

Not hard to figure out what happened to our deer herds

Researchers throughout the West have been working hard to figure out the reasons for the precipitous decline in mule deer populations. To that end, a study has recently been launched at our own Starkey Experiment Station.

It's a worthy cause. In its hey-day, deer hunting brought in millions of dollars to local communities in the form of 4x4s, groceries, gasoline, motel rooms and other sporting equipment.

Hunters put literally thousands of tons of nutritious venison into family freezers. There are few local endeavors that were such a unique, renewable resource.

To get a better handle on our deer herd's plight, perhaps we should take a look back at history, consider what took place out on the land and maybe figure out how to counter the problem. Let's go back about 70 years.

We overstocked the vast deer ranges with so many cattle and sheep they trampled and chewed the native vegetation into oblivion. Then we blanketed the land with a complete carpet of cheatgrass. Winter comes, and when the starving deer digs through a foot of snow to in search of a nutritious morsel, there's nothing at the bottom of the hole.

We laced the deer range with high-speed highways, mostly along deer-favored riparian corridors. We bounce a good many off our bumpers every year. We gouged out roads in every section of forest to the point that one can stand on one road and throw a rock to another. No one has to walk to get a deer anymore — we shoot 'em out of the pickup window or off our 4-wheeler.

We made the forest much more accessible to poachers — who, studies have shown, kill as many deer as legitimate hunters. We cut down all the trees, so the deer have no place to hide from the relentless guns.

We removed the best cougar-control method, tracking dogs, and have allowed the deer's chief predator to rebound 1,000 percent. A cougar kills 50 deer a year. Multiply that by several thousand cougars in our state and do the math.

So now we have the struggling deer population down to a meager fraction of what it once was. Hunters have taken up other hobbies and the flow of hunter-related dollars doesn't bring the much-needed boost to local communities.

And just when you'd think we've hammered this poor creature from nearly every angle, we sprinkled in several packs of wolves to add to their misery.

Does anyone really have to scratch their head to figure out what caused this malady? Do we really have to hire a PhD to figure it out?

My Voice

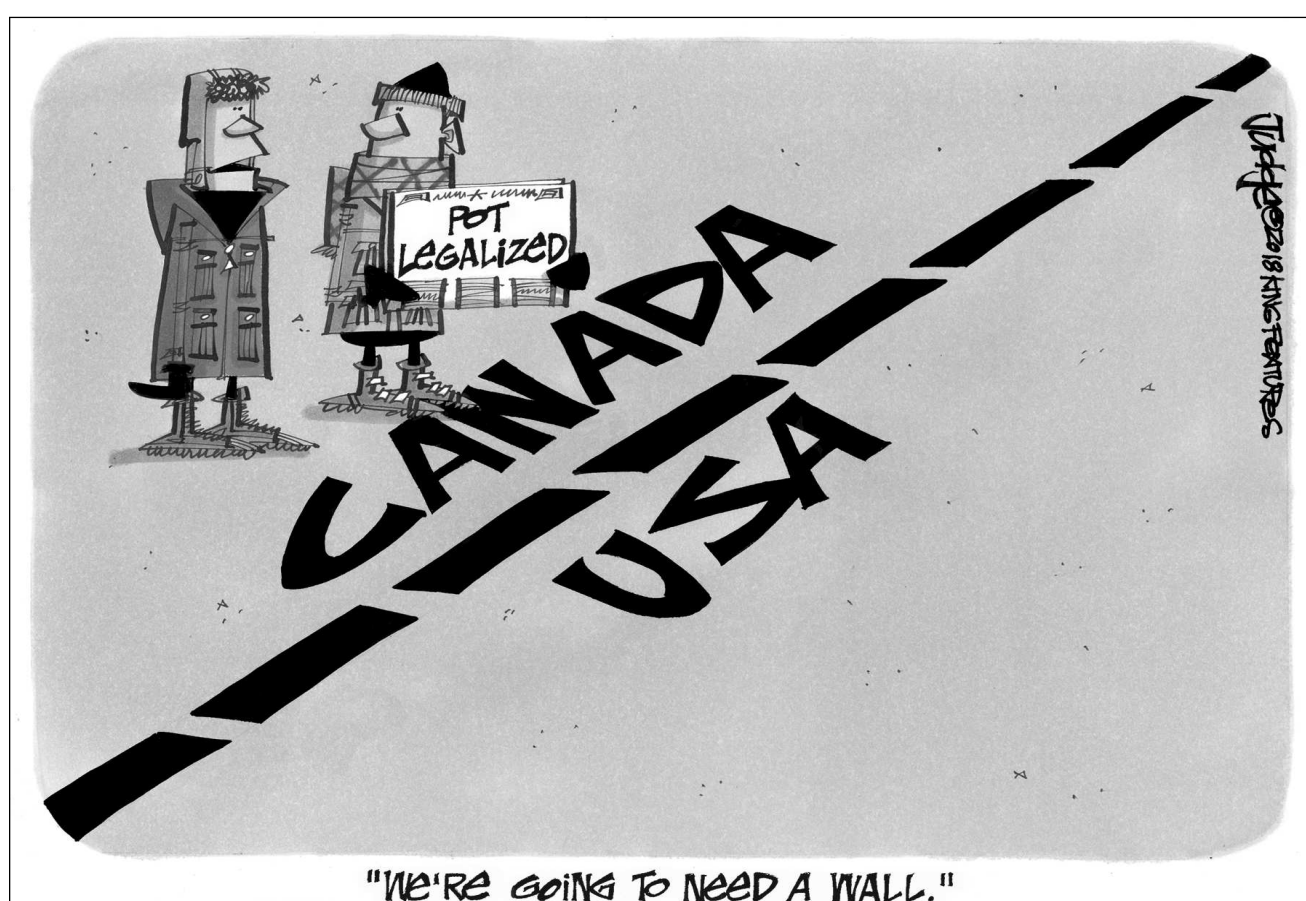
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Ward has hunted and horsebacked the backwoods of Eastern Oregon for nearly 60 years

