

Nifty Tidbits

By Chuck Rigby

Today is an important day for astronomers and other people interested in the planet Mars. Earth and Mars will only be 34,646,000 miles apart.

That might not seem like a close encounter, but it will make Mars appear bigger and brighter than it has for many years. Scientists are debating whether it was 57,538 BC or 57,537 when Mars was this close the last time. They do agree that in 2,287 AD, Mars will be 43,000 miles closer than today. However, that is a long wait and so it will be best to check it out now. Presumably the gravitational pull of Jupiter is making the orbit of Mars more eccentric or elliptical.

This is a gradual process and Mars won't disappear overnight. It will be visible in the South Western part of the sky after 9:30 p.m. and will be at its highest point about 12:30 a.m. It's supposed to be red but it's closer to yellow or pale orange, and is the brightest object in the sky other than the moon.

After tonight Mars will continue to arise earlier each evening but will gradually become smaller and less bright.

There are some good scientific reasons why this is all happening now. Mars and Earth are both revolving around the Sun in slightly elliptical orbits. Mars is farther out, has a longer orbit, and travels at a slower speed. Therefore Earth catches and passes Mars about every two years and 50 days.

This passing period, when they both are on the same side of the Sun, is when Mars will appear the brightest. When this passing period is at the end of August, Mars is at perihelion, this is the point of its orbit when it's closest to the Sun.

When the earth catches and passes Mars, it creates another astronomical tidbit which is really an optical

illusion. Both planets are traveling counter-clockwise around the Sun, as viewed from above the North Pole. When the Earth passes Mars it makes it seem as though Mars is traveling backward for awhile, called retrograde motion. It's like passing another car on the freeway, which makes the slower car seem to go backward when seen from the faster car. A viewer in a space traffic helicopter would not see retrograde motion but simply a faster blue planet passing another slightly red one.

Mars is now in retrograde motion and that is why it's rising earlier each evening.

This is only temporary until Earth gets far enough in front to make the apparent motion stop, then it will return back to moving slowly toward the east, which is its usual motion.

The revolution of the planets brings up another scientific concept. What keeps them in orbit? The Sun's gravity is pulling all the planets toward the Sun. The planet stays in orbit because its speed creates centrifugal force, like mud being thrown off a spinning tire. The centrifugal force has to exactly equal the gravitational pull of the Sun. If it is too fast, the planet would be thrown into space, too slow and it would be pulled into the Sun. Mercury, closest to the Sun, has to be the fastest and each planet outward until Pluto, which has the slowest speed of all planets.

Mars will be an exciting planet to be visited by humans in the future. It has seasons and an atmosphere, mostly carbon dioxide, but some nitrogen, oxygen and even water vapor. The temperature is cold, but like Antarctica, is not too cold to prevent life as we know it. Hopefully, some day soon, humans will be able to walk on the surface of Mars.

Tiger tours, classes offered

Wildland Tiger Trax Endangered Animal Sanctuary, 28893 Redwood Hwy. in Cave Junction, will offer free tours on Wednesday, Aug. 27, for area community groups and associations.

Wildland Tiger Trax also offers a series of continuing trainings and classes:

*Art classes with wild-life artists - Big Cat Art, Wildlife Art Techniques.

*Endangered Animal Handler's Training - Levels 1, 2 and 3.

*Children's Tiger and Wildlife Education Program - In coordination with local schools.

For more information phone 592-6085.



PAINTING THE TOWN -- David Holmes helps give a much needed face-lift with a fresh coat of paint to the outside of Bi-Rite Auto Parts located in the former Ivy Theatre in Downtown Cave Junction.
(Photo by Britt Fairchild)

ODA moves to prevent sudden oak death

The Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) is taking regulatory action to help detect imported nursery stock that may be infected with sudden oak death.

An emergency rule adopted by ODA requires all recipients of tree and shrub nursery stock imported into Oregon from any out-of-state source to notify the department for possible inspection of the plants.

The new requirement comes following three separate instances of infected nursery stock entering the state this year.

ODA officials say the action is needed to protect Oregon's important and

vibrant nursery industry from sudden oak death.

The emergency rule went into effect on Sunday, Aug. 17 and requires nurseries and retailers to contact ODA no later than two days following arrival of shipment of out-of-state tree and shrub nursery stock.

Notification must include plant species, quantities, source and recipients contact information.

Copies of regular shipping documents, such as loads lists, are encouraged.

ODA will contact nurseries within one business day following notification if the tree and shrub nursery stock needs to be held for inspection. Recipi-

ents are not obligated to hold the imported plants for inspection unless contacted directly by an ODA inspector.

However, the imported tree and shrub nursery stock must not be sold or distributed to untraceable buyers, such as final consumers, for one business day after notifying ODA.

ODA officials emphasize that the previous introductions of infected nursery stock came from out-of-state nurseries and were not part of an established infestation of sudden oak death in Oregon.

The emergency rule is designed to locate any new introductions before infected plants reach consumers or other nurseries.

Employment decline 'typical'

Payroll employment in Josephine County fell by a seasonably typical 830 jobs in July, mostly as a result of a loss of 970 jobs in local government education.

Josephine County's unemployment rate was essentially unchanged from the prior month, at 8.6 percent.

The unemployment rate is also little changed from 2002, when it stood at 8.5 percent. Total non-farm payroll employment has increased by 210 jobs since last July.

Construction employment rose by 30 in July and now stands at 30 jobs below the year-ago number.

Josephine County's manufacturing sector, which has seen employment in its wood product manufacturing component fall by 23 percent over the past year (-200), has managed to show a very slight over-the-year increase of 10 jobs.

Wholesale trade employment, while unchanged over the past month, has added 70 jobs over the past year.

Retail trade employment has been increasing steadily over the year in Josephine County. Gains in July totaled 70 in this sector, including an increase of 20 in food and beverage stores. Over the year, employment in retail trade is up by over 300 jobs, a gain of nearly 90 percent.

Transportation, warehousing, and utility employment fell by 30 over the month, and has also declined by 40 over the past year.

Employment in financial activities has shown growth both over the month (+30), and over the past year (+90).

Josephine County

Clubs ...

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start school. This year some are even needing help with new shoes, socks, and underwear. Anyone wanting to make donations to this cause would be greatly appreciated.

The Legion sent \$532 worth of coupons to Japan and is saving pull tabs from cans to help with costs for dialysis patients.

Again this month the members sent afghans, men's clothing, suitcases and shaving bags to Roseburg Veterans Hospital. Seven more afghans were taken to Portland Veterans Hospital.

The Legion is still looking for new members.

Waldo Mining District

The Waldo Mining District will meet on Wednesday, Aug. 27 at 7 p.m. at the Josephine County Bldg. in downtown Cave Junction.

Items on the agenda include a recent lawsuit filed by the Siskiyou Project and other current mining issues.

Except for an occasional heart attack I feel as young as I ever did.

- Robert Benchley -

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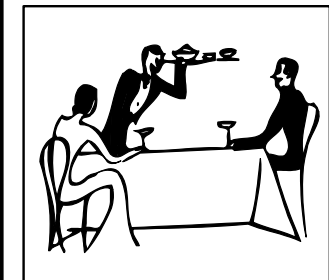
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