

Nifty Tidbits

By CHUCK RIGBY

In 1834 an expedition arrived in Oregon from St. Louis, Mo. It was composed of some fur trappers and clerks who were employed by Nathaniel Wyeth.

He planned on getting rich by trading with the Indians for furs and supplying trappers with their supplies. Hudson Bay Co. quickly undercut his business, and Wyeth did not remain long in Oregon. His 1834 expedition also contained two scientists who wanted to collect plants and animals in the region.

Thomas Nuttall was mainly a botanist who made some new discoveries such as: Pacific Dogwood, *Cornus nuttallii*. His associate on the trip was John Kirk Townsend, who hoped to discover new birds and mammals. Townsend was successful in both groups. Townsend's Solitaire is an uncommon bird, but familiar to most bird watchers.

Townsend's Chipmunk was first collected at the mouth of the Willamette River. It is a familiar sight to visitors at the Oregon Caves even though its scientific name, *Tamias townsendii*, might not be as friendly. Townsend spent the winter of 1834-35 in Hawaii also collecting specimens. The next year he helped as a surgeon at Ft. Vancouver because he had some medical training.

On May 9, 1835, Townsend discovered a mole at Ft. Vancouver named *Scapanus townsendii*, better known as Townsend's Mole. "Skapane" is a Greek word meaning digging tool, and is used because it's a good digger. Townsend's Mole is the largest and most common of the four kinds of moles found in Josephine County. It has a range all along the coastal part of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. It has a range all along the coastal part of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. It is most common in moist soil areas, especially fields, lawns, gardens, and coniferous forests.

All moles are good at digging and usually have deep tunnels, six to 10 inches below the surface, which are hard to locate. They push up cone-shaped piles of dirt at intervals along the route of the tunnels. These piles have no obvious entrance, unlike gopher mounds which are fan-shaped and have an obvious entrance with a dirt plug in the hole. Moles also create surface tunnels which make raised mounds of dirt along their path which are more easy for people to locate than the deep tunnels.

Moles are mainly carnivores, eating worms and beetle grubs living in the soil. On occasion, a few underground tubers and roots are eaten, but this is not the main damage. Flowers and grass are damaged by pushing them into the air while the mole is making the surface tunnels. This can damage the roots by exposing them to the air and also creates air pockets around the roots of plants. Gardening experts suggest these mounds be pressed down as soon as possible to reduce damage to the plants. Most gardeners are not very tolerant of these habits and want the mole gone as quickly as possible.

A number of methods have been tried and each gardener swears that their method is best. Flooding the deep tunnels with a hose works occasionally but mostly provides exercise for the mole and deep watering for nearby plants. Attaching a garden hose to a car exhaust pipe has some success also, but moles can create dense plugs in their tunnel system.

Poisons and traps are most recommended by gardening books with traps most preferred. Poison and gas bombs kill other animals as well, including pets if any pellets are left above ground or dug up later.

Traps need to be placed in the deep tunnels on both sides of the cone shaped piles of dirt if the tunnels can be located. This involves a lot of digging and increases the damage to the garden or lawn. My method is to put an untouched half stick of Juicy Fruit gum in the tunnel, but that doesn't work all the time either.

IVCRT Insights

By RON PHILLIPS

Countdown for opening the Chateau at Oregon Caves National Monument, 20 miles east of Cave Junction, on Thursday, May 1 is proceeding, and CRT staffers are busy preparing.

More than 40 applications for employment have been received, and interviews will begin this week. With the necessary lead time this year, we are planning a thorough training as part of CRT's commitment to provide vocational development for those who wish to make a career in hospitality.

There was a good turnout at the jurying of arts and crafts on March 30. Those who still wish to submit work should contact the CRT office. There is also a "Logo Contest" to develop just the right look for Oregon Caves Outfitters and to be displayed on souvenirs sold in the Gift Gallery. The deadline is May 1, but offerings should be submitted as soon as possible. Also, CRT is still looking for prepared food items (e.g. jams, flavored vinegars, honey, etc.) to sell in the gallery.

Arts & Economics Centre

The CRT Board voted to cautiously proceed with development of an Arts & Economics Centre. It is seen as a large, complex project that merits careful analysis and preparation. The first two grant applications are ready for submission, but additional funding will be sought.

