

GUEST EDITORIAL

FROM THE OREGONIAN/OREGONLIVE

Let's set our differences aside

It's easy to rattle off the many issues on which Oregonians are split these days, locked down on either side pointing fingers and accusing the other of moral corruption.

The fodder for division is great. The recent upheaval with the general election and Oregonians' choices for governor. Our sanctuary status. The homeless crisis playing out across the state. Oregon's massively underfunded public pension system. Mayor Ted Wheeler's strategy to address the regular rallies and counter protests in downtown Portland. Freedom of speech.

The list goes on and on. And with the closing of some minds, we see a deepening of trenches and a shaming of those who hold viewpoints that don't fall in line.

Steve Allison of Hillsboro wrote about his feelings from one perspective in a letter to the editor earlier this month: "Following this recent election, I find myself totally alienated from my fellow Oregonians. Yes, I feel that I am an Oregonian having lived here for 42 years. I am a conservative who believes in obeying the law, supporting the constitution of the United States as written, secure borders, true freedom of speech and honest debate, fiscal responsibility and holding our politicians responsible to work on our behalf. Beliefs I find not held in Oregon. Despite the upheaval of the recent general election and the signs of division we see every day, so many Oregonians are searching for ways to come together."

Other Oregonians, like Lynn McClenahan of Southwest Portland, have shared from the other side and offered up ways they're trying to get by. "I don't expect to change someone's mind. I want to respect others' beliefs — unless they encourage harmful actions — and I want to be respected by others for my beliefs. This is easier said than done, and I know I need help with this.

"I recently attended a workshop facilitated by Better Angels volunteers called "Talking across the political divide," she wrote. "It provided practical tools for blue and red individuals to reduce political polarization — but more than that, it gave me hope."

In the Opinion section earlier this week, Tom Bowerman and Jackman Wilson of Eugene share a commentary piece, "Finding common ground in a not-so-divided Oregon," in which they argue that a majority of Oregonians aren't as fractured as we may feel. At least when it comes to caring for our environment and creating a more equitable health care system. That's reassuring.

"The overall picture is one of great complexity," they write. "Oregonians see the world in full color, not just red and blue. Deep disagreements do exist, but not nearly so much as agreement."

And, as they do every year, readers of any political stripe can support local programs that will help Oregonians in need access health care, food, educational programs and a variety of other local services through The Oregonian/OregonLive's Season of Sharing.

The annual campaign, which launched last week, allows readers to donate to a number of local social service agencies through our 501(c)(3) nonprofit with an understanding of exactly how their dollars will help.

For instance, Oregonians may give \$75 to Neighborhood House through Season of Sharing and help to provide 10 rides to medical appointments and shopping trips for seniors who are in need. The Neighborhood House, which was founded more than 100 years ago by the National Council of Jewish Women, offers programs across the city to welcome and support new immigrants to the area during their difficult early transition. A \$25 donation can provide 100 pounds of healthy food through the nonprofit's emergency food box program.

Or readers may give \$10 to The Shadow Project and provide sensory tools that will help students with dyslexia focus while they are learning to read. The Portland nonprofit organizes two dozen volunteers who mentor nearly 1,600 kids in schools across the metro area. A \$50 donation can put helpful technology into the hands of a child who is struggling to understand the printed word.

So far, 2018 has been a difficult year. Many of us have found it hard to escape local and national politics and the fear, frustration and powerlessness that often follow. End the year on a higher note, providing hope and support to local groups that work hard every day to help fellow Oregonians, no matter their political views.



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Your views

McCracken: Cougars are not to blame for low elk numbers

To the Editor:

"Cougars: too many cats, or hunters?" (The Observer, 11/23/18) is based on blatant, nefarious practices utilized by Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife to manipulate public awareness in order to gain support for anti-predator, pro-agriculture and hunting agendas.

