

Local

Birds and Burns

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“Many species of plants and animals actually increase in abundance, following high-severity fire, and, some species even depend on it,” she said.

She mentioned that there were several studies showcasing post-fire benefits, on wildlife, soil, vegetation, etc.

She explained the term severe fire: burns at mixed or high intensity, where the mortality of the overstory is often 100%, but, sometimes, as low as 75%.

There is widespread mortality of the existing vegetation, that results in a forest structure that is no longer dominated by live trees, but, by herbs, shrubs, or, dead trees or snags, she said.

Moderate- (or mixed) intensity fire includes a mortality of 25%, and, low-intensity includes a mortality of generally less than 25%, as in prescribed fires.

She explained that some species depend on dense forest canopies, and, they wouldn't necessarily be present without that, and, others use structures such as downed timber.

This stand structure—the vertical and horizontal components of the forest, including trees, shrubs, and vegetation—for many species, determines, ulti-

mately, which species are present in an area, she said. A high-severity fire affects bird habitat in three major ways, Ratliff said: it alters the understory and the overstory structure; it creates and destroys downed debris; and, it creates and destroys snags, or dead trees.

Ratliff said that approximately 93 different species of wildlife utilize snags in various stages of decay, which she described. The most favored snag species are Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, and, Quaking Aspen.

Softwood trees, such as Fir, tend to make better food-foraging trees, while hardwood trees are sometimes better for nesting cavities, she said.

The different parts of the snags, such as the perch site, the outer bark, the inner bark, and the space between the bark and the trunk, provide various hiding and foraging opportunities for different species, she said.

She described different species of primary and secondary cavity nesters (woodpeckers, for example, who initially use the nesting areas, and, ones who utilize the nests after that), naming the Bluebird as the most famous secondary cavity nester.

Some studies Ratliff mentioned included interesting results, she said, including dramatic increases in populations of bird species, post-fire.

A couple of key points she made: the White-Headed Woodpecker prefers more of an open canopy, residing in an area for years after a fire; and, the Black-Backed Woodpecker is dependant on a dense forest, and, is the “poster child” for a burned forest, as Ratliff put it, because,

this species has a strong affinity for, and is considered a “specialist” of, severely-burned habitat, having been the subject of many studies, the species’ distribution matching closely the historical footprint of severe fire.

She said the Black-Backed Woodpecker is sensitive to salvage logging activities, and, the species becomes the focal point when discussing the effects of said logging.

She listed some recommended strategies for post-fire habitat management, including: managing smaller, burned areas, and, substantial portions of larger fires, exclusively for post-fire resources; retaining patches of high-severity burn, adjacent to intact, green forest patches; and, considering the landscape context (watershed, forest, etc.), and, the availability of different habitat types.

Ratliff paused after the partial list, and, said, “And, that’s pretty much what my job is—considering that landscape context, and, making sure that we’re providing adequate amounts of each type of habitat.”

She continued with the list of strategies: considering the area of a fire that burned in high-severity, as opposed to the area of the entire fire, when determining what percentage of the area to salvage log; whenever possible, restricting activities that deplete breeding bird nests and the young, to the non-breeding season; retaining high-severity burned habitat in locations with higher densities of large-diameter trees; retaining high-severity patches of areas where pre-fire snags are abundant; retaining some snags in salvage areas in dense clumps; providing a range

of snags conditions, from heavily decayed, to recently dead, in order to ensure a longer lasting source of snags; retaining decaying snags of all species with broken tops; consider retaining smaller snags; and, most importantly, Ratliff said, considering post-fire habitat as an important component of the ecosystem, because, it maintains biological diversity.

She ended the presentation with a slide that included non-bird species, as she explained that other species, in addition to birds, benefit from snags.

Upon the conclusion of Ratliff’s presentation, she asked if there were any questions from attendees.

Dawn Bishop said, “You said the Black-Backed (Woodpecker) would probably come back. Will it be this coming spring?”

Ratliff said, “Yeah, I would expect so.”

Julianne Williams said, “Do birds like owls move out of the fires, into neighboring areas?”

Ratliff said, “I guess it depends on the species of owl. If it was a Great Grey Owl, it probably wouldn’t stay in the area. Some owls will actually use cavities that are created by fire snags.”

Marshall McComb, Chair of the Baker County Democrats, said, “It’s not really a question, but, you know, it’s just sort of like you’re saying, it puts a whole different flavor on how you view this burned landscape. An uninformed person would assume that it’s a loss, or, a great opportunity to get in their with chainsaws, but, you’ve given us a much better indication of what really makes it a part of the total ecosystem.”

Ratliff said, “It is kind of that initial reaction. Even



Photo courtesy of USFWS.

The White-Headed woodpecker prefers an open canopy, said Ratliff.

I had that reaction going out there, when it’s charred white, before anything even comes back, because, I think we’ve really been trained that way our entire lives, to look at it that way. But then, even in October, I was out there, and, there was already green-up occurring, so, the rejuvenation really does take place pretty quickly.”

Fouty asked how many present are birders. There was a significant show of hands, and, she asked Ratliff about opportunities for birders to assist the USFS and public with tracking patterns of birds. Ratliff responded by mentioning the internet site, eBird.org, a “...real-time, online checklist program...” that has “...revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds,” according to the site. The site was

launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Wildlife Biologist Brian Ratliff, Jamie’s husband, attended the presentation with the couple’s three-year-old son, Carson.

