

Outdoor Rec / Sports

All this talk about cougars ...



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

I've noticed quite a bit of talk lately about cougar activity in our humble neck of the woods, so, I thought I'd jump into the conversation in order to become more educated about the situation, and to possibly pass on any wisdom I might have gained from others in the know.

We've all heard about the reported sightings by locals Kenneth Clement and Jennifer Watkins last week, on the west side of Highway 7, on the south end of town, so I won't repeat the major details there.

I am glad to note that people, especially parents, seem to be more cognizant lately concerning their surroundings. No problem understanding the heightened awareness there, since the idea of a cougar in town attacking a child, a pet, livestock, deer, an adult—take your pick—doesn't really give one that warm, fuzzy feeling.

As sort of a New Year's Day "gift" to myself, I purchased a hunting license, along with two cougar tags, with the ambitious intention of actually filling

them this year, as long as the cougars make an attempt to cooperate to the fullest extent possible. I really wish their hides were bright orange or something, but I don't see that happening soon.

Anyway, getting to my point, they aren't a protected species,

and they can be hunted, though there are regulations and laws that need to be followed in order to do so. Even with a tag, shooting at a cougar within City limits is a big no-no unless there's an imminent threat, and you'd be having a chat afterward with local law enforcement, and the folks from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Whether an imminent threat or actual planned mini-safari, you wouldn't be able to keep the cougar.

The sightings prompted me to ask Brian Ratliff, ODFW Biologist located in the Baker City office, about the elusive—or, maybe, not so elusive—cat. He said, "I see females regularly barely over 70 pounds." Even males, normally larger, rarely peak over 100 pounds, he said. "A 70-pound male looks exactly the same as a 70-pound female, except a male's head may be more block-shaped, and there may be more muscle mass. But, coloration—identical. I couldn't tell you from

100 yards if I was looking at a 70-pound male, or a 70-pound female."

"Cats don't sniff around," said Ratliff. "They're visual predators, and they don't use their sense of smell for hunting." Ratliff said he hasn't received reports of missing cats, dogs, deer carcasses, etc. yet. He said that considering the evidence from the sightings, it's difficult to determine exactly what the cougar situation looks like, and whether one is regularly visiting the area.

"Where human safety is concerned, they're not relocated," he said, explaining that if a cougar were to stay around town, it would have to be euthanized because it would continue to stay here otherwise. "In no way, shape or form are we low in cougar numbers," he said, so that wouldn't be an issue. In fact, their numbers are growing.

Ratliff said that placing a bucket or something else over any tracks seen can help to preserve them, so they can be investigated later on, and calling local law enforcement about a sighting is exactly the right thing to do, since human safety is a priority.

I wondered about the increase in the number of deer within our city and others, because they're one of a number of prey for cougars (what isn't?), and Ratliff said that it's easy to see why deer would hang around, with the available food sources, whether purposely supplied or not. The problem is, besides the potential for cougars to also

stick around, deer gathered together at the same feeding spots regularly can lead to spread of disease.

"If you stack your yard full of deer intentionally, you're asking for an animal that preys on deer to come there," he said. The feeding sites that ODFW operates involves testing for diseases, said Ratliff, so, that's not an issue there. Some people like to feed deer and have them stick around, and some don't, but he noted to keep in mind, there are potential issues to consider.

Police Chief Wyn Lohner said, "Based on the sightings, we're convinced that it's real. It's been a while since we've had a sighting in town. We haven't had any more sightings since then (last Thursday), that I'm aware of."

A cougar was euthanized within City limits before, but that was 12 years ago. He said a potential cougar threat and report are treated very seriously, and, "A cougar is a predator, and whether a predator is a human or an animal, we see it as a threat, and we'll do what we need to."

"We do have reason to believe a cougar is living in that area of town, and just be cautious with kids and pets, and if there are missing pets, or remains of a deer are seen, let us know."

He said he's also pleased to see the increase in awareness from community members, and human safety is the highest priority. I agree. Good luck with your adventures.

Inland Empire Short Course Championship

Submitted by Noel Scott

Baker Swim Team and La Grande Swim Club attended the Inland Empire Short Course Championships on February 27- March 1. BST sent 8 athletes, LGSC had 14 attend.

There were 361 total swimmers representing 17 teams from Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Justin Miller and Riana Scott from Baker City swam for LGSC. The following are their results:

