



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo, File
A report from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says a sheep herder on Horseshoe Ridge, outside of Meacham, reported seeing four wolves in close proximity to his sheep on a 1,200-acre private pasture.

WOLVES

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approximately a quarter of an inch in diameter on the neck, with associated hemorrhage and tissue trauma from 1 inch to up to 1-3/4 inches deep. Both injured lambs had fresh wounds on their necks and labored breathing.

Fish and Wildlife attributed the attack to what is known as the OR30 wolves.

Wolves have made Mount Emily their home for almost a decade but, according to Roblyn Brown, Fish and Wildlife state wolf biologist, OR30 and his companions are the only wolves known to be in the Meacham area right now.

Because the area of this recent attack has become so well used by wolves, Brown said Greg Rimbach, district wildlife biologist at ODFW's Pendleton office, has been working with this producer in this area for many years on cattle and sheep issues. Currently, the lambs are gathered each night and kept in a pen surrounded by an electric fence.

"They are very proactive and have been trying many different things over the years to reduce wolf-livestock conflict," Brown said.

OR30 was originally a Wallowa County wolf, but around the age of 2, he left the Snake River Pack and was collared on Mount Emily in February 2015. He spent much of that year in the Mount Emily, Starkey and Ukiah wildlife units south of Interstate 84. In December 2015, he was observed with another wolf in the area formerly

used by the Umatilla River Pack.

In 2016, radio-collar locations showed OR30 primarily using a large area in the Starkey and Ukiah units that he had frequented in the summer of 2015. He also was discovered from time to time in the Mount Emily Unit and was believed to be alone.

In the spring of 2017, OR30 was observed with a different wolf and the pair was in the northern Starkey and Ukiah units south of I-84.

In 2017, the OR30 wolves produced at least two pups that survived to the end of the year, but they were not counted as a breeding pair because the female died in October. Radio-collar data showed a 306-square mile use of area primarily in the Starkey and Ukiah units. Roughly 67% of location data points showed them on private lands.

The following year the OR30 wolf group totaled three animals and were monitored until September. By the end of 2018, two of the wolves remained in the pack area.

By January 2019, OR30 left the Starkey and Ukiah area, and the group's area of known wolf activity was discontinued. According to ODFW's website, OR30 spent most of 2019 in the Wenaha Pack area of known wolf activity. In early 2020, he was observed with another wolf in the Mount Emily wildlife management unit.

Brown said the department has documented three wolves in the OR30 group this spring and suspect they are denning in the area and there are probably pups, as well.

QUEEN

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day — about 4 hours. The smaller ones, I can make four or five in a day," he said.

The time-consuming part comes later when Corsini dries, fires, glazes, and re-fires the creations in the classroom. It takes about a week to finalize the pieces. Corsini said he was thankful to have the space and material offered by the high school to create the set.

"It gave me an opportunity to do it well, and work harder on it," he said regarding his sculpting.

The inspiration for making the chess set came partly from McIlmoil, who after observing Corsini sculpt figures, suggested that he make a chess set. Corsini, who is a fan of chess and routinely plays against his dad and his friends, agreed.

"I usually beat my dad," Corsini said.

Corsini likes to play chess with his friends, though he noted that chess hasn't found much of a following in La Grande.

"There's nothing really serious about chess around here. It used to be a big thing in the world, with master chess players everywhere," said Corsini.

Chess has seen a renaissance in the past year, having been bolstered by the pandemic and the release of the hugely pop-

ular Netflix series "The Queen's Gambit." That same enthusiasm, however, hasn't found much of a following in La Grande.

Northwest Chess, a repository website of local chess clubs in the Northwestern United States, confirms Corsini's statement — the nearest chess club is in Hermiston, which meets only on the first Wednesday of the month. Pendleton's chess club is listed as inactive.

For now, Corsini is content with making his pieces and casually playing with his friends. He hopes to complete the set by the end of the year, and to finish making a wooden board to host the pieces.

When asked about what he would like to do after he finished the set, he wasn't sure — noting that he hadn't thought about entering it into art shows, competitions, or even considered selling it.

"I'm probably just gonna put it in my room," he said, noting that he was more focused on creating the pieces than planning their exhibition.

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LUNCH: Meal is free to all youths 18 and under

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Activity Center, 2609 Second St., La Grande, because of state social distancing rules in place to protect people from the COVID-19 pandemic, said Jeff Hensley, assistant director of Community Connection of Northeast Oregon.

A total of 6,140 meals were served in 2020 via the Summer Food Program at Riveria. This was an average of 108 per day, up from the average of 94 a day in 2019.

Hensley credits the increase to a move made a year ago when lunches started being prepared not in Riveria's kitchen but instead at the Union County Senior Center by its food service staff led by Sydney Gleeson, the center's food service nutrition department manager. This was done to boost efficiency since meals are already prepared there for the center's senior meals program, which is part of Community Connection.

Hensley said the lunches prepared by Gleeson were tastier, which likely explains why more people came for meals at Riveria last summer.

"Sydney does a wonderful job of preparing meals," Hensley said.

Many of the staff who are again serving lunches at Riveria are volunteers.

"Hats off to the volunteers who give up their time to serve children," Hensley said.

