

RECREATION
REPORT

PEDALING TOWARD SPRING

The Observer & Baker City Herald

PRESENTATION
ON HISTORY OF
ELK IN BAKER
COUNTY SET

The Baker County Historical Society will have a program on the history of elk in the county on Monday, March 2, at 6:30 p.m. at the Crossroads Carnegie Art Center, 2020 Auburn Ave.

The guest speaker will be George Keister, retired wildlife biologist from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Keister was the district biologist for Baker County from 1995 to 2006.

Refreshments will be served. Attendees should use the door to the basement at Crossroads.

YOUTH STATE
ARCHERY
COMPETITION
MARCH 7

ALBANY — The Oregon National Archery in Schools program (NASP) will have its state tournament on March 7 at the Linn County Expo Center in Albany.

Doors open at 8:30 a.m., and the competition for First Flight starts at 9 a.m., with the Second Flight at 10:30 a.m., and the Third Flight at noon. Awards will be presented after the final flight.

More than 140 archers from throughout the state are registered to compete in the state tournament with space available for more participants. Registration remains open through Feb. 29.

“This tournament has many benefits for students including the chance to compete as both an individual and on a team and to make new friends from around the state of Oregon,” said Stephanie Rustad, archery education coordinator for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. “Participants also have the chance to earn scholarships and become eligible to compete at NASP® Western Nationals in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 24th and 25th.”

The tournament is open to students in Grades 4-12 and the archer only needs to attend a NASP® participating school to be able to compete.

Each archer will compete with an Original Genesis bow without sights and Genesis arrows, creating an even playing field for all archers.

Registration fee to compete is \$35. The public is invited to view the event and there is no entrance fee. To learn more about the youth archery programs in Oregon, go to www.myodfw.com/odfw/archery



Photo by Mavis Hartz

Pick the right day and a gravel road, such as High Valley Road between Union and Cove, can be as smooth as asphalt.

As Smooth As . . . GRAVEL

By Mavis Hartz

As the spring thaw arrives, the season for gravel riding is upon us. One of the more magnificent mixed surface rides in the Grande Ronde Valley area loops from Cove through Union and back along the breathtaking High Valley Road.

Begin this just under 21-mile escapade in the fruit-producing hamlet of Cove next to the Cove Tavern and Steak House.

Roll out the south side of town to the west, traveling on the paved Highway 237 toward Union. The first section of travel allows cyclists to warm up their legs as they leave the protective flanks of Mount Fanny, losing 100 feet of elevation before skirting around the rocky Phys Point. Delight in watching the sun and weather as they march in opposite directions across the grassy, stream-crossed valley bottom.

Phys Point marks the beginning of the next 14.5 miles of gradual elevation gain. Birds of prey, cows and an occasional horse will keep the cyclist company as the highway skirts the dry rocky ridge to the east and the marshy basin to the west. Mile 8 brings the City of Union. If the adventurer feels the need for sustenance, a restroom or a visit to a marvelous museum, roll into town and enjoy the amenities. To continue on route, turn east at E. Bryan Street, just after crossing Little Creek.

E. Bryan Street morphs into High Valley Road and takes the rider back toward Cove. As the highway and the



Photo by Mavis Hartz

An barn adds strong visual focus to this eye-catching scene along High Valley Road.



Photo by Mavis Hartz

Snow on the ground doesn’t necessarily mean gravel roads aren’t suitable for an early season bicycle ride.

buzz of people are left behind, High Valley Road becomes progressively less kept before switching to gravel around mile 11, just after crossing Little Creek yet again.

Gravel roads like High Valley can be the best or worst riding to be found. It is imper-

ative to take into account the weather before planning such a trip as this. If vast amounts of precipitation have joined the snowmelt, or the road has been graded in recent days, the road will likely be excessively soft and too muddy for easy travel. If a summer of

hot weather has been on the books, washboard and dust are the cyclist’s bane. However, if the timing is right, the winter-worked surface can be smoother than pavement.

The bicycle choice for gravel voyages is always that with a little wider tire.

Cyclocross and wide-tire touring bicycles are wonderful on gravel roads. They give the cyclist a nice gear range while allowing increased float on a soft surface and a more cushioned ride due to air volume.

Climb through the canyon guarded by basalt cliffs and the burbling brook to High Valley via a grade that briefly reaches 7.7%.

High Valley hosts a splendor all its own. Rocky basalt outcrops frame both the Elkhorn and Wallowa mountains at different times making the gain of over 1,000 feet of elevation worth it. The dive back into Cove illustrates why High Valley is best tackled from the Union side — significant elevation loss. Be alert around mile 11 because the road drops in an over 11% grade that, when full of washboards, can be unpleasant and hard to maneuver.

Turn east as High Valley Road tees into Highway 237 near the neo-gothic historic Hendershott House. Climb back to Cove and veer onto Church Street to appreciate the red door of the Episcopalian Gothic Revival Church built around 1874 closely followed by the adjacent rectory. Return to Highway 237 to choose either the Cove Drive In for a hamburger and soft serve ice cream or the Cove Tavern and Steakhouse for a delightful prime rib. Whichever fits your dining pleasure, try to make sure you are in a position to relish the sunset as it sets over the Blue Mountains at the end of a beautiful day.

ODFW seeks comments on upland bird seasons

Upland bird hunters have a chance to weigh in on possible changes to upland bird hunting seasons as the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission is considering the framework for 2020-2025 seasons.

Some proposals being considered:

- Open mountain quail season statewide with a 10-bird bag in Western Oregon and a two-bird bag limit in Eastern Oregon. Hunters have the potential to encounter mountain quail in every county of the state due to successful translocation efforts in Eastern Oregon.
- Eastern Oregon upland bird

seasons (chukar, pheasant, mountain quail) opening changed from “Saturday closest to Oct. 8” to “second Saturday in October.” This change is necessary to adhere to a season opening one week after most Eastern Oregon controlled deer seasons begin. Controlled deer seasons are proposed to open the first Saturday in October beginning in 2021.

This change would not affect the proposed 2020 Eastern Oregon upland bird opener, which is already scheduled for the second Saturday in October.

- Extend fall turkey season to Jan.

31 statewide. Extending the hunting season for fall turkey by one month will allow additional opportunity for hunters and provide a tool for managers dealing with nuisance and damage, particularly on private land. Many fall turkey tag holders do not actually use their tags and harvest is low (approximately 1,000 birds statewide in 2018). Eastern Oregon fall turkey hunting seasons will remain for private lands only from Dec. 1 to Jan. 31.

- Remove caps on total tags available for Oregon fall turkey hunts. Eastern Oregon fall turkey

tags always sell out, but based on mandatory reporting, harvest rates and actual hunter participation are low. Removing artificial tag caps will increase opportunity for hunters and provide an additional tool for Wildlife Districts seeking to address turkey damage using licensed hunters.

To comment on these proposals, or make other suggestions, contact Mikal Cline, Mikal.L.Cline@state.or.us, 503-947-6323.

The Commission will adopt a framework and 2020-2021 Game Bird Regulations at its April 17 meeting in Reedsport.