Brian said, post-presentation, about salvage logging, “That’s the downside of dealing with an agency; with an agency, like the Forest Service, they say, ‘We’re not going to cut that,’ but, then, they don’t get into the details of exactly why they’re going to cut right there. Those (as outlined in the presentation) are some of the details why. It’s just a part of it. People just hear, ‘No,’ but, there’s a reason why they’re doing it there, and not here.”

NOTICE

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**CASE #
RECEIPT #
ITEM
DESCRIPTION**

P201200329 14320 - 4 Boy's BMX Solo Plus Bicycle	P201400022 16642 - 1 Black and Yellow Huffly Bicycle	P201400032 14958 - 1 Gray Woman's Bicycle	P201201641 15251 - 1 Red Magna Exciter Bicycle	P201201641 15251 - 2 Blue Huffly Bicycle	P201300866 15912 - 6 Black Bicycle with Blue Handle Bars	P201300966 15955 - 1 Purple Bicycle	P201301510 16216 - 1 White Hyper 26 Inspire Bicycle	P201401180 16476 - 1 Black, Next, Cruiser style Bicycle	P201500228 16483 - 1 Purple, Roadmaster Woman's Mountain Bicycle	P201500773 16488 - 1 Blue, Mongoose, XR150 Men's Mountain Bicycle	P201401326 17671 - 2 Black Bicycle with Zebra Tape	P201401326 17671 - 3 Black Bicycle with Green Grips	P201500268 16484 - 1 Gray Cosco Stroller	P201401352 17732 - 2 Kid's Dart Pacific BMX Bicycle	P201401354 17734 - 1 Red Roadmaster Mountain Bicycle	P201401457 17795 - 1 Blue Huffly BMX Style Bicycle	P201500188 18316 - 1 Black with Orange Huffly Bicycle	P201500270 18355 - 1 Pink Schwinn Girl's Mountain Bicycle	P201500484 18558 - 1 Blue Kent Girl's Bicycle	P201500546 18591 - 5 Silver Roadmaster Men's Bicycle	P201500558 18595 - 1 Purple, Roadmaster Woman's Cruiser Bicycle	Blue DXR Mountain Bicycle	P201501747 18631 - 2 Yellow JC Penney Bicycle	P201501436 18748 - 1 Teal KHS Montana Crest Woman's Bicycle	P201300966 15955 - 2 Hammer with Axe type end (Shingle Hammer)	P201400749 17307 - 2 Silver Zebco Fishing Pole and Reel	P201400749 17307 - 3 Eddie Bauer Backpack and Clippers	P201501584 16493 - 1 Blue, Woman's Roadmaster Mountain Bicycle	P201501584 16493 - 2 Black, Phillips Cruiser Bicycle	P201501530 19336 - 1 Dark Gray Roadmaster Bicycle	P201501642 19559 - 1 Purple, Roadmaster Woman's Cruiser Bicycle	Red w/Black Trim Backpack with Clothing	P201501665 18513 - 1 Blue Yamaha "Dirt Bike" Motorcycle	P201400798 17344 - 1 Long, Black Skateboard	P201401121 17582 - 1 Black, Targus Roller Case w/Misc. Items	P201400464 16960 - 1 Red Airtech 10 Gallon Air Tank	P20140046 16960 - 3 Magliner Hand Truck	P201400052 16586 - 1 Left and Right Shin Guards, Fox Racing	P201400052 16586 - 2 Two Blue Alpenrose, Plastic Crates	P201300475 15687 - 1 Yellow and Black Live Strong Backpack	P200901390 11660 - 1 9 MM Pistol Magazine	P201201402 12262 - 1 Short Handled, Square Nosed Shovel	P201401077 17556 - 1 Pink and Black FILA	Woman's Tennis Shoes	P201300580 15850 - 3 Green, XXL Columbia Jacket	P201401817 18247 - 1 PVC Pipe with Knife	P201401452 17602 - 2 Purse, Tan with Leather Trim	P201401398 17760 - 1 Black ZTE Smart Phone	P201200121 14176 - 25 Tan and Silver Computer Tower	P201300192 14883 - 1 Black, Collapsible Baton	P201300192 14883 - 2 Jim Frost Pocket Knife	P201401292 17712 - 1 HTC Cellular Phone	P201401127 17583 - 1 Plastic Bag with Clothing	P201400996 17434 - 1 Owl Pendant Necklace	P201401006 17438 Blue Kamry Case with K101	P201200526 11835 - 1 Black and Decker Multi-Head Wrench	P201200712 14565 - 11 Camo Sunglasses	P201201445 15060 - 1 Two boxes of 9 MM Ammunition	P201201445 15060 - 2 Black, Taurus 9 MM Magazine	P201201775 15282 - 1 Blue Ball, PG 8.5	P201400097 16729 - 1 Prescription - Thyroxine	P201400097 16729 - 2 Prescription - Ibuprofen	P201301734 17354 - 1 Poulan Chainsaw	P201301734 17354 - 2 Husqvarna Trimmer	P201301734 17354 - 3 Choker Cable
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