

Outdoor Recreation

Mushing through the snow ...



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

This month marks the 13th year of the West's only Iditarod and Yukon Quest qualifier, a 200-mile adventure, dubbed the Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race, which includes the Wallowa Mountains in its course, and the Fergi Ski Area, nine miles southeast of Joseph, as its starting point.

Slated for Wednesday, January 18, through Saturday, January 21, the event, hosted by Enterprise-based Eagle Cap Extreme (ECX), begins with Vet Checks, at 9 a.m. in Joseph, and at 1 p.m. in Enterprise, on Wednesday. That same day, all are invited to the Musher Potluck, at 6 p.m., held at the Joseph Community Center.

The actual start of the race is on Thursday, January 19, at noon, at the Fergi Ski Area, with the Awards Banquet concluding the event, on Saturday, January 21, at 5:30 p.m., at the Joseph Community Center.

Distances for this year include the 200-mile, 12-Dog Race (the Iditarod and Yukon Quest qualifier); the 100-mile, 8-Dog Race; the 31-mile, 6-Dog Mid-Distance Pot Race; and the

22-mile, 4-6 Dog Junior Race (for 14- to 17-year-old mushers).

Last year, Bret Bruggerman, a dentist from Great Falls, Montana, won the 200-mile race (he'd also won the year before that), running Alaskan Huskies. Laurie

Warren, a mule trainer from Council, Idaho, won the 100-mile race, running Alaskan Huskies. Jane Devlin, a professional dog trainer from Bend, won the 62-mile race, running Siberian Huskies.

This year, the lineup of mushers for the 200-mile race includes John Kuntzler, an energy production field man, from Vernal, Utah, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Bryce Mumford, a U.S. Postal Service Mail Carrier, from Preston, Idaho, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Neal Bowlen, a heavy equipment operator, from Park City, Utah, who will be running Seppala Siberian Huskies; Warren, who won the 100-mile race last year, this year also running Alaskan Huskies; Scott White, a custom home builder, from Snohomish, Washington, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Mark Stamm, a boat repairer and builder, from Riverside, Washington, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; and Clayton Perry, a home center owner and civil engineer, from Power, Montana, who

will be running Alaskan Huskies.

The lineup of mushers for the 100-mile race includes Adam Buch, a grunt, from Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada, who will be running Siberian Huskies; David Bush, a carpenter, from Bend, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Gabe Dunham, a U.S. Forest Service Wildlife Technician, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Dina Lund, a physical therapist, from Okanogan, Washington, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Hugo Antonucci, a retired configuration analyst, from Adin, California, who will be running Alaskan and Siberian Huskies; Karen Ramstead, a dog musher, from Perryvale, Alberta, Canada, who will be running Siberian Huskies; Bino Fowler, an electrician, from Bend, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; and April Cox, a Red Barn General Store clerk, from Adin, California, who will be running Siberian Huskies.

The lineup of mushers for the 31-mile race includes Scott Barber; David Hassilev, a U.S. Coast Guard retiree, and semi-retired IT professional, from Priest River, Idaho, who will be running Alaskan Huskies, and Chinooks; Linda Pierce, from Okanogan, Washington, who will be running Alaskan Huskies; Connie Star, a semi-retiree, and dog sled tour guide, from Cle Elum, Washington, who will be running Siberian and Alaskan Huskies; and Susan Parraga, Mt. Joseph Family Foods Assistant Manager, from Joseph, who will be

running Siberian Huskies, and a "token" Rat Terrier.

The lineup of mushers for the 22-mile race includes Christina Gibson, a dog musher, from Riverside, Washington, who will be running Alaskan Huskies.

The Pot Race's winnings consist entirely of that race's entry fees, divided up as follows: 50% to first place, 30% to second place, and 20% to third place. Other winnings will include: for the 200-mile race, \$1,700 for first place, \$925 for second, \$575 for third, \$300 for fourth, \$200 for fifth, \$150 for sixth, \$75 for seventh through tenth, and \$250 for the best cared-for team; for the 100-mile race, \$850 for first place, \$500 for second, \$300 for third, \$175 for fourth, \$125 for fifth, \$75 for sixth and seventh, \$50 for eighth through tenth, and \$250 for best cared-for team; and for the 31-mile and 22-mile races, 50% of the pot for first place, 30% for second, and 20% for third.

