

Oregon



A male bald eagle rests at a wildlife rehabilitation center in Portland. It was captured June 28 near Gaston, Ore. An examination showed it had been shot. Rewards totaling \$7,500 are being offered for the arrest and conviction of the person responsible.

Reward offered in shooting of bald eagle

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Rewards totaling \$7,500 are offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who shot a bald eagle near Gaston, Ore., in late June.

The eagle was captured by an Oregon State Police trooper June 28 and taken to the Portland Audubon's wildlife rehabilitation center in Portland. It had been reported injured the previous week but was still able to fly at that point and wasn't caught. The trooper later returned to the area and caught the eagle after following it through brush, a marsh and into a field. The bird was found near Old Highway 47 and Looking



Courtesy of Portland Audubon
A bullet wound sustained by a bald eagle. It's being treated at an animal rehabilitation center in Portland but its longterm prognosis is unknown.

Glass Drive north of Gaston, a small community southwest of Portland.

The male eagle appears

to have been shot in its right shoulder. The bird is in a rehabilitation flight cage at the care center; its longterm prognosis is not known at this point, a center spokeswoman said.

Although no longer on the endangered species list, bald eagles remain protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. It's illegal to hunt, capture, injure or kill them. The crime is punishable by up to a \$5,000 fine and a year in jail.

The Animal League Defense Fund has posted a \$5,000 reward in the case, and Portland Audubon added \$1,500 to the fund. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a \$1,000 reward.

Toxic tansy ragwort makes a comeback in W. Oregon

By ALIYA HALL
Capital Press

The toxic weed tansy ragwort has spread this year around Western Oregon with particularly large populations in Marion and Clackamas counties.

The outbreak is the worst Sam Leininger, WeedWise program manager, has seen in the program's eight years of operation. WeedWise began in 2008 to "support more effective management of invasive weeds in Clackamas County," according to its website.

Tansy is dangerous to humans and livestock because of a poisonous alkaloid in the plant's tissue that causes liver damage when eaten. Signs of poisoning are consistent with liver failure, said Dr. Charles Estill, Oregon State University Extension veterinary agent.

"Horses get jaundiced, lethargic, slow, depressed, stop chewing in the middle of eating and wandering — some die from the wandering, from either walking off a cliff or walking into a pond and drowning," said Estill.

While grazing animals generally avoid eating tansy, heavily infested pastures or hay contaminated with the weed can make it nearly impossible for the animals to avoid consumption. If tansy is more than 5 percent of the plants in a pasture, it creates an opportunity for toxicity, Estill said.

Young animals are especially susceptible because "they have different physiology or not as much life experience," he said, as well as being less discriminating in what they eat.

Tansy can take anywhere from two weeks to six months to kill an animal. No treatment is available.

"(An animal) can ingest it now and die at Christmastime," Estill said. Most cases are suspected and not confirmed.

There haven't been any reported cases so far this year of



Courtesy of Wash. Noxious Weed Control Board

Tansy ragwort, also known as stinking willie and staggerwort, has increased this year in parts of Oregon's Willamette Valley. The alkaloid in the plant causes toxicity to cattle, horses and humans.

animals killed by tansy consumption, but it is too early in the year to know, said Dr. Morrie Craig, professor of toxicology at Oregon State's veterinarian research laboratory.

Unlike horses and cattle, sheep have ruminal microbes in their stomach that can eat the alkaloids that the tansy produces. Craig said research is underway to take advantage of these ruminal microbes.

"We're thinking we're going to try a way to capsule ruminal microbes, and make a probiotic out of it that you can give to a cow," Craig said, "and then it'll have the microbes in its stomach to break it down."

Tansy ragwort is identifiable by its flat yellow flowers at the top of the plant. The stems are green — occasionally with a reddish tinge — and the leaves are ruffled and dark green, according to WeedWise. At maturity, the plant can grow up to 6 feet tall and produce up to 200,000 seeds that remain in the soil for more than 10 years.

The infestation is most likely caused by the cool, wet and mild springs that Oregon has had for the past two years, Leininger said. The conditions have undermined biological controls such as the Cinnabar moth and flea beetle, which

during the larval stage eat the roots of the plant. They were introduced from 1960 to 1971 by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. By the mid-1980s cattle deaths by tansy had been reduced by more than 90 percent, a report from the ODA said.

