

# Kandi Crow gets sentenced for animal possession

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Kandi Crow was sentenced June 8 to two months in jail. After that, she'll have to spend another four months in jail or serve additional time in home detention to answer for her April

13 conviction on 13 misdemeanor charges of unlawful possession of an animal. Crow has also been ordered to stay away from animals for five years, and to pay more than \$1,600.

The sentence stems from her March 13, 2015, arrest, after an anonymous tip brought Josephine County animal protection

officers to Crow's property where they found six cats, a dog and two peafowl. She was also found to be involved in transporting miniature horses from Idaho, and two miniature horses were found next door to Crow's property without food or water - on land she'd deeded to her daughter.

Back in 2013, Crow made national headlines after 177 miniature horses and numerous other animals were seized from her Cave Junction property in 2012. Many of those horses were so sick or emaciated that they had to be euthanized. While that huge rescue effort cost JoCo more than \$300,000;

an auction of the surviving rehabilitated animals held to recover some of those costs only netted \$90,000. Crow paid just \$2,300 in fines and served 40 days in jail. She was placed on probation for five years and was forbidden to possess animals.



**Kandi Crow**

# Helicopter survey trains eye on invasive alyssum

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The small army of volunteers dedicated to eliminating the invasive yellow-tuft alyssum plant from numerous Illinois Valley locations will get a boost June 22 when a helicopter surveys the area to monitor known sites and identify any new locations where the plant has taken root.

"When people see a low flying helicopter we want them to understand that we're only looking for alyssum. We're not monitoring any other land use activities," said Suzanne Vautier, who with her

partner, Tim Leyba, founded the Illinois Valley-based Cultural & Ecological Enhancement Network (CEEN), the organization that has lead the charge to arrest the non-native plant's spread. CEEN received a grant through the Oregon State Weed Board to pay for this year's helicopter survey.

"We'll mostly fly along the river, follow a few roads and check fields around the Valley where alyssum was planted," she said.

"The helicopter provides a different perspective," said O'Brien resident Gordon Lyford, a volunteer with the decadelong project. "From the air you see things you can't see

when you're walking around in the brush."

"The window to do anything about the problem is limited," Vautier said. "Alyssum is in the mustard family, which is notoriously weedy. It's really hardy and spreads easily. Right now it's confined to just this area - but if we don't stop the spread in the next few years, we won't be able to do anything about it."

Yellow-tuft alyssum is native to southern Europe and Turkey. Vautier explained how the Valley's native plants cannot compete against the aggressive foreign plants that lack naturally evolved checks and balances.

"It's even more critical because our area has so much biodiversity," Vautier added. "A lot of our rare native plants grow on serpentine soil, which naturally protects them from many weeds that won't grow there. However this alyssum thrives in serpentine, so that comprises an even bigger threat to our rare plant populations."

"There's been quite a bit of volunteer work done to combat the problem," said Carri Piroosko, regional noxious weed coordinator for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). "We estimate we've spent over a million dollars so far, with funding from ODA and two federal partners: the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S.

Forest Service. But about

half of the work is accomplished by volunteers."

Piroosko said alyssum plant numbers have been dramatically reduced; and while last winter's abundant rainfall brought "concern about lots of new seedlings" she's pleased that this hasn't been the case. "We think the seed supply in the soils is finally becoming exhausted. And that's really good news - our goal is to eliminate that seed bank. We don't know how long we'll have to stick with it, at least for the next three-to-five years, but we'll have to monitor it for years to come."

In the late 1990s Viridian Resources planted alyssum on private lands in the Valley to try out a technology for nickel mining. Billed as a "miracle plant," alyssum is a "hyperaccumulator" capable of sucking heavy metals - like nickel - from serpentine soils and stores it in its leaves. Then in 2002, Viridian gained approvals from the Josephine County board to plant on more than 50 acres near the Illinois Valley Airport.

"Local conservationists and botanists with the Siskiyou Project warned the county board to not lease these lands to Viridian, but they did it anyway," Vautier said. "The county got a little bit of money from that lease - but that's nothing compared to all the tax payer money spent to get rid of it."

Viridian planned to mine the plant, but the company folded and

alyssum quickly spread up and down the Illinois River. Lyford said Viridian's farmworkers "didn't follow the harvesting protocols for the plant. They weren't supposed to allow the plant to go to the flowering stage. Also, they piled up hundreds of bales of alyssum and just left it there at the airport. We went in and burned that off, and the next year, there were seedlings in the ash."

Vautier, a local weed specialist, was one of the first to notice the spread of alyssum onto wild lands. She reported it to the ODA and helped organize the effort to combat the problem. "Once I showed the ODA how much the plant had spread they were really wonderful," she said. "They certainly saw that it was a problem and immediately supported our effort to get rid of it."

In addition to displacing native plants, Vautier says alyssum causes numerous other problems. "Since it's a bio-accumulator of metals, it's also poisonous to animals. For example, mice eat the plant, collect that metal in their tissues, then hawks eat the mice and they concentrate the metals even more. It accumulates up the food chain, so it is also an agricultural issue. If goats or other livestock eat the plant, and then we milk the animals or eat that meat - we could be poisoned as well."

Anyone who spots alyssum around the Valley should call 541-291-8860 to report the location.



Alyssum photo courtesy of Kyle Strauss, Strauss Ecological Services

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