"The Eagle Cap Extreme runs through the rugged Wallowa Mountains in Northeast Oregon. It has been described as challenging, fun, and drop-dead beautiful by participants and fans alike. This all-volunteer race receives high marks for professionalism, and for being very well run. We focus on making the mushers' experience as safe, comfortable, and fun as possible. The mushers and their dogs really love their fans, especially all the school kids that make a special field trip to see the event..." said ECE.

ODFW WEEKLY RECREATION REPORT

NE OREGON VIEWING

BAKER COUNTY

Bighorn sheep can be seen in the Burnt River Canyon west of Durkee or along the Snake River Road south of Richland. The best viewing is in the early morning and late in the evening.

Winter bird species are starting to migrate through the area.

Bald and golden eagles can be seen along the Snake River. Take the Snake River Road between Richland and Huntington.

Early in the morning and late in the afternoon are good times to view wildlife.

Elkhorn Wildlife Area is known for the Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer herds that frequent the area during the winter. When snow covers the ground, ODFW staff feed elk and deer to encourage them to stay in the higher elevations and out of agricultural fields.

There are two good viewing sites. The Anthony Creek site is located about eight miles west of I-84 on North Powder River Lane. From I-84 take the North Powder Exit (Exit 285). About 150 elk can be seen here on any given day. From the overlook on Auburn Road, watch hundreds of elk and mule deer. It is on the south side of Old Auburn Road, which branches off Highway 7 about six miles south of Baker City.

GRANT COUNTY

Bald Eagles are starting to move into the John Day Valley, they can be observed along Hwy 26 between Prairie City and Dayville.

Bighorn sheep may be viewed from the South Fork near the Murderers Creek road. Early mornings are your best chances for catching them out on the rocky outcrops.

UNION COUNTY

Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area

Note: All visitors must have in their possession a free daily permit to access the wildlife area. Permits are available at several self-check-in stations at entry points and parking lots. Wildlife viewers and anglers also need a parking permit to park on the wildlife area. The \$10 daily or \$30 annual permit can be purchased online or at an ODFW office that sells licenses or at a license sales agent. Learn more about ODFW's Wildlife Area Parking Permit Program.

The Tule Lake Unit, including the auto route, is closed to daily access. The area, and the rest of the wildlife area, is open Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and holidays during the pheasant quail and waterfowl hunting seasons. The Glass Hill unit is open 7 days a week to foot and horse traffic only. Visitors are advised to carefully read posted signs and consult the wildlife area administrative rules. Rules that apply to all areas are at the top (at the link), and then scroll down to page 8, #635-008-120, for additional rules specific to Ladd Marsh. Dogs are not permitted within the Wildlife Area, including the Glass Hill Unit, on or off leash except during authorized game bird hunting seasons.

There are numerous quality viewing opportunities from county roads that pass through the area. Binoculars or a spotting scope will help as many animals are best viewed from a distance. As hunting seasons continue, wildlife viewers should be aware of other users and consider avoiding locations where hunters are set up.

Red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks and northern harriers can be seen perched on poles and fences. Great horned owls can often be seen on power poles at dawn or dusk. American kestrels are common throughout the area and are often seen hunting from perch sites. Other raptors using the area include Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, prairie falcons, and both bald and golden eagles.

White-crowned sparrows are present in good numbers and song sparrows are widespread and abundant. Northern shrikes, while not common can be found at various locations on the area.

Nearly all ponds and wetlands are locked in ice. Ducks can be seen using grain fields and in flight to and from feeding and loafing areas off the wildlife area.

Elk and deer have moved to lower elevations. They can often be seen from county roads by glassing the slopes of Glass Hill or across the flats to the east. Use caution to avoid spooking wildlife into roads or highways for their safety and the safety of the traveling public.

UMATILLA COUNTY

Columbia Basin Wildlife Areas

Willow Creek and Coyote Springs Wildlife Areas are both found next to interstate 84 and the Columbia River and have excellent viewing for wetland and riparian obligate bird species. The upland areas are also available for savanna and shrub steppe species of birds. Willow Creek has an ample deer herd and the evidence of beaver activity can be seen on the Willow Creek delta area of the wildlife area.

