

Outdoor Rec / Sports

With spring comes squirrels



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

It seems a bit premature to comment on the weather becoming warmer and the ground becoming softer (and muddier), especially since we're supposed to have around a month and a half more of the winter season, at least according to Punxsutawney Phil, but I don't think the squirrels received that memo.

I see them running around with excitement in significant numbers, as if they were mysteriously brought back to life from the slumber of their winter vacation homes underground, to feast on what appears to be not much to feast on quite yet.

It certainly isn't the first time they've been out and about this early, and in years past, they've been out even earlier.

I did make the mistake

in the past of waiting too long to begin attempting to help control the population of these little critters, the results of which were hay fields that resembled Swiss cheese, with the networks of tunnels suddenly appearing out of nowhere.

Add to this the badger holes, or ankle-breakers, and the fun really begins.

Using a .22 caliber rifle to thin the squirrel population isn't everybody's cup of tea, but it is common practice, and it is fairly inexpensive, assuming you can find (or have already found) boxes of .22s that don't cost an arm and a leg.

I found some bricks (500-round boxes) last year, so I'm fairly well prepared to go on the hunt. For a while, anyway.

Squirrels are small targets, but not hard to hit, and since they aren't exactly the brightest bulbs in the pack, I've always marveled at how one can stand looking straight at you the second a buddy or two of his is taken down.

I suppose the fact that a lot of them have no idea what's going on, and they may be brand new to the world to start with, might have something to do with it.

I prefer a bolt-action .22 rifle myself, because it just feels better than a semi-automatic rifle to me. And I'm used to it. As far as ammunition goes, well, pretty much whatever I can find in that caliber is what I use. You can't be too picky these days with .22s.

My thoughts on the caliber would follow the "never use a small-caliber bullet on a large-caliber animal" philosophy, so I haven't expected miracles from it, though I did try to shoot a badger once with the rifle from some distance. I heard a THUMP, and the badger fell (or jumped) down into his hole, but I wasn't that optimistic about my chances of success. I never saw him after that. I did manage to take down a badger with a .22 pistol last fall, but the range was shorter, and I was lucky he emerged from the same hole after he ran down into it. They are deceptively quick on their feet.

Sometimes, a person can be out all day long and shoot and shoot, without seemingly making a dent in the population of

squirrels. But, it is a good, effective method, I believe, and something that can give the younger hunters a chance to practice shooting their skills. The recoil and noise level are naturally much less than what they'd be with a larger caliber rifle, so it's a good starting point to fine-tuning trigger control, breathing, shooting accuracy, etc.

I personally think it's a lot of fun also, and it helps me keep my skills sharp. You can never have too much practice or experience.

Case in point, I had an odd encounter when I was younger, with an albino squirrel in a hay field on the family ranch. I guess you could call it "squirrel fever," because as calm and accurate with the other "normal" squirrels as I was, this one had me excited and shaking, and in that excitement, I missed him. My grandfather snapped his fingers and cursed a little, because he wanted us to be able to show everyone else that rare squirrel, but he didn't make much of a fuss over it.

Now that I'm, um, older, I still need plenty of practice to keep the skills finely tuned. Use them or lose them, I like to think. Good luck with your adventures.

Wrestlers have marathon week

Submitted by Brandon Young

We had another marathon week with our La Grande/Payette duals on Thursday night, our middle school tournament on Friday in Baker, and then traveled to Homedale for a dual tournament. Thursday the Bulldogs went 2-0 at home. The team finished the day with 2nd place at Homedale and a 4-1 record on the day. It was a team effort as we went up against very physical teams.

Thursday in Baker: Baker 37, La Grande 25; Baker 50, Payette 18.

The Bulldogs were ready to defend their home on Thursday night. We went into the dual with the expectation that we were going to win. La Grande had the same mentality, which made for a great dual! It was neck and neck all the way to the end. It was probably the most intense dual I have ever been in. Our team was excited, as was La Grande, and the crowd was going wild!

We started the dual at 106lbs. Lagrande pulled a fast one and bumped their returning state champion Cole Rohan up to wrestled Hays at 113lbs. The score was 2-2 after the first period and then Rohan began to build his lead and won 14-4. La Grande 4, Baker 0.

Next up was James AhHee vs Corey Isaacson. AhHee lost a major decision a year ago to Isaacson in the dual. This time it was all AhHee who dominated the match with a 6-2 victory. La Grande 4, Baker 3.

Next up was Senior Logan Valentine vs Chance Frederick. The match was tied at 6 going into the third period with neither wrestler being able to secure a takedown, which sent them into overtime. Valentine nearly scored a takedown in overtime, but they went out of bounds. On the next flurry Frederick was able to get the 2 pts to secure the win 8-6. La Grande 7, Baker 3.

At 132 pounds Skylar Jones of Lagrande pinned Nick Blair of Baker. La Grande 13, Baker 3.

Next up was Marco Vela vs Hakan Strommer. Marco built a 7-1 lead but was unable to earn any more points or secure a much needed fall for the team. He won by minor decision. La Grande 13, Baker 6.

Sean Stanford vs Elijah Livingston was another one of the more exciting matches of the night. It was an absolute war. The score entering the final round was Stanford 9, Livingston 10. In the final round Stanford was able to secure two takedowns and Livingston earned 1 point for an escape to give Stanford the win 14-11. La Grande 13, Baker 9.

Next up was Dylan Feldmeier and Miller Thurman at 152 pounds. Feldmeier set the pace for the match and wrestled a great match earning the much needed extra team point winning 19-10 which is a major decision and 4 team points to tie the team race 13 to 13.

