

BIRDS

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rehab centers in Walla Walla, Tri-Cities and Yakima have closed.

With Blue Mountain Wildlife the only rehabilitation facility in Oregon east of The Dalles and the closest Washington facility at Washington State University in Pullman, Blue Mountain Wildlife's coverage is now nearly the size of New York state, stretching from Burns to the south to Wenatchee, Washington, to the north.

Washington not only provides Blue Mountain Wildlife with a steady stream of birds, but also brings in an important source of revenue.

Tompkins said the non-profit gets much of its funding through memberships, a source of revenue that's often cultivated when Blue Mountain Wildlife comes into contact with rescuers.

Tompkins said restricting Blue Mountain Wildlife to taking in birds only from Oregon would cut off Blue Mountain Wildlife from members in Eastern Washington, which is more highly populated than its regional counterpart in Oregon.

Without those members, Tompkins said Blue Mountain Wildlife wouldn't have the funds to stay open as a rehab center, and she's now trying to find answers from the state.

On Aug. 21, Tompkins emailed Brad LeaMaster, state veterinarian for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and asked him about the ODA regulations for importing migratory birds and whether they've changed.

LeaMaster responded the next day that ODA migratory bird rules were originally intended to apply to good Samaritans who transported injured birds across state lines without knowing the state's requirements. He added that the ODA eventually dropped its migratory bird permit program because it duplicated ODFW responsibilities.

After recounting past instances where migratory birds spread diseases like West Nile virus and the bird flu, he discouraged Tompkins from importing birds.

"We should be very conservative about moving wild migratory birds across state lines. Injured/sick birds in Washington need to be rehabilitated in Washington and not shipped to Oregon ... and vice versa," he wrote. "Please understand that we realize that you, and other rehabilitation facilities do extremely important and caring work. However, for the greater good of our state, routine shipments of migratory birds across state lines should not be allowed."

In an interview Wednesday, LeaMaster reiterated many of the same points, adding that ODA's concerns about migratory birds mostly have to do with how they affect avian livestock like chickens.

LeaMaster said tracking migratory bird imports is split between the ODA, which regulates permanent imports, and ODFW, which covers temporary stays.

LeaMaster was confused as to why Tompkins was concerned now since the rules had been in place for several years, but he was complimentary of Blue Mountain Wildlife's efforts.

Tompkins also reached out to Colin Gillin, ODFW state wildlife veterinarian, but she said she hasn't heard back.

Gillin was out of the office Wednesday. ODFW spokesman Adam Baylor said the department's rules hadn't changed and referred inquires back to the ODA.

Tompkins' concerns over state regulations comes as Blue Mountain Wildlife is the midst of a fundraising drive.

AWARD

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inconvenience is worth it.

While providers are willing to be inconvenienced, GRH's goal is to make the process of health care more convenient for patients. With the MyChart portal, patients can be more engaged in their health care management. The portal allows them to schedule appointments, refill certain prescriptions and correspond with their doctors about non-emergency questions and concerns.

For Sattar, this means the hospital's goal of patient engagement is being achieved. Sattar said the best care is provided when there is a balance of technology integration and old-school human interaction.

"The more engagement you have, the more efficient the outcome will be," Sattar said.

Sattar said right now GRH is working to find a balance between integrating the use of technology and working with providers and patients who are not as comfortable with it. Non-digital communication is still available for those who may not want to use the portal. Patients may call or visit their providers for all their health care needs. Sattar said the hospital is proud to provide both.



Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

GRH won an award for being a Most Wired hospital for its utilization of technology including a new computer-based charting system

Another benefit of being a "wired" hospital that Sattar identified is having the ability to collect and analyze data. Rather than relying on their memory alone, providers can see the data for effective treatments. This includes looking at trends of what treatments have worked in the past, what the current illnesses are within the community and predicting changes that may occur in the future with proper adjustments in patient care.

"It's not just hindsight, but insight

into what is working and foresight into what may work in the future," Sattar said.

When looking at the detailed score from CHIME for the award, Sattar was able to identify improvements that can still be made in GRH's use of technology. According to Sattar, in some areas, although the technology exists, there is a combination of factors preventing the hospital from fully implementing it, including the financial cost as well as the comfort levels of both patients and providers.

SHORTAGE

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department has 15 full-time firefighters, allowing it to have five full-time firefighters on its three 48-hour shifts. Presently the fire department has a staff of four on two shifts and three on another.

The 10 firefighters are working longer than regular hours in response to the shortage.

"Almost everyone on our staff is working overtime to cover shifts," Cornford said.

Help from retired firefighters in the community and firefighters without EMT training and paramedics without firefighter training are also lending the LGFD a hand. Agencies assisting the LGFD include the La Grande Rural Fire Department and Union's ambulance service.

The La Grande Fire Department's staffing situation, which has been hit by several retirements and firefighters moving out of the area for a variety of reasons, is set to soon improve. Cornford said that two new firefighters with paramedic certification will join the department, on Oct. 1 and Oct. 7, respectively. One has links to Union County and the other to Baker County, which Cornford hopes will prove to be a plus.

"People who have ties to the area are more likely to be long-term employees," he said.



Dick Mason /The Observer File Photo

La Grande Fire Department firefighters extinguish a blaze at Bearco Business Park the morning of Aug. 23.

The fire department will receive another boost in late October when a LGFD firefighter with paramedic certification who has been out on medical leave will return, increasing the department's staff to 13.

Filling a staff is complicated by the fact firefighters need medical certification because they are permitted to make ambulance calls. Five of La Grande's full-time firefighters have emergency medical technician certification and four have paramedic certification, the highest given via the EMT system.

Cornford wants to raise the number of paramedics the LGFD has to nine. He noted that the three firefighters to be added in October are also para-

medics, which means La Grande's total will be seven a month from now.

To further raise the number of paramedics on staff, the department is exploring the possibility of offering firefighters the opportunity to take a 14-month paramedic certification program online. The fire department would cover the cost of tuition.

Cornford said one firefighter on staff is now beginning the online certification program. If the experiment proves to be a success, more firefighters will be given the chance to earn their certification online.

Cornford tells prospective recruits that the life of firefighters is challenging but also immensely fulfilling.

"Every day you have a chance to make a difference in someone's life," he said.



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