

# BEARS

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about 150 pounds.

Jeff Smith, who owns J2K Excavating and lives on Foothill Drive, offered the use of his bucket lift to retrieve the bear.

Ratliff said the bear awoke in the cage about 11:30 a.m. on July 3, a little more than an hour after he fired the tranquilizer dart.

“By noon it was mobile,” Ratliff said of the bear. He released the bear in the Eagle Creek area northeast of Baker City.

“It ran straight down a hill,” he said. “It did not want to stick around, which is exactly what we like to see.”

That behavior is typical of a truly wild animal that is not accustomed to being around people, Ratliff said.

He suspects the bear had separated from its mother, as bears tend to do after their first birthday.

“I think it just wandered into town and got caught after daylight where it didn’t want to be,” Ratliff said.

He said there were no reports of the bear nosing into garbage cans or other behavior that could suggest the bear was comfortable around people.

In those cases, ODFW officials are likely to kill the bear rather than trap it and release it in the wild. Ratliff said the foothill above the city’s southwest corner probably is a travel corridor for wildlife, including the occasional bear.

The episode started when the bear was seen at Quail Ridge Golf Course, on the hill directly west of Foothill Drive.

Julie Bouchard, who lives at 235 Foothill, on the west side of the street, said she had just let out three dogs, one of her own and two belonging to her daughter-in-law, Megan Cloyd, when she heard someone yelling, from the golf course, about a bear.

Bouchard quickly brought the dogs inside — Louie, her boxer-bulldog mix, and Cloyd’s black Labradors, Lola and Lola’s daughter, Sammy.

Cloyd, who grew up in Baker City and moved to Moses Lake, Washington, about four years ago, was visiting for the Fourth of July weekend with her children, Nicholas Cloyd Jr., 10, and Scarlett, 11.

Bouchard said she watched the bear rumble through a field near her home, cross Foothill Drive and climb the birch tree between two apartment buildings directly across the street.

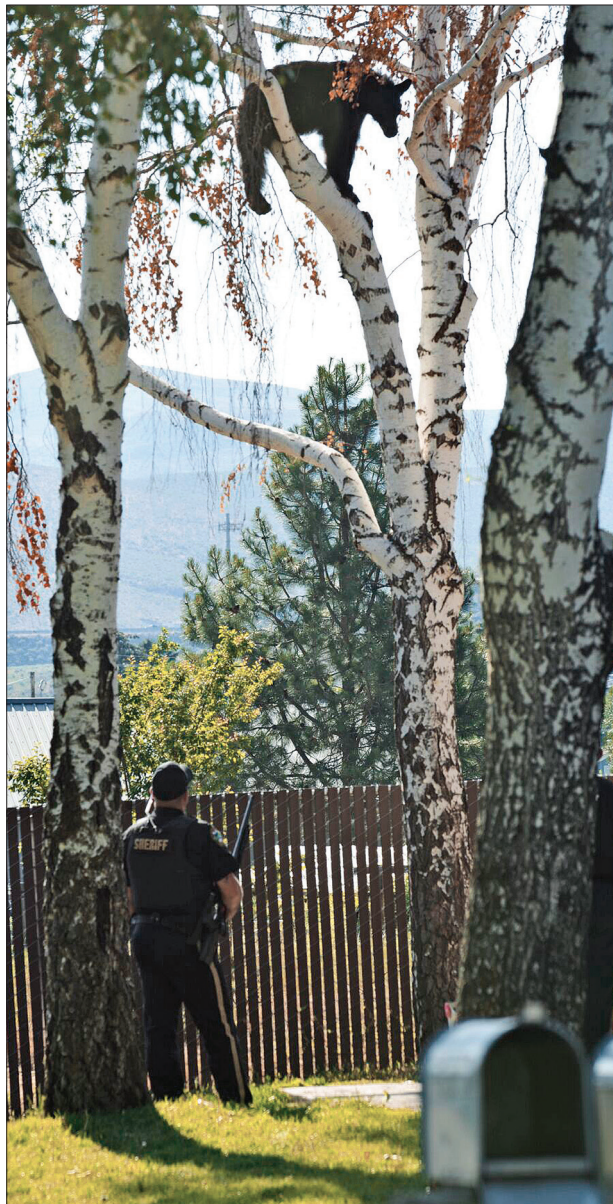
“It was so cute while it was running,” Bouchard said.

