

OUR VIEW

# Poaching punishes those who play by the rules

**S**tories from such faraway places as Harney County often do not resonate locally, but the recent sentencing of a Hines couple for their involvement in killing at least seven elk last year carries implications for everyone who hunts across our great region.

The couple, Chris and Stephanie Lardy, both face stiff penalties for the crime that police said occurred in December. Chris Lardy was convicted of taking a bull elk out of season and exceeding the bag limit while Stephanie Lardy pled guilty to aiding/counseling in a game violation. In the wake of the crime, two calves, two cows and a spike bull were left rotting.

The case is significant because our region, to a large extent, represents a vast and rich hunting environment. Every year, hunters enter the woods in hopes of bagging an elk or deer. To a lesser extent, our economy prospers from the influx of hunters.

Hunting, then, for many is a serious business. Most hunters follow the rules. They take only what they are allowed to by law. In that way, each hunter is a steward of not only our game herds but of the forests where they search for game.

We are all naturally proud of our traditions of self-sufficiency and resiliency along with the knowledge that we can hunt during the designated season. Hunting for many is generational. Fathers and mothers pass on the tradition to their children.

Yet when anyone poaches or otherwise mars the philosophy of hunting, it damages the entire sport. Not only does it impact the judicial system, but it also punishes those who play by the rules every year. Poaching also sends a message that the rules don't matter. Those who poach conduct their actions of aggression in a concealed manner.

Fortunately, there are laws that keep crimes against our wildlife in check. However, no number of legal statutes can erase what is often the depravity of human nature.

That means all of us have a responsibility to ensure that our great resource — the elk and deer and other game that traverse Eastern Oregon — remain viable for the future. Hunting, is indeed, serious business. We are the ones who can keep our herds of wildlife stable and safe so that when we journey into the woods, lawfully, to enjoy one of our region's great pastimes we won't be disappointed.

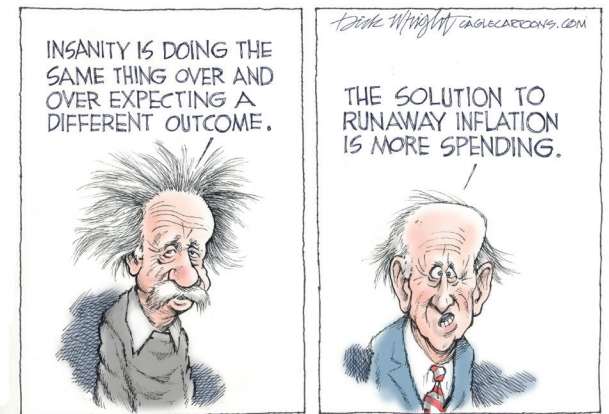
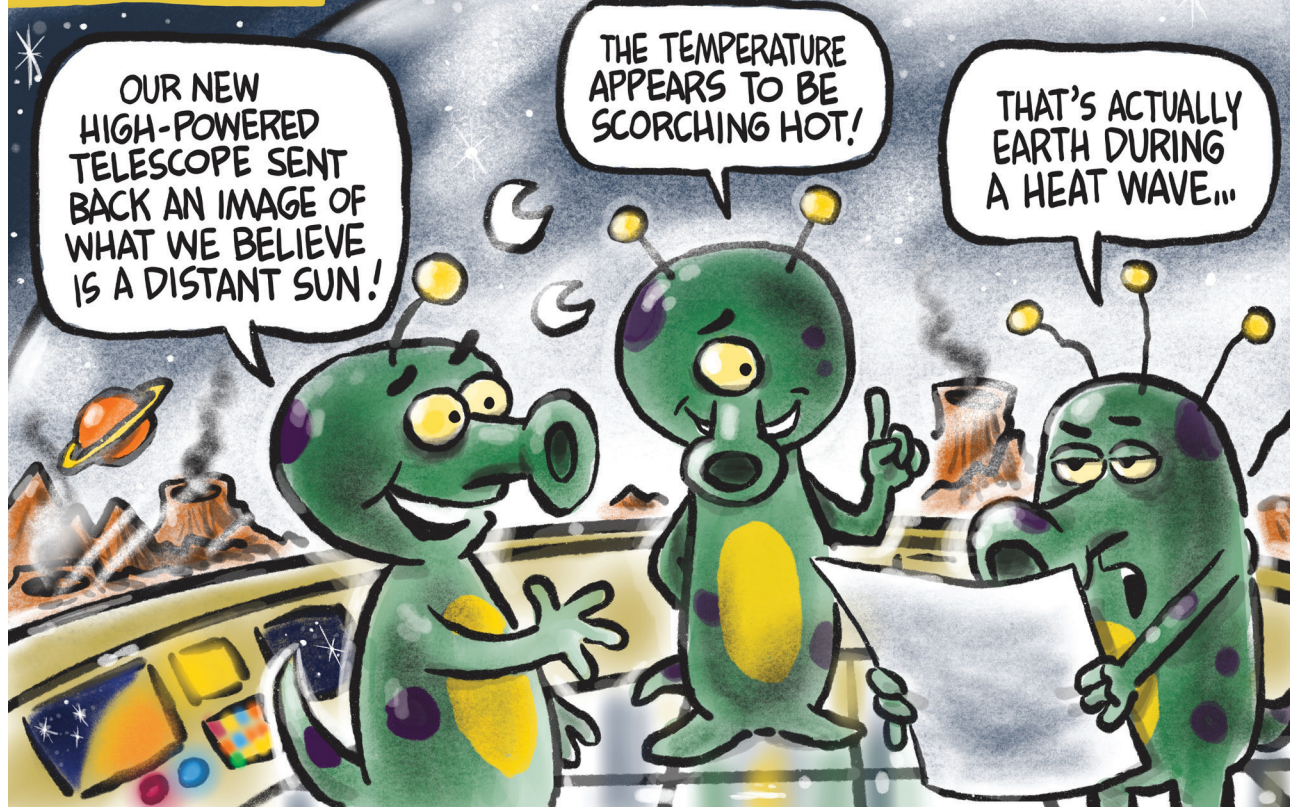
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MEANWHILE, ELSEWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE...



