, law enforcement and many more have been added to the list of people who must report if they suspect abuse or neglect.

McDonald said one indication that mandatory reporters make an impact is that the Safe Center usually sees a rise in cases right after school starts in the fall and again after Christmas break.

In addition to the increased amount of people who are lawfully bound to report suspected abuse, McDonald believes that those who work with children, as well as the children themselves, are becoming better

educated about abuse.

"When you have more education, then you're going to catch more things," she said.

The sex offender is also not that creepy stranger that many imagine. It's often someone you know.

"They're in your circle," Burns said. "Half of the child predators are other kids. Be aware of who your child's friends are."

McDonald said it takes a special kind of person to work at the Safe Center.

"I'm crazy protective of my kids," Burns said. "It makes me want to hug my kids."

Despite the ugly situations that she has witnessed in her line of work, Burns said the children constantly impress her.

"Kids are so brave to tell us what they tell us," she said.

McDonald agreed. "How they're able to handle all of this is truly incredible," McDonald said. "You can't imagine this happening to yourself as an adult. And these kids are going through it."

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