

Illinois Valley News

Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2014, 1 Section, 12 Pages, Volume 76 No. 48 Published Weekly Cave Junction, Oregon 97523

illinois-valley-news.com

Libraries seek support

By
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Josephine Community Libraries, Inc. (JCLI) supporters are working hard to get a tax levy on the ballot in autumn. They're well on their way to the needed 8,500 signatures but are looking for more registered voters signatures ahead of the May deadline.

According to library personnel, in the last three years, the number of library cardholders has doubled and 300 new cards are issued every month. To keep up with the demand for services, the four-library organization is requesting a levy of .39 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Forming a "library district," a funding system similar to the I.V. Fire District, will create a reliable income stream. An article in the January 15 issue of the I.V. News reviews the reasons sustainable funding is needed for JCLI. Oregon statutes prohibit charging fees to use the library or for library cards.

Organizers are looking for volunteers to help in several areas. Those interested are asked to contact petition coordinator Dick Cotrill at 541-472-8879 or Judy Williams at 541-846-6722 to help with any of the following:

Signature gatherers are needed to table at pedestrian high traffic areas including the library and possibly the I.V. Post office.

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(Photo by Judy Hoyle, Illinois Valley News)

I.V. Garden Club member Kimberle Lehman (center) mentors Evergreen SMILE students as they plant a butterfly garden, Jan. 28.

Legal counsel race will likely be decided in May

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

Candidates for Josephine County Sheriff and Position 1 on the county commission are gearing up for the May 20 primary election. While the March 11 candidate filing deadline is still a month away, one race, for county legal counsel, is already well-defined.

"We're unique," said Josephine

County Clerk Art Harvey. "We're the only county in the state with an elected legal counsel position. To run for the office you have to be an attorney and member in good standing with the Oregon State Bar. The position is separate from the DA's office and basically serves the commissioners and other county interests."

Incumbent Steve Rich, seeking his sixth four-year term since 1995, is anticipating a "good campaign" from

State Representative Wally Hicks. With just two candidates, May's vote will likely serve as the general election for the legal counsel position.

"Wally's got a lot of experience," Rich said. "He's been in the state legislature for two terms. It'll boil down to a choice between a nice young man with a military academy background and someone experienced in the wide range of legal matters that the county counsel must attend to."

"This jobs runs from A to Z, from airports to zoning," Rich added. "Everything from prisoner complaints about the food to court claims against the county."

Rich explained that, "as our society continues to become more litigious, we've seen an increase of bogus claims, like someone saying they fell in the courthouse bathroom."

See Legal on A-10

Feds killing eastern barred owls to save spotted owls

By
Annette McGee Rasch
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The federal government is killing barred owls to help rare northern spotted owls regain territory. The robust non-native barred owl has rapidly taken over spotted owl habitat throughout the Pacific Northwest in recent decades, further threatening the survival of the smaller and shyer native bird.

"We anguished over this decision, but it's the best of bad choices," said Robin Bown, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist involved with the Barred Owl Removal Program. "The spotted owl has been coping with a double-whammy. Up until the 1990's, throughout its entire range, habitat loss from over-logging was the problem. If we're going to recover the spotted owl, we must address both habitat protection, and now, find ways to reduce the numbers of barred owls."

The plan is to remove a total of 3,600 barred owls from four locations to discover if spotted owl numbers rebound enough to make a difference. Most will be shot. About 40 birds have been killed so far. According to Bown, procedures have been developed to ensure clean kills. Removals will only occur in fall and winter to avoid killing owls with dependent young.

The barred owl is a powerful generalist who eats rodents, small mammals, birds, insects, fish and crayfish. The spotted owl is a specialist who only hunts medium-sized forest rodents. Because of its wider food base, the barred owl needs only one-fourth the territory required by the spotted owl, and Bown says that space, not food resources, is the key issue. The barred owl aggressively defends its habitat and the smaller spotted owl just can't compete.

Examining why, after a few million years, barred owls moved west of the Mississippi River, most experts agree that human activities are to blame. Eastern forests that hosted barred owls are long gone; and changes on the Great Plains also likely forced the owls' move across the continent.

"We've had a hand in getting to this point," Bown said. "So should we take action? Are we responsible for dealing with the effects of our own activities?"