The centre would be a dual-function facility; a gallery with demonstration studios will publicly provide another site for artisans to market their products, and other galleries to promote themselves. The front area will also serve an interpretative function to introduce visitors to the valley and refer them to the attractions, accommodations, restaurants, wineries, and activities.

To have the "curb appeal" to pull over some flow of vehicles traveling Redwood Hwy., the building will boast the Northwest rock, post and beam look. Similar to a pinball machine, the goal is to keep visitors in play as long as possible by passing them from one business to another to prolong their stay and their enjoyment.

The "back office" side of the centre would serve as a one-stop business support facility designed to assist entrepreneurs start to grow their businesses. A business owner would be able to choose from a range of services and learning opportunities from formal classes to informal, individual consultations. Fees will be paid from the Business Growth Investment Account, which will be established using grant funding for every business that qualifies. The idea is to reduce the risk of starting or expanding a business by making easily available and affordable the necessary support services tailored to each situation.

Marketing -- on-site and through the Internet -- would be a primary focus. Consequently, there will be computers available to provide high-speed Internet for training or use.

Legislators could be out of PERS rule

The House Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) Committee has voted to remove state legislators from PERS and into a new system for retirement benefits.

"Legislators oversee the PERS and I do not believe they should directly benefit from the decisions they make," said House Majority Leader Tim Knopp (R-Bend) who chairs the committee.

"In the 1980s and 1990s, the Legislature enacted changes to PERS that helped create the situation we're in today. House Bill 2407 will guarantee the decisions that are made concerning PERS are unbiased," he said.

The successor retirement plan will be a defined contribution plan with fixed contributions by the Legislative Assembly of 6 percent of the salary paid to members of the Assembly.

Legislators elected as of July 1, 2004 will automatically be placed before July 1, 2004 date. Legislators who have PERS accounts may leave their accounts as they are, or roll them over into the successor retirement plan.

The bill has an estimated savings of \$202,267 for the 2003-2005 biennium and \$405,533 for the 2005-2007 biennium. The savings are based on the difference between the currently budgeted employer contribution of 20.28 percent of salary and the 6 percent employer contribution set in the bill.

Applications for ODOT litter jobs available

This summer, Oregon Dept. of Transportation expects to hire approximately 250 youth statewide to clean up litter along state highways as part of the Youth Litter Patrol program.

While the crews primarily pick up litter, duties may also include graffiti removal and general landscape maintenance. A typical crew includes a crew leader and two or more crew members.

Youth Litter Patrol crew members earn \$7.49 an hour to start. Crew leaders earn \$8.08 per hour. Crew leaders must be at least 18 with a valid driver license and good driving record. Crew members must be 16 to 20.

Applicants need to register at their local employment depart. Office before July 18. A list of the offices is available online at www.workinginoregon.org.

Interviews for selected applicants for the summer session may begin as early as mid-May.

'Courier' writer Goracke lauded

Grants Pass "Daily Courier" reporter Susan Goracke has been named Oregon's Small Business Journalist of the Year.

She was nominated by Ted Risser, now retired director of Rogue Community College's Small Business Development Center. Goracke has covered business and the city of Grants Pass for the "Daily Courier" since September 2000.

In nominating Goracke, Risser said she has increased public awareness of the challenges and accomplishments of small businesses, and kept readers posted on business news and developments. The award is from the U.S. Small Business Administration.



HEY, DEM BONES - A program on fossils, some of which have been found inside Oregon Caves National Monument, was given by National Park Service personnel on Friday, April 11 in the Illinois Valley branch library. Fossils included the skull of an ancient grizzly bear, which, when it stood on its hind legs, was 12 1/2 feet tall. A free program on 'The Ghost of Elijah Davidson,' will be given on Friday, April 18 at 3:30 p.m. in the library.

Deadline soon for Head Start

Those looking for a preschool, or who have a child who will be 3 or 4 by Sept. 1, are reminded that applications turned in by the last week in April have a better chance of starting class in September.

Phone 734-5150, 472-4851 or (800) 866-9674 OR e-mail mneel@sofc.org to request an application.

Head Start is a nationally recognized preschool program started in 1967. Head Start has benefited thousands of families in Jackson and Josephine counties. Families have testified how this program has changed their lives in many ways, providing qualified preschool, social services for the family, healthy food, parenting classes, referrals to other community agencies, and job opportunities.

Tuesday - Saturday
3:30 to
8:30 p.m.
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