Tim Butler, manager of ODA's Noxious Weed Control Program, explained that biological controls work on a cycle with the plant.

"With a crash in the tansy population we have the mirror image of the bio-controls dropping off. Then when the (tansy) comes back there will be a lag time for the fleas to come back," he said. "People who want to get more bio-controls, we can't supply anything that's going to speed up the natural process. It won't make a significant difference."

At this point, it's too late to spray the weeds with herbicide, he said.

"Spraying won't do anything. The time to spray is early spring when it's a rosette, or in fall after the rain," Butler said.

Mowing the tansy when it's in full bloom isn't a solution, either, because it can cause plants to become short-lived perennials, and grow back next year.

However, Butler understands the motivation behind mowing, whether it's to appease neighbors or make the pastures look better.

WeedWise encourages removing the seed heads and putting them into bags to keep seeds from spreading. If there is a concern about exposure to cattle and horses, Leininger said to remove the tansy from the field.

"Some (people) want to pull it and leave it, but the plant's potability can increase in its wilt phase," Leininger said. "You have to understand it's a big task, but preventing seeding is the ideal scenario."

ODFW confirms wolf attack on calf

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

A 250-pound calf found with numerous bites and scrapes was attacked by a wolf, an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife investigation confirmed.

A rancher noticed the injuries July 21 while moving cattle on a public grazing allot-

ment in the Harl Butte area of Willowa County, in northeast Oregon. The cow and calf pair were hauled back to the home ranch. ODFW was notified and investigated the following day.

The calf had multiple bites and scrapes on its back legs, including one open wound that was 4 inches long and 3 inches wide. The size, location and direction of the bites

were "consistent with common attack points for wolves," according to an ODFW report.

The calf was alert and responsive, according to the report. The injuries were estimated to be about seven days old. Tracking collar data showed a wolf designated OR-50 was in the grazing area during the time the attack is thought to have occurred.

Transload facility could speed onion delivery, open markets

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — A planned rail transload facility in Oregon's Malheur County could reduce transportation costs for onion shippers in the region but, perhaps more importantly, it could also speed up delivery times and open up new markets.

Speeding up the time it takes the Spanish bulb onions grown here to reach markets on the East Coast would be the main advantage of a transload facility, said Eddie Rodriguez, director of sales for Partners Produce, one of 30 onion shippers in the Treasure Valley of Idaho and Oregon.

"Getting our product to the market sooner is the biggest benefit to us," he said.

Because onions produced here and shipped by rail to the East Coast have to first be trucked West to the nearest transload facility in Wallula, Wash., before beginning their journey east, Washington onion shippers beat their Idaho and Oregon competitors to the market at every turn, Rodriguez said.

"Because we'll be able to get to the market sooner, that will open up more markets for us," he said of the planned transload facility, which would be built near Ontario or Nyssa.

The Oregon Legislature's recently passed \$5.3 billion transportation bill includes \$26 million for the transload facility, which will allow shipping containers to be transferred between truck and rail.

Freight rates change constantly and are impacted by many factors, but "it is fair to estimate a transload facility (here) would provide an avenue to ship more onion volume via rail out of our growing region at a cost savings versus trucking, and faster than traditional rail service," said Tiffany Cruickshank, transportation manager



Sean Ellis/Capital Press File

An onion field is shown in this photo taken outside Ontario, Ore. Producers say a planned rail transload facility in Malheur County will speed delivery and possibly open new markets.

for Snake River Produce.

In an email, she told Capital Press that the facility would be "transformational for our area and will ideally allow Snake River Produce and other area shippers to maintain and improve competitiveness, reduce transportation costs and grow business throughout the rail network."

Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, vice-co-chairman of the 14-member committee that put the transportation bill together, told onion growers and shippers last week that the money for the transload facility could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and he said it's critical for the community to do it right.

He said the facility could benefit a lot of farm commodities grown in the region but that it would focus on the onion industry.

The legislation that provides the \$26 million for the facility requires the community to submit a plan to the Oregon Transportation Commission by Jan. 1, 2020, that shows how it intends to spend the money.

One of the most important first steps is for the onion industry to form a committee that can offer significant input on the plan and help guide its formation, Bentz said.

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