

# 'This time it's worse'

State, local wildlife rehabilitation centers are no longer accepting waterfowl due to avian flu risk

By CHARLET HOTCHKISS and JOHN TILLMAN  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Wildlife Executive Director Lynn Tompkins said she is optimistic the recent avian flu outbreak might soon come to an end.

The last time Oregon experienced an avian influenza epidemic was 2014-15, Tompkins said, and it ended by the end of June.

"This time it's worse," she said. "This is a lot more significant outbreak."

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on Thursday, June 2, reported many wildlife rehabilitators are not accepting waterfowl due to the spread of avian flu in wild birds. Because waterfowl can carry the virus without showing symptoms, allowing them into rehabilitation facilities can put all the birds at risk.

"I'm really hoping the summer heat will help," she said.

Tompkins said Blue Mountain Wildlife doesn't normally get much waterfowl in this area, but the center in Tri-Cities does. The refuge there is no longer accepting sick birds of any kind, due to the risk of avian influenza.

Tompkins is trying to change this by adding three sheds outside their clinic for intake, evaluation and quarantine. That way,

they can see which are sick and get them tested for avian influenza without jeopardizing the health of the other birds being seen at the clinic.

All birds tested for avian influenza first have their preliminary results confirmed by a state lab, according to Tompkins. In Oregon, that testing is in Corvallis at the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, and in Washington, it's in Pullman at the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. Labs then send results to the national center for confirmation, where they will be added to the USDA website.

Tompkins has tested only a few birds for avian influenza this year in Washington: two goslings, a mallard duckling and a crow. She also said ODFW recently sent off a test for a bald eagle that was found at McCormack Slough in Morrow County near Irrigon. Results are pending for all of those tests.

Goslings, ducklings and adult waterfowl all can carry the virus. If you find healthy ducklings or goslings without a parent nearby, leave them alone and allow the parents to find them, ODFW requested. If you choose to interfere, they can be released at the nearest waterway. Injured ducks and geese may be brought to an ODFW office for euthanasia. Call ahead if you are bringing in

*"This year more than ever, it is important to leave wild birds in the wild to give them the best chance for survival. If you see young ducks or geese, please keep pets under tight control. Not feeding waterfowl is also especially important during this time."*

— Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Samantha Castoldi, left, and Blue Mountain Wildlife Director Lynn Tompkins on Thursday, June 2, 2022, prepare to put a band on the leg of a healthy American kestrel at the Pendleton bird rehabilitation center. Construction displaced the bird from its nest.

### BACKGROUND ON THE AVIAN FLU

In Oregon, wild avian flu was first detected in Canada goose goslings at Alton Baker Park in Eugene, then in several red-tailed hawks in May. Detection of the highly pathogenic virus has occurred only in Linn and Lane counties, but the biologists expect it to spread over the next several weeks.

This virus has been documented in more than 100 species of wild birds worldwide since it was first detected in December 2021 in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. It was believed to have entered North America in an infected wild seabird or migrating waterfowl.

The virus circulating in Oregon and other parts of the world is very contagious among birds. It can sicken and even kill many species, including chickens, ducks and turkeys. Infected birds can shed avian influenza A viruses in their saliva, nasal secretions and feces. Susceptible species become infected by the virus after it is shed by afflicted birds.

Wild birds typically carrying the virus include waterbirds (such as ducks, geese, swans, gulls and terns), shorebirds (such as sandpipers), pelicans and cormorants. Dabbling ducks (such as mallards, pintails and wigeons) serve as reservoir hosts for avian influenza A viruses, although it often does not cause disease in these species.

The disease also can infect raptors (such as eagles and hawks) that prey on or consume sick or dead waterfowl. The wild bird species in Oregon most at risk from this strain of virus currently appear to be all waterfowl, shorebirds, eagles and scavenging species, such as crows and turkey vultures.

While very contagious and deadly for some birds, the risk to human health is low, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To see all confirmed cases of avian influenza in wild birds and domestic birds, visit the USDA's website at [bit.ly/3zcDDzw](http://bit.ly/3zcDDzw).

—Source: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

an injured duck or goose.