Community Connection has operated a summer



Alex Wittwer/The Observer
Kids and parents sit in the grass outside Riveria Activity Center and eat lunch after receiving free meals donated and cooked at the Union County Senior Center on Thursday, June 10, 2021.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer
Volunteers Gerry Montgomery, left, and Judy Sherman prepare to serve lunches to children at Riveria Activity Center on Thursday, June 10, 2021.

lunch program at Riveria since 2005.

The free lunches in Elgin will start June 14 and are provided by the Elgin School District. Youths age 18 and younger will be able to pick up the lunches each

weekday. The Elgin School District and Community Connection will be reimbursed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the lunches they serve.

The free meals in Wallowa County will be offered

MORE INFORMATION

For additional information on free lunches in Wallowa County, call Building Healthy Families at 541-426-9411.

by Building Healthy Families. BHF will offer grab-and-go curbside pickup at sites in Wallowa, Enterprise and Joseph Monday through Thursday from June 14 to Aug. 5.

The lunches will be free to all youths age 18 and younger from noon to 12:30 p.m. at the following sites: the east side of Enterprise City Park, the east side of Evans Park in Wallowa, and the parking lot of the Joseph United Methodist Church.

Funders of the program include the USDA and local sponsors.

DROUGHT

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declaration, requested that all state and federal drought programs, grants, loans and other assistance be made available to affected Union County citizens. These include farmers and ranchers who already are feeling the impact of the drought.

"The wheat crop has never been lower in the past 30 years," Burton said, referring to Union County and Northeast Oregon overall.

Union County Commissioner Paul Anderes noted that dry land wheat crops may develop smaller kernels because of the drought. He also said livestock producers are now feeling the impact.

"The lack of spring rain has reduced pasture land for cattle," he said.

Burton said the forage available for cattle is down as much as 60% because of the drought.

"Grassland is not as productive," he said.

A year ago, Burton said, ranchers could graze 400 cattle on a certain amount of land for a month, but now can only graze for about two weeks on the same acreage before they have to move cattle to another pasture.

The situation will get worse for farmers and ranchers later in the year when stream flows likely will continue to decline, Burton said. Farmers and



Alex Wittwer/The Observer
A burn notice and fire season sign outside of Elgin warns of an increased risk of fire on Friday, June 11, 2021. Union County officially declared a drought on June 9 after a warm spring had prematurely melted nearly all of the nearby mountain snowpacks.

ranchers who do not have water rights high on a seniority list may come up empty this summer when attempting to use some streams.

"Water may not exist for them," he said.

Still, Union County is much better off in terms of drought conditions than almost all of its surrounding counties. Burton said this is often the case in terms of drought and wildfires.

"We are in a blessed center," he said.

Fire season

The commissioners' decision to enter Union County into a regulated fire season on June 15 means it will do so 15 days before the fire season's mandatory start. The move comes on the heels of a recommendation from the Union County Fire Defense Board. The board

consists of all fire department chiefs within Union County.

Fire Defense Board Chief Craig Kretschmer said the recommendation was made due to extremely dry fuel conditions and several fire starts locally and regionally.

Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage said the decision will help heighten awareness of the wildfire dangers the region faces.

"It will make a lot of people more hyperalert," she said.

Anderes said Union County will have a pair of new elements working for it on the wildfire protection front this summer — two fire breaks in the Mount Emily Recreation Area now close to completion. One is six miles long on MERA's Mainline Trail, which runs north-south starting from the rec-

MORE INFORMATION

During the regulated use fire season which begins June 15, no open burning is allowed on private lands within rural fire protection districts as well as outside of city limits and on all private lands in Union County. The provision does not include regulated agricultural field burning or the use of gas or pellet barbecues at residences. Burn barrel use from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and recreational fires are also allowed under regulated use as long as they meet provisions within the county's regulated fire season ordinance.

The regulated fire season ordinance can be read in its entirety at www.union-county.org/emergency-services.

reaction site's parking lot off Fox Hill Road. The other is about 1 mile long and runs on the western edge of MERA.

"They have turned out very well," Anderes said.

The trunks of all trees in the firebreaks are at least 10 feet apart and their crowns 25 feet apart. The distances make it much less likely for a fire to spread from tree to tree. These firebreaks are designed to help stop the advancement of fires from the Mount Emily area into the Grande Ronde Valley and blazes moving in the opposite direction, Anderes said.

The firebreaks, created over the past six months, cost a combined total of \$200,000, much of which was covered by state and federal grants.

2021 EASTERN OREGON PHOTO CONTEST

Official Rules:
 Photo Contest open now and closes at 11:59 pm Sunday, June 20, 2021.
 Staff will choose the top 10. The public can vote online for People's Choice from 12:01 am Monday, June 21 through 11:59 pm Thursday, June 30.
 Digital or scanned photos only, uploaded to the online platform. No physical copies.
 Only photographers from Oregon may participate.
 The contest subject matter is wide open but we're looking for images that capture life in Eastern Oregon.

Entrants may crop, tone, adjust saturation and make minor enhancements, but may not add or remove objects within the frame, or doctor images such that the final product doesn't represent what's actually before the camera.

The winners will appear in the July 8th edition of Go Magazine; the top 25 will appear online.

Gift cards to a restaurant of your choice will be awarded for first, second and third place.

Submit all photos online at: lagrandeobserver.com/photocontest