Girls 13-14 500 Yard Free 6 Riana Scott 13 LGSC-IE 5:33.45
Boys 13-14 500 Yard Free 12 Justin Miller 14 LGSC-IE 5:25.38
Boys 13-14 200 Yard IM 6 Justin Miller 14 LGSC-IE 2:15.16
Girls 14&U 400 Yard Medley Relay 5 LGSC-IE A 4:29.99 Romayne Ricker 13 Riana Scott 13 Grace Knutsen 13 Kennedy Kruse 13
Girls 13-14 50 Yard Free 9 Riana Scott 13 LGSC-IE 26.88
Boys 13-14 50 Yard Free 9 Justin Miller 14 LGSC-IE 25.85
Girls 13-14 100 Yard Breast 10 Riana Scott 13 LGSC-IE 1:16.29
Girls 13-14 100 Yard Back 10 Riana Scott 13 LGSC-IE 1:07.17
Boys 13-14 100 Yard Back 8 Justin Miller 14 LGSC-IE 1:01.95
Girls 13-14 200 Yard Back 6 Riana Scott 13 LGSC-IE 2:21.35
Boys 13-14 200 Yard Back 6 Justin Miller 14 LGSC-IE 2:12.20
Girls 14&U 400 Yard Free Relay 4 LGSC-IE A 4:00.81 Grace Knutsen 13 Kennedy Kruse 13 Romayne Ricker 13 Riana Scott 13
Girls 13-14 100 Yard Free 8 Riana Scott 13 LGSC-IE 58.54
Boys 13-14 100 Yard Free 11 Justin Miller 14 LGSC-IE 56.26
The BST results will be coming from their coach, if you have not already received them. Thank you for including these kids results.

52nd Annual Middle School Basketball Tournament held in Huntington

By Eileen Driver
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The 52nd Annual Middle School Basketball Tournament was held Friday and Saturday, February 27th & 28th, at Huntington K-12 School. The school puts on this tournament annually to provide an opportunity for athletic competition, social development and recreation for the children of small schools in the region.

Eight schools participated this year in both boys and girls basketball competitions with a double elimination. The two-day event was held in the Huntington School gym and was entered into by the Huntington Panthers coached by Elizabeth Williams and Amy Jones, Adrian Antelopes coached by Nolan Shira, Nathan Bayes and LaDawn Bayes,

Harper Hornets coached by Scott Talbot and Vanessa Lovell, Prairie City Panthers coached by Ryan Gerry and Billy Colson, Cove Leopards coached by Jason Gorham, Jordan Valley Colts coached by Mike Eiguren, Ryan Bruce, Silas Skinner and Todd Gluch, Willow Creek Warriors coached by Todd Gregory, Austin Gregory, Brad Jacobs, Bill Jacobs and Michael McGourty and the Powder Valley Badgers coached by Molly Smith and Betsy Nedrow.

After many hard-won battles the final boys basketball game was played by the Powder Valley Badgers and the Prairie City Panthers. The game was intense the entire time with both teams doing their best to not let the other side gain an edge. The first half ended with Prairie City having a one-basket

lead with a 15-13 score.

The second half had even more back and forth action culminating in a score of 25-25 with 35 seconds to go in the game. Everyone held their breath when the end of game buzzer sounded with a 3 point shot in the air, shot by #10 Omar Benites and let out a loud cheer when it made the basket ending the game with a score of 28-25 making the Powder Valley Badgers the tournament Boy's Champions.

The final girls basketball game was played by the Jordan Valley Colts and the Harper Hornets.

Although the Hornets put up a good fight it just wasn't their day, and the Colts won by a landslide with a final score of 56 to 14 making the Jordan Valley Colts the tournament Girl's Champions.

Four trophies are given



Eileen Driver / The Baker County Press

Final boy's game between powder valley badgers and prairie city Panthers

out in both the boys and girls categories—1st, 2nd, 3rd, and Consolation, as well as a coveted Sportsmanship Trophy for the school who displayed the best overall spirit and respect for other teams and referees, and 20 All-Star Awards. 10 boys and 10 girls, are given by opposing coaches for most valuable players in the games. Scott Bullock, Huntington School Superintendent / Principal, thanked all the schools and students for participating, the teachers and coaches for the donation of their time, the Lion's Club and Huntington residents for volunteering to man the entry booths and had the pleasure of handing out the trophies and awards.

Here's the winning lineup:
Boy's Basketball

1st Powder Valley Badgers
2nd Prairie City Panthers
3rd Harper Hornets
Consolation Jordan Valley Colts
Girl's Basketball
1st Jordan Valley Colts
2nd Harper Hornets
3rd Prairie City Panthers
Consolation Powder Valley Badgers
Sportsmanship Trophy Willow Creek Warriors
All-Star Awards - Girls
Regann Skinner #2 Jordan Valley Colts
Taylor Warn #4 Jordan Valley Colts
Alexis Wilson #11 Harper Hornets
Kassie Jordan #34 Harper Hornets
Sadey Speelmon #4 Adrian Antelopes
Ashley Jacobs #1 Willow Creek Warriors
Raven Maloy #32 Prairie City Panthers

Logan Nedrow #13 Powder Valley Badgers
Rebekah Farrell #2 Cove Leopards
Tyalinn Harrison #21 Huntington Panthers
All-Star Awards Boy's
Omar Benites #10 Powder Valley Badgers
Marshall Baldwin #34 Powder Valley Badgers
Levi Burke #21 Prairie City Panthers
Lucas McKinley #22 Prairie City Panthers
Luke Ekstrom #32 Willow Creek Warriors
Morgan Butler #1 Harper Hornets
Hunter Youngblood #33 Cove Leopards
Zeke Quintero #13 Jordan Valley Colts
Thomas Finding #30 Adrian Antelopes
Nolan Nantz #51 Huntington Panthers

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