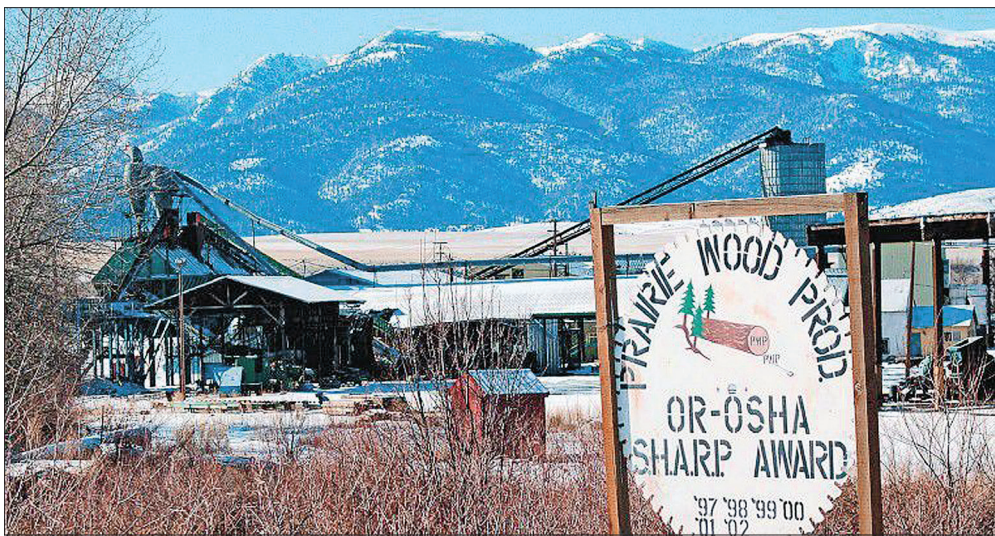
State fish and wildlife also urged the public not to collect or handle sick or dead wild birds but report the incident directly to a local ODFW office, the Wildlife Health lab at 866-968-2600 or email at [Wildlife.Health@odfw.oregon.gov](mailto:Wildlife.Health@odfw.oregon.gov). Fish and wildlife staff will conduct surveillance and collecting/testing sick and dead wild birds to monitor for the presence

of the disease.

This is the time of year when goslings, ducklings and other young birds are commonly picked up and brought into rehab centers, according to ODFW. Well-intentioned people mistakenly think these young birds are orphaned because they may be temporarily separated from their parents.

"This year more than ever, it is important to leave wild birds

in the wild to give them the best chance for survival," the state fish and game department urged. "If you see young ducks or geese, please keep pets under tight control. Not feeding waterfowl is also especially important during this time. In addition to commonly causing nutritional issues, feeding congregates animals and results in overcrowding and increased risk of disease spread."



Blue Mountain Eagle, File

The parent company of the Prairie Wood Products sawmill in Prairie City intends to reopen the facility in early July 2022 and plans on hiring roughly 50 employees.

## Prairie Wood mill reopens in July

Company planning to hire 50 workers

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — The parent company of the Prairie Wood Products sawmill in Prairie City intends to reopen the facility in early July and plans on hiring roughly 50 employees.

The D.R. Johnson Lumber Co., Prairie Wood's parent company, announced in a press release that the sawmill will host a job fair at Chester's Thriftway in John Day on Monday, June 13, and Tuesday, June 14, from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

According to the press release, the company is looking to fill a variety of jobs, from maintenance and production to management roles in human resources.

The wages, the press release states, will be "highly competitive" with a "robust" benefits package.

The Prairie City mill was purchased in 1976 by the D.R. Johnson Lumber Co. Two years later, the family-owned company added a stud mill and planer. Then, in the late 1980s, the company installed a co-generation power plant at the Prairie Wood Products mill.

The sawmill, which operated successfully in Prairie City for more than 30 years and employed upward of

100 people who worked two different shifts, shuttered in 2008 amid a housing market crash that led to a lack of available sawlogs.

D.R. Johnson restarted the mill in early 2009 but shut it down permanently by the end of the year. The cleanup of the mill, which sits at the west end of Prairie City, concluded in 2019. Since then, much of the mill equipment has remained, along with the co-gen plant.

In the mill's heyday, Don "D.R." Johnson expanded the facility's capacity by adding a computerized stud mill in 1981. In the late 1980s, Johnson followed that up by installing the co-gen power plant at the mill.

### UMATILLA COUNTY

## ODFW confirms wolf depredation

By JOHN TILLMAN  
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Wolves with the Ukiah Pack killed two sheep on private land in Coyote Canyon, a ravine tributary to McKay Creek, in late May, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reported.

A sheep herder found a dead 180-pound ewe and 70-pound lamb in a 5,000-acre pasture about 1 mile from his camp on Monday, May 30. The sheep had bedded down for the night in the private pasture.

The ewe had been mostly consumed, while the lamb was entirely intact. ODFW estimated that both sheep died no earlier than the evening of May 29 or the morning of May 30.

ODFW personnel shaved, skinned and examined the carcasses. Both sheep suffered multiple bite punctures and pre-mortem hemorrhaging, indicating that they had been attacked by a predator.

The ewe had pre-mortem tooth punctures up to 5/16-inch diameter on the neck, with pre-mortem hemorrhaging in the remaining muscle tissue. The lamb had numerous 1/4-inch pre-mortem bite punctures and multiple tears in the hide on the neck, throat and left hindquarter above the hock. Trauma to the neck penetrated to the bone on both sides and dislocated the neck. Pre-mortem hemorrhage on the left hindquarter was up to 1-1/2 inches deep. The severity and location of injuries to these sheep are consistent with wolf attacks.

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