

Oregon

Wandering wolf unlikely to return to Malheur County

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

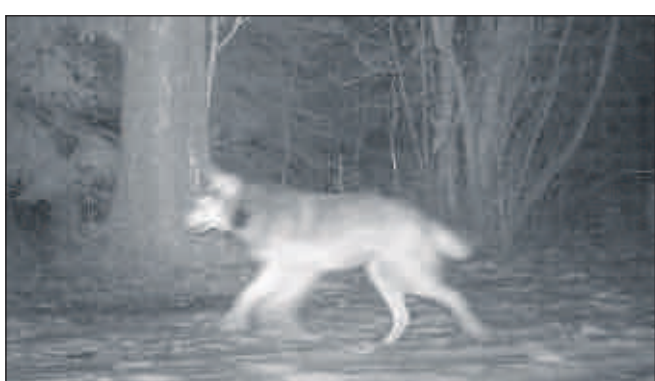
ADRIAN, Ore. — A wandering wolf that hung out in Malheur County for more than five weeks has apparently found a new home and is unlikely to return.

"I would be absolutely, drop-dead surprised if" he returned to the county, said Greg Rimbach, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's acting assistant wolf program manager.

Malheur is Oregon's largest cattle-producing county and ranchers here were happy to hear the lone wolf was gone.

The male wolf, known as OR22 by Oregon wolf biologists, has spent the last three weeks hanging out in forest area northeast of the city of John Day, Rimbach said.

"It's just kind of hanging out there by itself," he said. "It's found



Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

OR 22, a male wolf that separated from the Umatilla River Pack, is pictured walking through a Northeast Oregon forest on Jan. 26. The lone wolf spent several weeks near Adrian in Malheur County. It is now in Grant County.

something it likes."

OR22 is a castoff from a Northwest Oregon pack that began "wandering around in a dispersing pattern" after separating from the Umatilla River Pack around Feb. 13, according to Philip Milburn, a district wildlife biologist in the ODFW's Ontario office.

The wolf, which has a

tracking collar, entered Malheur County April 10 and hung out mostly in sagebrush country south of Vale and west of Adrian, an area that is not considered suitable habitat for wolves.

During its stay, OR22 made a brief foray into farm country and was seen napping in a wheat field by several farmers

and even swimming across a canal by ditch workers.

Before OR22's stay here, no other wolf was known to have been in the county for more than a brief period, Milburn said.

Once wolf biologists discovered and removed two cow carcasses the wolf had been feeding off of, it left the county in mid-May and started heading toward John Day country, Rimbach said.

Wolf biologists said the cows were dead before OR22 found them.

One of the big lessons biologists and cattlemen learned during OR22's stay in Malheur County is to ensure that cow carcasses are removed quickly, Rimbach said.

"The only reason he stayed in Malheur County was because he had a free meal," he said. Once the carcasses were removed, "it only took a few days before he was moving on."

Co-op weathers international firm's presence

By ZANE SPARLING
Capital Press

SALEM — Growers of meadowfoam, a niche oilseed, say they have weathered a multinational corporation's entrance into their market, forcing the larger company to slash contracted acreage. But a market observer believes both sides now face the specter of overproduction.

The oil extracted from meadowfoam seeds has special value to the Asian cosmetics industry due to its distinctive tactile feel and long shelf life. The oil is odorless and resistant to heat, oxidation and other manufacturing processes.

"There's a lot of mythology around meadowfoam," explained Oregon State University crop scientist Jennifer Kling. "Everybody wants to grow meadowfoam, but finding buyers is a real challenge."

In search of that market, publicly traded specialty plant and seed corporation Technology Crops International began contracting with Willamette Valley farmers in 2010, asking them to add meadowfoam to their rotation of grass seed crops.

That move forced OMG, an open-enrollment cooperative formerly known as the Oregon Meadowfoam Growers Association, to sharply decrease their meadowfoam acreage. In 2012, the co-op's production fell roughly 42 percent, to 2,200 acres from 3,800, according to a Capital Press report published at that time.

Membership rolls correspondingly fell to 50, down from a peak of about 100 growers. Mike Martinez, OMG's chief executive officer, said the drop most-



Courtesy of Ron Cooper

A combine harvests meadowfoam seed on the Alan McKee farm in Polk County, Ore. A farmers' cooperative, OMG, and a North Carolina-based company contract for the oil seed in the Willamette Valley. The unusual perspective was taken by Salem photographer Ron Cooper using a photo drone camera piloted by Devin Fadenrecht.

ly represented infrequent growers of meadowfoam.

"We've definitely experienced some price pressure on an account-by-account basis," Martinez said. "There's always concern when any competitive entity wants to start a price war. That never bodes well for any industry."

But TCI apparently overestimated the market, and subsequently scaled back its production from a high of 5,000 acres. The North Carolina-based corporation now produces "considerably less acreage than OMG," which produces approximately 3,000 acres annually, according to Kling.

"I got put out of business," she said, speaking metaphorically. OSU has shuttered her meadowfoam breeding program due to the lack of industry demand.

"There's no reason for me to breed meadowfoam

... because (TCI and OMG) can't grow as many acres as they might like to," Kling said. "So there's really no urgent need for a higher-yielding variety."

TCI and the farmers' co-op declined to release detailed acreage information.

TCI General Manager Kathy Flores said from her office in Winston-Salem, N.C., that the company typically begins production of a new crop after someone expresses a need for it, but declined to provide specifics.