Next, La Grande's Seth Devinney was up against freshmen Derritt Gwynn. Devinney blew his knee out at the beginning of the season, but was given consent to compete. Devinney is a returning state placer and would be pretty tough on one leg! We told the kids that if Devinney walked out on the mat we were going to forfeit and bump our whole lineup for the win. Devinney reported to the mat and we bumped Gwynn to 170, Harper to 182, and Peter Baker to 195. After forfeiting to La Grande at 160 the score was La Grande 19, Baker 13. Gwynn and Harper then accepted forfeits from LaGrande at 170 and 182, giving Baker the lead 25-19.

As I mentioned previously in the season, when the team is placed in team captain Peter Baker's hands I have no doubt about what is going to happen. Despite weighing in at 173 pounds which technically made Peter a 182 pounder, and then by rules you can bump him one weight class higher than what he weighs. So Peter was giving up about 20 lbs. He faced Trent Shaffer and went all out. Peter build a 4-0 lead in the first round and then earned the fall in the third round to put Baker up 31-19. But a Baker forfeit put La Grande within reach at 220 lbs. making the score Baker 31, La Grande 25.

If La Grande's heavy weight Tanner Jones could secure a fall, La Grande would have been able to tie the dual 31-31. But, Will Goodwin had something to say about that. The score was tied 2-2 in the first period. In the 2nd round Goodwin earned the fall over Jones to seal the Baker victory for a final score of Baker 37, La Grande 25.

The Bulldogs are currently in 2nd place to Mac-Hi in the GOL League Standings. Mac-Hi was able to slip past Ontario in a close dual the other night which could have placed the Bulldogs in 1st. Mac-Hi still has to get past La Grande and if it's anything like our dual it should be a good one! This is another one of only a handful of times that Baker has ever beat La Grande in 35 years!

Baker 42, Payette 21; Baker 51, Union/Pine Eagle 12 Baker 20, Vale 50; Baker 36, Parma 30; Baker 36, Homedale 27.

The Parma and Homedale matches each came down to the last matches of the dual. Both times freshman Sam Harper sealed the win for the Bulldogs. Against Parma we were tied 30-30, but Parma had a forfeit at 170, which put Baker up 36-30. Then against Homedale the score was Baker 30, Homedale 27 going into Sam Harper's match. He went after Houser of Homedale. He knew what he had to do and that it was all up to him at that point. Prior to the dual we talked to him that this situation could come up. He was prepared and took on the challenge for the team! Jace Hays pinned Homedale's returning state champion Andy Montes. Hays had built a 7-1 lead and then caught Montes on his back for the fall. Peter Baker also defeated a very tough opponent from Union, Chad Witty. Logan Valentine defeated Taran Hardwick of Union by a 3-2 decision. Logan wrestled a very smart match!

The Bulldogs are now 9-6 on the season and 2-1 in the GOL. Next week we dual Pendleton and Riverside in Pendleton on Wednesday and then half of our team will travel to Heppner on Saturday for a tournament. The rest of the team will try and recuperate so they are 100% for regionals in two weeks.

Pacific Northwest Sportsman's show is this weekend

The nation's second largest sportsmen's show returns for its 40th year to the Portland Expo Center, February 4-8.

The 2015 Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show and Sport Fishing Boat Show®, presented by Federal Premium Ammunition and Bushnell, is known as "The Big One" because this family-friendly tradition and one-of-a-kind shopping experience has more than 800 exhibitors for five days of outdoor sporting excitement.

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with in demand guides, outfitters, and representatives from leading hunting and fishing lodges and resorts.

Plus, enjoy unparalleled features including the return of the world's only live action Indoor Steelhead River, the exciting annual Head and Horns Competition, the beloved Free Kids' Trout Pond and the popular Camp Cooking Demonstrations.

This year close to 1000 exhibitors, top northwest and national outdoor ex-

perts will fill the Portland Expo Center wall-to-wall with outdoor gear and equipment, including the latest new products from manufacturers.

Enjoy free demonstrations, seminars and interactive displays, and valuable knowledge from outdoor enthusiasts of every kind. Plus, connect with guides, outfitters and representatives from leading hunting and fishing lodges from exciting locations throughout the Northwest and around the world.

The show is Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, February 4, 5, 6 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.; Saturday, February 7, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.; Sunday, February 8 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. at the Portland Expo Center 2060 N. Marine Drive Portland, Oregon 97217.

Admission is Adults \$12 Two-day Pass \$18, Juniors (ages 6 to 16) \$5, Ages 5 and under free.

\$2 discount coupons are available at Baxter Auto Supply, Les Schwab and Bi-Mart stores, or for download from www.thesportshows.com.

Or, use your Fred Meyer Rewards Card at the show to receive a \$2 discount on weekday admission and a \$1 discount on the weekend.

Parking at Portland Expo Center is \$8 per space, per entry without in and out privileges.

Carpools of three or more are \$7. Off-site parking at Portland International Raceway and Portland Meadows is \$6 and includes free shuttle service to the show.

For more information, please visit www.thesportshows.com.

— RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS —

Each week The Baker County Press will include a list—all anonymous, of course—of the good deeds and random acts of kindness people from around the area have witnessed. To include something you've seen or experienced, email News@TheBakerCoun-

tyPress.com with "Random Acts of Kindness" in the subject line. We'll be sure to include your story.

- I saw the story all over Baker County Classifieds where dozens of people jumped in to give a stranded lady rides from Union

County to Baker County and then to Malheur County after she missed her bus. She was trying to get to her sick child and wasn't even dressed for the weather when the bus took off without her. People can be very kind when they want to be.

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