## New media filling Oregon news deserts



**STEVE FORRESTER**  
WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

**G**eorge Custer is a new player in the struggle to keep Oregon news deserts from happening.

Following closure of the Dead Mountain Echo, an Oakridge newspaper of some 50 years standing, a group led by veteran newsman Doug Bates started the Highway 58 Herald, an online newspaper. A former Marine Corps captain and a businessman, Custer is working on the newspaper's business side, and he has filled in as an interim editor.

Custer and I met at the Eugene City Club's July 8 discussion of the topic "Can local newspapers survive?" In response to that question, I had the easier task, because I could speak about our media company and its survival.

The Highway 58 endeavor is much like the Ashland News, which is powered by retired journalists and business people such as Paul Steinle, who resides in Ashland as well as on the Long Beach Peninsula. Steinle is a retired executive of King Broadcasting of Seattle.

These two startups and another in Yachats are emblematic of the drive to fill community news voids.

EO Media Group, parent company of The Observer, closed its books on June 30, at the end of the fiscal year. I am pleased to report that it was a financially healthy year. During that cycle, our newspapers gained sub-

scribers, to both our print and digital editions.

Talent is the key to our company's financial health. Talent in the newsrooms of our 15 newspapers, talent among our designers and advertising sales staffs, talent in our one printing site in Astoria and in our call center.

News content is what drives readers to our print and digital editions. In one of our highest profile news initiatives, the Bulletin in Bend is in the midst of a year-long series that profiles homeless persons in Deschutes County. Prior to the U.S. Supreme Court decision on Roe v. Wade, Katie Frankowicz of KMUN-FM and Nicole Bales of The Astorian took an extensive look at the lack of access to abortion in rural areas of Oregon like the North Coast. The East Oregonian covered a 170-car crash on Interstate 84 in late February that stretched nearly 2 miles long. Nearly 20 patients were transported to area hospitals and stranded motorists were taken to the Pendleton Convention Center, which served as a reunification hub for people involved in the crash.

In the years ahead, our company's path and the paths of new Oregon news outlets such as in Ashland and Oakridge may intersect. During the fiscal year, EO Media Group launched the Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism. This nonprofit venture is seeking philanthropic money that is dedicated to helping newsrooms thrive. FORJ aims to help rural newsrooms around Oregon build sustainable operation. Also we hope to build collaborations with other rural newspapers in shared news initiatives on topics such as water, housing and cli-

mate change.

What I like about FORJ is that it is a countervailing force against the national narrative that news deserts must be our future. What America and Oregon need is a new generation of news entrepreneurs. In other words, young people who are equipped with reporting, editing and business skills to start community news organizations. These young talents can emerge from our journalism schools. Our company leaders have had that conversation with the leaders of the University of Oregon School of Journalism.

Journalism schools at the University of West Virginia and University of Kentucky are focusing on developing new generations of entrepreneurial journalists. Our conversations with the UO Journalism School are heartening.

By telling you that we've had a good fiscal year, I do not mean to disguise the challenges we've confronted and will confront.

The newspaper business has never been easy for papers our size in communities such as we represent. If you've read "Grit and Ink," the history of our company and family, you know that from the late 19th century into the 21st century, impediments such as the Great Depression, a massive fire in Astoria, pandemics as well as shifts in the advertising industry have come our way regularly.

The key to rural and regional newspapers' survival is resilience and innovation. And that is where you'll find EO Media Group in the year ahead.

■ Steve Forrester is the president and chief executive officer of EO Media Group.

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