OMG's Martinez declined to disclose the cooperative's total contracted acreage for 2015. Charles Ortiz, an OMG agronomist, compared that information to a newspaper's circulation numbers.

"I'm not trying to be all 'Spy vs. Spy,' but I'm just not comfortable giving out that information," he said, referencing the comic strip

published in Mad magazine.

Martinez also did not comment on the amount of meadowfoam production ordered by TCI, or if the company was undercutting the cooperative's prices.

Martinez said the co-op has paid its members dividends every year since 2008. In separate conversations, board members repeatedly stressed the crop's continued status as a moneymaker, but warned that meadowfoam could easily be overproduced.

Farmer and OMG board member Bruce Ruddenklau said his 40 acres of meadowfoam has brought anywhere from \$900 to \$1,800 per acre.

"I wouldn't raise the crop if it weren't profitable," he said. "We're seeing good prices and good stability in being paid on schedule, and everything's been steady as she goes for a long time."

Drought now critical in Wallowa County

NE Oregon river levels dropping rapidly

By KATHLEEN ELLYN
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE, Ore. — Despite some unique flashes of good luck, Wallowa County teeters on the edge of a drought worthy of a state of emergency designation.

The U.S. Drought monitor reports Wallowa County in a state of severe drought — elevated from just a week ago when the mountainous region's drought status was still designated as drought. "We are seeing stream flows we normally see in the middle of August," said Diana Enright, water policy analyst for the director's office at the Oregon Water Resources Department. "Conditions are four to six weeks ahead of schedule across the state."

In Wallowa County streams and rivers are "dropping really fast," said Wallowa County Watermaster David Bates. "We're way ahead of where we should be and none of the long-range forecasts are giving favorable predictions about stream flow."

It is true, Bates said, that Wallowa County has enjoyed normal rain patterns, and even a series of real gully-washers on Mt. Howard in late spring.

"We had 10 inches of rain on Mt. Howard the first week in May till the first of June. That's unique. No one else got that big storm like we did," he said.

Even as recently as July 9, Wallowa County's rain luck was holding. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) predicted flash floods in the county, which Bates said could be a real boon to stock ponds. "Those can fill right up in this situation," he said.

But as lucky as Wallowa County has been with rain, it's just not enough to save the rivers and streams.

Even with the rainfall, the low snowfall has driven the precipitation average in Wallowa County down.

Record low snowfalls and rapid melts resulted in low to no snow water reserves. And only snowpack can maintain stream water flow into the latter season.

Now, measurements taken on the Grand Ronde River at Troy show the flow at 50 percent of average. Locally, creeks like Hurricane are nearly dry at lower elevations.

The Drought Monitor reports that even with better than average rains so far, when both snow and rain precipitation is calculated, Wallowa County precipitation hovers at about 87 percent of normal — with the hottest, driest months to come.

Other counties are in far worse condition than Wallowa County, and a big part of their problem has to do with no reservoir storage.

Wallowa County again caught a break in this department.

Wallowa Lake Reservoir was reported at 135 percent of normal on June 1.

"Anyone who uses water from Wallowa Lake is positioned to have a good supply into the summer," said Bates.

"The lake is doing pretty good. There was not much demand on the lake early on."

The streams and rivers are a different story, and as bad as this may bode for farmers and ranchers, it's death to fish.

After 18 years of development that saw a surviving population of about 70 breeding pair of Chinook bred back to a fishing population of 3,000, Lostine Chinook are facing obstacles they will not be able to meet.

"Chinook in the lower Imnaha will not progress further than the Imnaha because they are facing 70- to 80-degree water. Those temperatures are lethal to them," said Kyle Bratcher, Wallowa District assistant fish biologist. "Bear Creek is dried up and the Lostine is low."

Commissions team with chefs for promos

By MITCH LIES
For the Capital Press



Courtesy of the Oregon Blueberry Commission

Pro Chefs of Oregon's annual picnic and barbecue competition this year featured a twist: Not the lemon peel sort. Instead of being held in a Portland area park, this year, for the first time, it was held on an Oregon farm and sponsored by Oregon agricultural commissions.

"We just wanted to say thank you to them for all of the hard work they've done at the Bite of Oregon the last several years," said Bryan Ostlund, administrator of the Oregon Blueberry Commission, one of four commodity commissions to sponsor the event. "They just bust their hump. They work hard at that thing."

Pro Chefs of Oregon works in tandem with commodity commissions each summer to sponsor the Oregon Bounty Chef's Table at the Bite of Oregon.

At this year's Bite, scheduled for Aug. 7-9 at Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland, several commodity commissions will be working with the chefs, including the Oregon Blackberry and Raspberry Commission, the Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission, Oregon seafood commissions and the four commissions that sponsored the annual picnic: the Oregon Dairy Products Commission, the Oregon Beef

Council, the Oregon Potato Commission and the Oregon Blueberry Commission.

"I've been working with the chefs at the Bite of Oregon for the last several years," Ostlund said, "and I've been completely impressed with how much work they do on our behalf. They are in there year in and year out volunteering their time to put a public face to Oregon agriculture."

"We absolutely appreciate what they do," he said. "So we decided to do something special."

Gingerich Farms in Canby hosted the picnic, held July 11, while the Oregon Beef Council supplied beef. Cheeses were provided by the Oregon Dairy Products Commission and potatoes and blueberries were provided by their respective commissions.

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