

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Saturday, April 10, the 100th day of 2021. There are 265 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On April 10, 1947, Brooklyn Dodgers President Branch Rickey purchased the contract of Jackie Robinson from the Montreal Royals.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic set sail from Southampton, England, on its ill-fated maiden voyage.

In 1932, German President Paul Von Hindenburg was reelected in a runoff, with Adolf Hitler coming in second.

In 1963, the fast-attack nuclear submarine USS Thresher (SSN-593) sank during deep-diving tests east of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in a disaster that claimed 129 lives.

In 1971, a table tennis team from the United States arrived in China at the invitation of the communist government for a goodwill visit that came to be known as "ping-pong diplomacy."

In 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union joined some 70 nations in signing an agreement banning biological warfare.

In 1981, imprisoned IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands was declared the winner of a by-election to the British Parliament.

In 1992, comedian Sam Kinison was killed in a car crash outside Needles, California, at age 38.

In 1998, the Northern Ireland peace talks concluded as negotiators reached a landmark settlement to end 30 years of bitter rivalries and bloody attacks.

In 2005, Tiger Woods won his fourth Masters with a spectacular finish of birdies and bogeys.

In 2010, Polish President Lech Kaczynski, 60, was killed in a plane crash in western Russia that also claimed the lives of his wife and top Polish political, military and church officials. "Designing Women" co-star Dixie Carter, 70, died in Houston.

In 2015, the Apple Watch made its debut.

In 2019, scientists released the first image ever made of a black hole, revealing a fiery, doughnut-shaped object in a galaxy 53 million light-years from earth.

Ten years ago: The House Homeland Security Committee examined Muslim extremism in America during a hearing punctuated by tearful testimony and angry recriminations. (Chairman Peter King, R-N.Y., accused U.S. Muslims of doing too little to help fight terror in America; Democrats warned of inflaming anti-Muslim sentiment.)

Five years ago: Donald Trump and his Republican rivals turned their presidential debate in Miami into a mostly respectful but still pointed discussion of Social Security, Islam, trade and more. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an official visit to the White House. Sir Ken Adam, the British film production designer behind the sets for some of the James Bond movies and "Dr. Strangelove," died in London at age 95.

Dousing a fire at the mill



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Firefighters with La Grande Fire Department battle a long-smoldering blaze at Woodgrain Lumber, 1917 Jackson Ave., La Grande, on Wednesday, April 7, 2021. The fire started at 2:37 p.m. The situation challenged firefighters due to the difficulty of accessing the interior of the machinery where the fire was burning.

Car kills adult male wolf from Cornucopia Pack near Richland

By JAYSON JACOBY

Baker City Herald

BAKER COUNTY

— An adult wolf from the Cornucopia Pack in eastern Baker County was hit and killed by a car on Highway 86 near Richland either late Wednesday night or early Thursday, April 8.

Several motorists reported the dead wolf, starting around 6:30 a.m. Thursday, said Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife office in Baker City.

The wolf was hit near Milepost 36, about five miles west of Richland.

Ratliff said he doesn't know who hit the wolf. No one has reported doing so.

The dead wolf, a male weighing 95 pounds, was born in the spring of 2019 along with two other pups, Ratliff said. That litter elevated the group of wolves to pack status.

Although the wolf did not have a tracking collar, Ratliff said a GPS signal from a collar fitted to a female wolf in the Cornucopia pack, also part of the pack's spring 2019 litter, showed that that wolf, early Thursday morning, was near the point on the

highway where the male wolf was killed.

Also, during a wolf census flight this winter, ODFW biologists saw a gray wolf with the Cornucopia Pack with colors similar to those of the wolf hit on the highway, Ratliff said.

Based on previous GPS signals, that pack has crossed Highway 86 in that area, he said.

The Cornucopia Pack's breeding male and female produced their first litter, consisting of three pups, in 2019, and another litter in the spring of 2020. At the end of 2020 the pack consisted of seven wolves, Ratliff said.

Someone shot and killed the Cornucopia Pack's breeding male in late September 2020 in the Skull Creek area of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, about one mile east of Eagle Forks Campground.

Oregon State Police investigated the case but no suspects have been arrested.

