

CYANIDE

Continued from Page 1A loaded devices designed to control populations of coyotes, foxes and wild dogs, according to material from Wildlife Services, a federal program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The devices contain a capsule filled with sodium cyanide that's partially buried in the ground and coated with a substance that's designed to attract canines. When an animal triggers the device, a lethal dose of sodium cyanide is ejected.

The traps are designed to handle wild canines that attack poultry or livestock, especially sheep and lambs. According to material from Wildlife Services, coyotes killed more than 118,000 sheep and lambs nationwide in 2015, and livestock owners lost \$32.5 million from attacks on sheep and lambs by all predators that year. The federal agency considers M-44 devices a vital tool in fighting depredations.

"Without an effective predator management program that combines lethal and nonlethal methods, losses to predators would be significantly higher," the material reads.

Still, Fahy said the devices kill animals indiscriminately. The petition notes that Wild-



AP photo

Environmentalists are pushing to ban the use of cyanide bombs, which are used to ward of predators.

life Services reported 246,985 animals killed by M-44s from 2000 through 2016, ranging from grizzly bears to kangaroo rats to red-tailed hawks. The devices killed 4,621 animals in Oregon alone during that time, making local headlines in 2017 after a device killed OR-48, a collared gray wolf living in Northeast Oregon.

"Any animal that is attracted to scents is at risk," Fahy said. "What's reported is a small fraction of what's been done."

Fahy said pets and even children aren't immune from the impacts. The letter notes the devices have killed pets and injured people across Oregon, from Estacada to Philomath. Fahy said an incident in spring 2017 in which

an M-44 device killed a dog and hospitalized a teenager in Pocatello, Idaho, drew national attention and prompted Wildlife Services to stop using the devices in Idaho.

"It's not if a child's going to be killed, it's when," he said. "This is a ticking time bomb."

Fahy said the devices have been around for decades, dating back to the "coyote getters" used in the West during the 1950s. However, he said the problem has been compounded by more and more people visiting and moving to rural parts of the Western United States, where the barriers between public and private land begin to blur.

"There is no place anymore that people don't

venture to," Fahy said.

The EPA has a set of restrictions on where M-44 devices may not be used, including areas where species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act may be affected, and areas with national forests that are set aside for recreational use. Fahy said those restrictions are often not followed.

Fahy said he'd like to see Oregon follow in the footsteps of Idaho and Colorado, two Western states that have halted the use of M-44 devices. Ideally, he said, agencies could shift their focus onto keeping predators away from livestock through nonlethal measures.

"I'd like to think, in my lifetime, we'd be able to end this," he said.

FOREST

Continued from Page 1A For larger predators, such as wolves, bears and cougars, Biggs relied in part on trail camera shots provided by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Having grown up in La Grande, documenting the series was especially poignant for Biggs.

"I've spent a lot of time in the Blues, but it wasn't until I hung out with (Denny) that it really became special to me," he said. "The first time I went out with (Denny) and he was explaining how (things) have to fight for survival, and all have their perfect little role

they play — that they were there for a reason — I found myself tippy-toeing out of the forest. Everything became precious to me because of how it had a function (and) a purpose."

Though the series covers hundreds of species, Biggs laments that due to the vast amount of plant and animal life existing in the Blues, it wasn't possible to include everything in the final series. Nonetheless, he hopes those who watch will glean something from the series.

"I hope we see the Blue Mountains as a treasure and appreciate it on a different level. I expect people are going to hear and see some things

they never knew existed in the Blues and have an appreciation they maybe didn't have before," Biggs said. "We can pass by a lot of beautiful things and just not see or take the time to look at (them)."

Though filming has concluded, Biggs is still working in post-production.

"The amount of editing is intense. I've (finished) about seven episodes out of 13," he said.

Despite the workload, the process has allowed for a deeper education of the surroundings he's known for a lifetime.

"We have a relationship to the Blue Mountains — it's where we get our drinking

water, it's the air we breathe (and) the trees that produce our oxygen," Biggs said.

"What I've learned, being out in the woods with someone who really understands it, is everything is reliant on relationships. All species need things, and without (those things) there are problems and consequences. But it's also beautiful — you see (everything) working in harmony together."