The Irrigon Wildlife Area holds riparian and wetland habitat and hosts a number of species of birds associated with each habitat. One can see a number of waterfowl and wading bird species in the pothole pond areas. Painted turtles are also common in the pond areas. White pelicans can be commonly found along the Columbia River as well. Geese and ducks are beginning to build along the Columbia River and will be commonly trading back and forth along the river.

Hermiston area

Recently, locals report seeing American robins, black-billed magpies, belted kingfisher, downy woodpecker, bohemian waxwings, northern flickers, white-crowned sparrow and yellow-rumped warbler. Raptors in the area include American kestrel, bald eagles, northern harriers, and red-tailed hawks. Waterfowl seen include American Coot, American wigeon, Canada geese, common merganser, hooded merganser, northern shoveler and snow geese. Shorebirds and other waterbirds observed include American white pelican, Great blue heron, Black-crowned night-heron, ring-billed gull and Western grebe.

Umatilla County Uplands

Fall migration is over and the uplands and forested riparian areas will have a number of wintering birds using those areas.

ELK will be more common in the early morning and late afternoon in mid and lower elevation areas now that wintering conditions are in place. Roads moving upslope from the valley floor to the mountain areas will be best to see these animals.

WHITE-TAILED DEER are common along the foothills of the Blue Mountains and can be seen either early morning or evening in those areas. Mule deer are found in better numbers in the desert and mountain areas.

WALLOWA COUNTY

Common raptors in the open areas of the county in winter are red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, prairie falcons, golden eagles, and occasionally gyrfalcons. Look for bald eagles and ospreys perched in the larger trees along Wallowa Lake shore or on power poles near water in the valley.

Most elk have left the Zumwalt Prairie now and moved onto the breaks above Little Sheep Creek or the Imnaha River. Try driving the Lower Imnaha River Road and looking carefully on slopes west of the river on Long Ridge. These areas are county roads that run through private property, so please respect the landowner's privacy and remain on the county road and park out of the traffic lanes while watching the elk. Once you find a herd, use binoculars or a spotting scope to observe the animals.

The breeding season birds have moved south now, but we have a number of interesting migrants from the north still in the area. Seen recently on Wallowa Lake were Canada geese, mallards, wigeon, mergansers, buffleheads, pied-billed grebes, as well as both Barrow's and common goldeneyes. Other winter migrants include grey-crowned rosy finches that regularly winter on the prairie areas north of Enterprise and a gyrfalcon seen in the Upper Prairie Creek area.

New Oregon BLM director named

Bureau of Land Management veteran Jamie Connell, currently Director of the BLM's Montana/Dakotas State Office, has been named the new Director of the BLM's Oregon/Washington State Office based in Portland, Oregon.

BLM Director Neil Kornze, who announced the appointment today, noted that "Jamie brings extensive experience and a depth of natural resource knowledge with her to her new post.

She understands the challenges of public land management at a time when the American people recognize the scenic, recreational, and economic values of these lands as never before."

Connell, a 31-year BLM veteran, has served since October 2010 as head of the BLM Montana/Dakotas State Office, based in Billings, Montana.

In her new capacity, Connell will oversee more than 16 million acres of public land in Oregon and Washington that comprise a mix of heavily forested lands west of the Cascades and the dry, sagebrush ecosystems of the Great Basin.

These BLM-managed lands support diverse uses, resources, and values, including recreation, wilderness, wildlife, timber harvesting, livestock grazing, wild horses and burros, and mineral extraction.

Connell, a native of Butte, Montana, received

her B.S. in Petroleum Engineering from Montana Tech in 1985, when she began her BLM career as a petroleum engineer in Miles City, Montana. Connell's managerial experience includes stints for the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service in locations across the West, including Great

Falls and Malta, Montana; Boise, Idaho; and the cities of Montrose, Silverthorne, Glenwood Springs, and Grand Junction, all in Colorado.

Connell and her husband John enjoy hiking, skiing, canoeing, upland bird hunting, and fly fishing.



Submitted Photo.
Jamie Connell.

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