Based on this winter's aerial survey, the Cornucopia Pack doesn't have a new breeding male, Ratliff said.

If another male had

taken over that role, the two breeding wolves would have been running very close together, and that wasn't the case, he said.

It's possible, however, the pack's breeding female did mate, and if that happened the female will move soon into a den to have her pups, Ratliff said.

Biologists will be able to determine that she's gone to a den based on data from her tracking collar, which emits radio signals rather than GPS signals.

Recently the Cornucopia Pack has been in the area near Highway 86, mostly private land used for cattle grazing, Ratliff said. He said that "gives me concern" because the wolves could be close to cattle. Ratliff said he has alerted ranchers in the area to the wolves' presence.

Data from the collared wolves in the pack in 2019 showed they roamed a 162-square-mile area ranging from the southern part of the Eagle Cap Wilderness near Cornucopia (hence the pack's name) to the northern parts of the Pine and Eagle valleys.

About 92% of the location points were on public land, according to ODFW.

NEWS BRIEFS

Commissioners approve IC law enforcement contract

ISLAND CITY — A new contract with the Union County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement services in Island City is set to take effect July 1.

The Union County Board of Commissioners Wednesday, April 7, ratified the pact that Island City's city council approved Feb. 15.



Bowen

The contract is similar to the one now in place. The contract calls for Island City to continue receiving 80 hours a month of law enforcement service from the Union County Sheriff's Office. The contract, like the present one, will automatically increase 1.5% each year on July 1 to allow for cost-of-living pay increases and will remain in place indefinitely unless one party pulls out or negotiates for a change.

The cost of the contract to Island City in the first three years of the pact will be \$59,709.07 in 2021-22, \$60,604.71 in 2022-23 and \$61,513.78 in 2023-24.

The big difference between the new contract and the current one is the city or the sheriff's office must give a 120-day notice for any changes to the deal. The current contract requires a one-year notice before Island City can negotiate changes or cancel the contract, but the Union County Sheriff's Office can do either on a much shorter notice.

Sheriff Cody Bowen said the change makes the contract more just.

"It seems like a fairer deal to me," Bowen said.

Wallowa man held on Utah sex charges

WALLOWA — A man living in Wallowa faces multiple counts of sex abuse of a child in Utah.

Wallowa County sheriff's deputies on Wednesday, March 31 arrested Michael Anthony Alexis, 52, on a felony warrant out of the federal district court in Washington County, Utah, for four counts of aggravated sex abuse of a child, according to a police report.

Washington County detective Sgt. Nate Abbott said Thursday, April 8, the alleged offenses took place over about a year's time from 2019-20. Although he couldn't identify the victim, Utah law indicates anyone younger than 14 is considered a child.

"The charge indicates it was a child," Abbott said.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office learned of the allegations a couple of months ago and investigators sought out, Alexis, who had apparently relocated to Wallowa County.

"We reached out to him and he was uncooperative," Abbott said.

As a result, the district court in Utah issued an arrest warrant, and Wallowa County deputies found and arrested Alexis.

Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish said the arrest took place without incident and Alexis surrendered willingly.

As of Thursday, Alexis remained in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, without bail.

Abbott said Washington County is in the process of seeking extradition from Oregon to Utah for Alexis to answer the charges.

— EO Media Group

COVID-19 infections close two John Day restaurants

By STEVEN MITCHELL

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The surge in COVID-19 cases has closed two restaurants in John Day.

In a Facebook post Wednesday, April 7, 1188 Brewing Company posted it would be closing temporarily due to exposure to COVID-19.

On Thursday, April 8, the Outpost Bar and Grill stated on its Facebook page it would close until Monday, possibly longer:

"We are sorry to announce that we are closed until Monday the 12th, maybe longer due to exposure. The safety of our community and our employees is #1. We are going to spend this time while closed cleaning and hope to be back as soon as possible."



Blue Mountain Eagle, File

Shannon Adair, owner of 1188 Brewing Company, John Day, said a to-go only model would not work for her establishment because brew pubs are too social of an environment.

The Blue Mountain Eagle was unable to reach the Outpost for comment.