Years ago a local ODFW cougar specialist was quoted in The Observer as saying nearly 100 percent of the newborn elk in a particular nearby area had been killed by cougar that spring. He compared that to the percentage that had been killed by cougars there in previous years. The increase in percentage was literally unbelievable. So I visited his office and refused to leave until I got "the rest of the story."

Turns out there had been a major harvest/slaughter of cow elk the preceding fall due to rancher complaints. Since dead elk don't give birth, that action greatly reduced the number of elk calves born the following spring. However, the cougars in the area needed the same number of kills to survive. Issuing the agricultural killing tags guaranteed far fewer births and consequently an outrageous increase in percentage in elk calf loss due to cougars. (Do the math: 10 kills out of 100 births = 10 percent; 10 kills out of 10 births = 100 percent.)

That deceptive information gave the public the false impression that cougar numbers were rapidly increasing. That in turn led to issuing more cougar tags, which brings money into ODFW. Yet the success rate of cougar hunters in Oregon has been low compared to other states. Other states use low hunter success to indicate low numbers of cougars. But in Oregon low hunter success is used to support reintroducing hunting cougars with dogs. Using the percent kill information, ODFW could justify increased cougar tags that help finance the agency.

In order to keep both elk hunters and ranchers happy, ODFW has shifted the blame for low elk numbers onto cougar predation rather than agency mismanagement.

For those curious about what happens when university research finds and publishes information that conflicts with industry profits,

Google Rod Weilgus University of Washington. Then join me in supporting PEER, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

Honest wildlife management is long overdue and will certainly challenge long held cultural beliefs and priorities.

Mary McCracken Island City

Knowles: Children's writing workshop supported by Festival of Trees

To the Editor:

I am writing in support of the Festival of Trees fundraiser hosted by the Soroptimist International of La Grande Friday and Saturday, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

This event raises funds for many local programs including the EOU's Student Writers' Workshop (SWW) that will be held March 9, 2019, on the Eastern Oregon University campus. The SWW is a conference for young writers in third through 12th grades in which writers, along with their teachers and parents, participate in a series of workshops practicing different kinds of writing. This conference enhances students' writing skills and confidence and helps them picture themselves as future college students.

Without fun fundraisers such as the Festival of Trees, we would lose many valuable arts and literacy programs. Please support these efforts by attending the Festival of Trees.

Nancy Knowles Student Writers' Workshop coordinator

Fouty: True stewards of the land do not support killing contests

To the Editor:

The first annual Young Farmers and Ranchers coyote killing contest begins in Burns on Nov. 30 and goes through Dec. 2. This contest is put on by the Oregon Farm Bureau. Participants will compete for cash and prizes for killing the most coyotes. The team with the greatest total weight of dead coyotes wins. Piles of dead animals and a blood-soaked ground. Does this "contest" reflect the stewardship ethics of our young farmers and ranchers and Oregonians in general? No.

So why is it allowed? Turns out that in the past the State Legisla-

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.

ture chose to define some animals as "predatory animals" (ORS 610.002) with subsequent legislation created to prevent ODFW from limiting the times, places or amounts for taking predatory animals (ORS 496.162 [3]). Currently included in the predatory animal category are "coyotes, rabbits, rodents and birds that are or may be destructive to agricultural crops, products and activities." Note the words "may be." Even if any of these animals are just passing by, they can be killed. Seriously? In addition, taxpayer dollars are to be used to fund their control and destruction (ORS 610.015, 610.020).

Unfortunately, despite ODFW's mission statement "to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations," their protection is limited to only some animals. Other wildlife can be killed anytime. Pretty sweet if you like to kill things. A real bummer if you value all wildlife, including coyotes and their contributions to natural rodent control.

True stewards of the land do not support or participate in killing contests. Instead, they respect and work with nature, partner with wildlife, hunt responsibly and address wildlife issues only when they arise and do so with respect and care. These true stewards need to let the Oregon Farm Bureau know that killing contests do not represent their ethics and only create future wildlife conflicts. All life deserves respect. Time to update these laws and end killing contests.

Suzanne Fouty Baker City

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