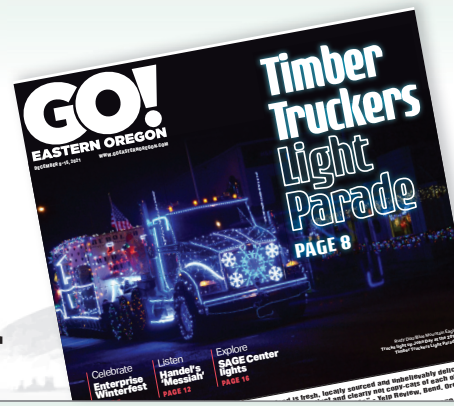


THE OBSERVER

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Five goats killed in wolf attacks

Attacks near Elgin linked to Balloon Tree Pack

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

ELGIN — Five goats were killed by at least one wolf in the Elgin area during a two-day period in late November, according to a report from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The first death was reported on Saturday, Nov. 27. The owner said that morning that the animals had broken out of their night pen within a 44-acre private pasture. One goat was found dead and one was injured.

The following morning, Nov. 28, four more goats in the Elgin area were found dead and two more were injured. The five dead goats, each weighing between 30 and 150 pounds, included two adult females, two yearling females and one kid.

ODFW determined wolf attacks were responsible for the goat deaths and injuries, and GPS location data indicated a radio-collared wolf was at or near the site of both attacks.

“The size, location and severity of injuries are consistent with wolf depredations,” according to the ODFW report, which attributed the attack events to the Balloon Tree Pack.

Other attacks

The Balloon Tree Pack was responsible for killing 12 ewes and injuring two guard dogs protecting sheep north of Elgin earlier this fall, according to ODFW investigations.

That pack’s breeding pair produced pups for the first time in 2020, with at least three surviving through the end of that year.

An employee of a sheep rancher found three dead adult ewes on Sept. 29 on a private timbered pasture, according to ODFW.

See, *Wolves/Page A5*



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

A sapling that had succumbed to the dry conditions sits dead in the ground at the Donovan Tree Farm in La Grande on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. Scorching summer heat waves and persistent droughts have damaged the new plantings of Christmas trees, killing off many saplings and seedlings.

A lasting impact?

Drought scorched trees to affect Christmas tradition in the future

By **ALEX WITTWER**
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — A scorching summer and persistent drought in Oregon has stressed young saplings and seedlings of Christmas trees from the Willamette Valley to Eastern Oregon. Those environmental conditions have exacerbated an already strained industry that was just starting to recover from a Christmas tree shortage that was decades in the making.

Due to a large surplus in trees in the early to mid-2000s, many Christmas tree growers had one unprofitable year after another, leading the farmers to seek out other avenues of revenue as prices plummeted for their product.

“Between growers not planting — that stayed in the businesses — the number of trees that were going into the ground from 2006 to 2007 wasn’t enough to sustain the demand that would be out there 10 years in the future,” said Greg Smith, owner of Molalla Tree Farms, which grows Christmas trees on nearly 200 acres in Clackamas County.



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Kevin Lyon, of Enterprise, cuts down a Christmas tree at the Donovan Tree Farm in La Grande on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. The Donivans say they’ll have more than enough trees this year to satisfy demand.

“So, in 2015, you started seeing the market tighten up for supply, and then people have been planting again, but it’s such a long process to grow a Christmas tree. It’s a 10-year project to get a marketable tree.”

Drought, rising gas prices, labor shortages and heat waves conspired to reduce the already low supply of

Christmas trees this year, and the effects of the heat wave are just the beginning. Smith lost many of his younger saplings and seedlings this year due to the high temperatures in the summer that pushed the mercury to more than 110 degrees in some parts of the state.

See, *Trees/Page A5*

LHS alums keep history alive

Graduation Class Picture Project volunteers restoring group photos

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A group of five La Grande High School alums are succeeding at keeping Father Time’s corrosive hands from erasing their school’s past, but they need help to continue.

The alumni are working as volunteers for the Graduation Class Picture Project, which is restoring

HELPING OUT

For information on making a donation, call Kathy Rudd, a 1969 LHS graduate and a Graduation Class Picture Project member, at 541-910-6122.

framed collections of 36 surviving LHS graduating class photos from 1924 to 2001. The preservation work includes having the picture frames replaced, with plastic glass that helps protect the photos from damaging ultraviolet light.

The restored frames have new blue background paper to coincide

See, *Photos/Page A5*



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Kathy Rudd, right, and Mary Ellen Taal lay out photos of the La Grande High School class of 1964 on Thursday, Dec. 2, 2021. A small group of volunteers are restoring yearbook displays to place in the hallways of La Grande High School, showcasing the school’s history.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
27 LOW
A bit of snow

Friday
38/29
Cloudy, flurries

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Issue 144
3 sections, 36 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
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