"Secret Life of the Forest" airs Sundays at 7 p.m. on Blue Mountain Television, and can be streamed live at www.bmt.tv or the BMT Roku channel. Rebroadcasts run Wednesdays at 5 p.m. and Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

CONSTRUCTION

Continued from Page 1A have 13 classrooms, including a science room that will house lab space, an art room that will have a kiln for making pottery, and a home economics/life skills room. Plans last spring called for the high school to have 11 classrooms. Since then, cost estimates have improved, allowing for the two classrooms to be added back in to the plan.

Dixon said having all 13 classrooms is a big plus. "We were very concerned," Dixon said, because with only 11 classrooms it would have been difficult to provide each teacher with a classroom.

Most of the construction will be funded with money from a \$3 million bond North Powder School District voters approved in May 2016 and a \$3 million matching grant it received from the state.

The new high school building will replace the present one, which was built more than 100 years and is becoming costly to main-

tain. A decision on what to do with the old high school will be made by the school district after the new one is finished.

School district plans call for the present gym, built in the late 1930s, to continue to be used after the new one is constructed. Extensive seismic upgrade work, funded by a state grant, was done in the gym in 2017.

The school district's current gym and high school are about 100 feet apart, but the new high school and gym will be connected. Dixon said this will boost security by keeping all high school and middle school students in the same space for most of the day.

"The only time students will have to go outside (when classes are in session) is to take shop classes," he said, referring to the classes taught in the shop building about 200 feet east of the present high school.

Safety in the new high school will also be enhanced by doors that will be accessible with key cards only and exterior doors that will



Contributed photo

This photo shows the exterior view of the new North Powder gym.

lock automatically when they close. There will also be a secure vestibule at the main entrance featuring a double set of doors, with access granted only by the front desk, according to information provided by the InterMountain Education Service District.

"Our goal is to make this one of the most secure schools on this side of the mountain," Dixon said.

The new gym and high school are being built by

McCormack Construction of Pendleton. Dixon said the project is going smoothly because of extensive pre-project planning involving the key parties.

"Pre-planning is paying huge dividends at this point," he said.

The superintendent anticipates that the gym and high school will be finished by May 2019. Dixon said the move into the new buildings will not begin until the 2018-19 school year is over.



Max Denning / The Observer

Construction was completed for the newly installed sidewalk on Haefler Lane in September.

COVE

Continued from Page 1A

whole process," Kruse said.

Next at the meeting was a public hearing for a conditional use application by New Cingular Wireless, also known as AT&T. Jennifer Taylor of Ryka Consulting was there to represent New Cingular Wireless, and outlined how the company is planning to update its cell tower located in Cove.

The upgrades were described as minor modernizations, and the conditional use application was unanimously approved by the council.

Union County Sheriff's Deputy Tony Humphries spoke next to the council to request that a school zone with a reduced 20 mile per hour speed limit be placed in the area surrounding Cove Elementary School on Haefler Lane. Humphries is also a school resource officer for Cove, North Powder, Union and La Grande. Currently, the speed limit is 25 mph and Humphries said he often catches people speeding down the street near the school.

"I have noticed since I've been here a large amount of traffic coming down Haefler, where it's 25 and I have made several stops of (people going) 40 and above, 35 and above," Humphries said.

The school zone would

mean that new signs would have to go up along Haefler Lane, and the council requested the public works director look into the cost of putting up the road signs. Kruse said the council would have to pass an ordinance to reduce the speed limit and put in place the school zone.

Before an ordinance is passed, the council likes to read the ordinance at two meetings meaning the soonest the school zone could be enacted would be at the beginning of January.

"I have firsthand experience with the problem (of speeding) that's existed for many, many years," Kruse said.

The final part of the discussion Tuesday night was about the completion of construction of a sidewalk-bike path that begins at Conklin Lane and goes down the south side of Haefler Lane to Cove Elementary School.

The path is a little less than a quarter-mile long and wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. Humphries said the sidewalk is helping improve safety for pedestrians on the street, but that the speed limit reduction would help.

"We know many children going to school use that sidewalk and it's even more important for people to know to slow down," Kruse said.

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