Bouchard, who has lived on Foothill Drive for about a decade, said she’s never seen a bear in the neighborhood.

Two Baker City Police Department officers responded, along with a Baker County Sheriff’s Office truck and two Oregon State Police troopers.

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash also drove to the scene.

Baker City Police officer Lance Woodward directed traffic along Foothill Drive. A car rolled through every few minutes, most driven by curious residents wanting to get a look at the bear.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

**A Baker City police officer stands beneath a birch tree on the east side of Foothill Drive in case the bear in the tree came down or fell, on Sunday, July 3, 2022.**



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

**Brian Ratliff, center, with white hat, wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, loads a black bear into a cage on Sunday morning, July 3, 2022.**

# INITIATIVES

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Oregon which has room for additional students.

For example, if a public school has room for five additional second graders and there are five applicants from outside the school’s district, the school would have to accept all five of the students, said Donna Kreitzberg, one of three chief petitioners for the initiative petitions and a member of the executive committee of Education Freedom for Oregon.

Under the proposed Open Enrollment amendment, should there be more applicants than there are openings, the school district would be required to conduct a lottery to give each of the applicants an equal opportunity to be selected and enrolled.

School districts would not be required to accept students for openings if they had been expelled from their previous school. Kreitzberg said the leaders of the Open Enrollment amendment drive don’t want problem students to be handed to other schools.

The rules of the proposed initiative petition would give priority to students of families living in each school district. This means that if there are 25 spaces available for third graders in a school district and there are 25 third graders living within the school district whose families want them to enroll there, these children would fill all the slots and the outside students might have to be put on a waiting list.

Kreitzberg said the Open Enrollment amendment would empower parents.

“This would give parents a choice and put them back in the driver’s seat,” she said.

## School choice

The School Choice constitutional amendment would make it easier for parents to afford to enroll their children in any private school in the state if there is space available.

The amendment would call for a School Choice Account to be created for students attending or planning to attend private schools. A portion of the state money that that public school districts receive whenever a student attends a public school would go into this account. Parents would never receive the money but it would go directly to private schools, Kreitzberg said.

Kreitzberg said the drive to get the School Choice and Open Enrollment amendments on the 2024 ballot, are in its very early stages. Sponsorship signatures are now being collected throughout the state, including La Grande. Once the required number is gathered, the drive’s petitioners will be closer to getting ballot titles from the state and the necessary permission to begin collecting the signatures needed to get the initiative petitions on the 2024 ballot.

A belief in the importance fairness in education is part of what is motivating Kreitzberg to take on this project.

“We believe that all Oregon K-12 students deserve the opportunity to receive a great education,” she said. “Oregon’s education dollars are meant to educate all Oregon K-12 students, and our amendments will make sure that happens in a fair manner.”

# FIRE

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prohibited, and all lodging must meet requirements for fire prevention. Something else that can be dangerous, especially around Independence Day, are fireworks. This is why Howard wants people in his district to be mindful because every year fires happen when fireworks go off in unsafe places.

“The fireworks that shoot up in the air don’t always go where

they’re intended,” he said.

Common sense goes a long way in preventing fire.

“Make sure they have a safe campfire, be wary of driving in tall, dry grass, be fire conscious and be aware,” Howard said.

He also said people should report a fire when they see it that way the authorities can learn about it as quickly as possible in order to minimize resources and cost.

“Don’t assume the next person has reported it,” Howard said. “We want to get there quickly and knock that fire down.”

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