and has been a professional wildlife photographer for nearly 40. He lives near La Grande adjacent to the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area.



My Voice columns reflect the views of the author only. My Voice columns should be 500-700 words or as space allows. Submissions should include a portrait-type photograph of the author. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We reject those published elsewhere. Send columns to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850, fax them to 541-963-7804 or email them to news@lagrandeobserver.com.



Your views

Rencken: Much of Walden's good work has gone unnoticed

To the Editor:
I want to thank Representative Walden for the work he has done for the people of Oregon. It seems much of the good work he has accomplished has gone unnoticed.

I spent a good portion of my Forest Service career working as a wildland firefighter. I have seen the benefits of proper forest management and know from firsthand experience how important it is to have the tools and ability to manage our forests before fires even begin. Additionally, when fires do start, it is so important to have the resources to properly and efficiently suppress them.

Greg Walden has been leading the fight when it comes to giving wildfire suppression forces the resources they need as well as working to give communities the tools they need to reduce impacts from and prevent wildfire. A major win from Representative Walden was fixing the way wildfire suppression is paid for — so the money allotted for fire prevention efforts is used for that purpose.

Recently, Representative Walden secured aid funding for farmers and ranchers impacted by the Substation Fire, showing once again that he is aware of the needs of his district and is working hard to represent the people of Eastern Oregon.

Greg Walden's efforts have also been instrumental in other key pieces of legislation that will help rural Oregon. Consider these headlines: "House passes Walden bill to protect Crooked River Ranch; Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act aims

to reduce risk of wildfire for local community" and "Greg Walden secures key priorities for Oregon: Supports House passage of government funding measure" — which includes forest management reform, Klamath Basin drought relief, combating the opioid crisis, funding critical mental health programs, Ray Baum's Act (ensuring that rural communities get broadband) and Brownfield's Re-Authorization (development of old industrial sites).

Nancy Rencken
Joseph

Larvik: Wes Williams is a crusader for criminal defendants

To the Editor:
I have practiced law in this community with Wes Williams for almost 20 years. The voters should know what they will be getting if he is elected judge.

Wes Williams is a crusader for criminal defendants. He is known for his extreme positions supporting criminal defendants, which has eroded his credibility. He very strongly identifies with the accused and has shown little empathy for victims of crimes. His support is generally from the most liberal element of our community, especially those in the legal community who view his election as favorable to their criminal clients.

Mr. Williams has applied to be appointed judge each of the last three vacancies and was passed over by two different liberal-progressive governors, despite his own extremely liberal personal views. Each time, the governor's search committee did an extensive investigation into

Write to us

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's address and phone number (for verification purposes only).

We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We will not publish poetry, consumer complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Thank-you letters are discouraged.

Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks. Email your letters to news@lagrandeobserver.com or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850.

Letters deadline

The Observer does not run endorsements of more than 350 words.

The Observer will institute a deadline for letters to the editor, so we can be fair with all the letters we receive and allow for responses before Election Day if necessary.

We run the letters on a first come, first served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by noon Friday, Oct. 26. You can email them to news@lagrandeobserver.com, drop them off at our La Grande location, or mail them to The Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, 97850.

We will publish our last letters on Friday, Nov. 2. Election Day is Nov. 6.

each applicant's personal reputation, character and abilities, and determined another applicant was better qualified.

Why does this matter to your average voter? If Wes Williams is elected judge, the fair administration of justice will suffer.

Mona Williams is a straightforward, dedicated public servant. She has served as the judge of our circuit and has done an admirable job. She has proven she is capable of the fair, even and balanced application of law to each individual case. Her personal integrity and reputation for fairness are unquestioned. She is by far the better choice for our circuit court judge. I strongly endorse her.

Cory Larvik
La Grande

Kreider: Walden's actions speak louder than words

To the Editor:
Is Greg Walden's nose growing? It should be! In the Oct. 5 debate on KTVZ with Jamie McLeod-Skinner he blatantly lied about his attempts to remove health insurance protections for people with pre-existing conditions.

McLeod-Skinner spelled out his record on this. Greg Walden was the principal architect of Trumpcare, the bill that would have removed protections to pre-existing conditions and would have resulted in a loss of (or significantly more expensive) coverage for one in four Oregonians.

Trying to defend himself, Walden babbled that "the charges that have been

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