"Look at the annual Aleutian Goose Festival in Crescent City," said Dominick DellaSala, Chief Scientist and President of the Ashland-based Geos Institute. "We now celebrate the goose that was brought close to extinction after non-native foxes were introduced onto their breeding grounds in the Aleutian Islands. The foxes were killed off, and because the geese also enjoyed habitat protection under the Endangered Species Act, they recovered."

DellaSala, who served on the Spotted Owl Recovery Team, reluctantly supports the barred owl removal experiment. "It's really sad, they're magnificent creatures."

The ethics of the situation has become a hot topic. One advocacy group, Friends of Animals, has filed a lawsuit and maintains that the government cannot make a moral argument for shooting an animal, even when it benefits another animal and believes the two species should "either figure out a way to coexist or let nature run its course."

However the loss of the spotted owl could have dire consequences to the whole ecosystem. "We never know if the species that dies out is a keystone species, meaning it's one that all the other species depend on," Bown said.

Because the barred owl has a different diet and didn't evolve alongside the other species in the area the way the spotted owl has, a

northwest forest with an exclusive barred owl population would interact within the rest of the ecosystem differently.

To illustrate that point Bown quoted famous conservationist Aldo Leopold: "The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant, 'What good is it?' If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of eons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."

Both Bown and DellaSala stressed the importance of intact mature forest, saying that spotted owls can handle some fragmentation to the forest but cannot survive in large-scale tree plantations comprised of even-aged trees, because there's no prey there.

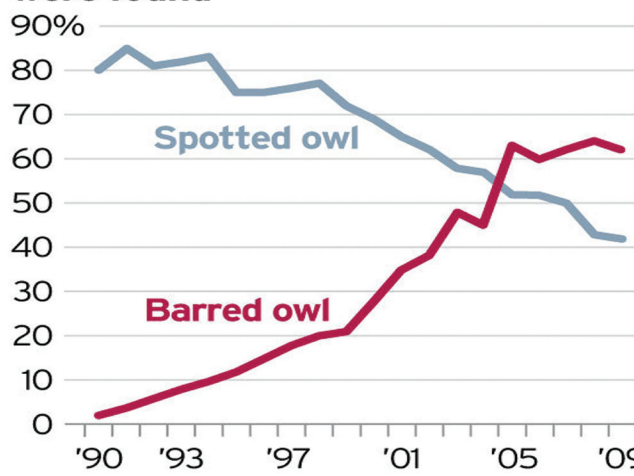
"There's not much of anything alive in those plantations," Bown said. "In a 20 year-old

clear cut, you can't even walk through because the trees are so dense, and even after they thin, it's still hard to move around because there's so much slash left behind. Also, the pesticides used early on to restore desirable tree species may be even another problem for wildlife."

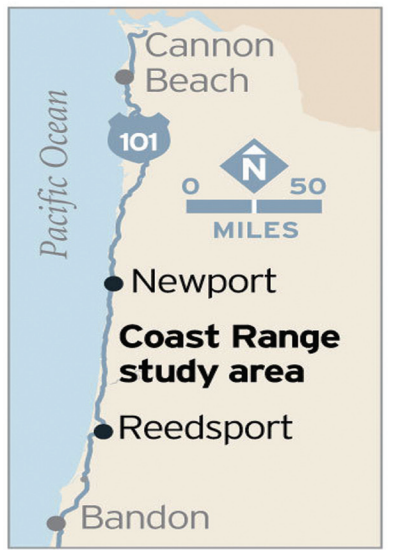
DellaSala is also concerned that Wyden's proposed O&C legislation will further threaten the owls' recovery as well as harm hundreds of other plants and animal species as the plan proposes increased logging in stands of mature trees.

"I believe that every acre of mature forest matters when the forest ecosystem has declined from historical levels of about two-thirds of the region in older forests to around today's 20 percent level," DellaSala said. "We have a responsibility for stewarding the creation. Any loss of biodiversity is unethical and only hurts us too. The spotted owls use the same habitat that we depend on for clean water, salmon, and a stable climate."

Percentage of sites where owls were found



Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



DAVID BADDERS/THE OREGONIAN