Shannon Adair, the owner of 1188, said "a couple" of employees tested positive and could have spread the virus to other staff members. If others test positive, she said, the restaurant could be closed until roughly April 17.

Adair said making the decision was not hard and she made the call within 15 minutes of hearing an employee tested positive.

"Even if I wanted to open, I don't have enough staff, but I also don't want anyone else in our community or anyone in the restaurant to get sick," she said.

She said she takes COVID-19 seriously and believes the virus can have long-term effects on those who become infected and if she

can reduce the risk of spreading it in the community, she will.

Adair said that some of her customers take the virus seriously and others do not.

For her part, as a business owner serving the public, she is making what, in her opinion, is the right decision.

Adair said regardless of how people feel about the virus, the breakneck pace of infections will ultimately close down the county. Adair said the people who tested positive did not get a COVID-19 test for a "random" reason.

"The people that I know that got tested got tested because they were sick," she said. "And so I think we should be taking it seriously."

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

7:54 a.m. — A caller reported a suspicious person on the 200 block of North 17th Avenue, Elgin. A Union County sheriff's deputy made contact and took information.

9:42 a.m. — La Grande police received a non-communicative 911 call. An officer responded and determined it was an accidental call.

3:56 p.m. — A caller asked police to check on the welfare of a person at Jefferson Avenue and Third Street, La Grande. An officer responded and found the subject was just resting.

4:41 p.m. — La Grande

police responded to a report of a possible vehicle theft and counseled a juvenile and parent.

6:29 p.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office received a report of a burglary at a business at Union City Park, Union. A deputy responded.

7:49 p.m. — A caller reported a car at the parking lot of Walmart, 11619 Island Ave., Island City, hit someone and left. A Union County sheriff's deputy made contact. The subject was not seriously injured and did not want to pursue charges.

THURSDAY, APRIL 8

7:46 a.m. — La Grande police responded to the 2000 block of Q Avenue on a report of a fight in progress. Officers cited a 20-year-old man for disorderly conduct.

9:35 a.m. — A caller reported possible animal abuse on the 400 block of North 16th Avenue, Elgin. A Union County sheriff's deputy took a report for animal abuse.

2:29 p.m. — A caller made a complaint about an aggressive dog on the 200 block of North 10th Avenue, Elgin.

7:02 p.m. — La Grande police responded to the Pioneer SK8 Park on a report of a disturbance. Officers warned the subjects involved.

8:45 p.m. — A caller reported a transient was causing issues on the 800 block of Adams Avenue, La Grande. An officer responded and told the person to move along.

9:11 p.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office received a report of a disturbance in the area of 50200 Highway 203. A sheriff's deputy made contact and referred the subject to mental health providers.



Baker City Herald, File

The RD Mac team gets dirty during a mud volleyball tournament at the 2016 Huckleberry Festival in North Powder. The festival returns this year with socially distanced activities after going on hiatus in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Getting ready for a berry good time

The North Powder Huckleberry Festival revives

By DICK MASON

The Observer

NORTH POWDER — A major North Powder event is coming back this summer.

North Powder's annual Huckleberry Festival, which like most events was canceled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will return in July due to falling infection rates in Union County.

The event, in keeping with tradition, will be July 31. This is the last Saturday in July, the day the festival has been conducted in past years.

Activities at this year's festival again will include a breakfast, a parade, a car show and a street dance, said Lindsey Thompson, chair of the Huckleberry Festival. Some events, including a huckleberry dessert contest, will not be run this year to help the festival conform to social distancing stan-

dards. Thompson said events such as the desert contest will be added back in future years once the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

Thompson is impressed with how people are stepping forward to offer to work as volunteers.

"We have a lot of new people with lots of energy," Thompson said.

The Huckleberry Festival started in 2007.

The festival recognizes the historical significance in the North Powder area of the popular fruit. Huckleberries were a staple for American Indians who summered in the area and for the pioneers who arrived in the mid-1860s, according to a July 24, 2008, article in The Observer.

The Huckleberry Festival joins the ranks of other spring and summer events rebounding this year, including the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show, the Elgin Stampede, the Union County Fair, Union's Grassroots Festival, Elgin's Riverfest and the Eastern Oregon Beer Festival.