

Wildlife news

Big game surveys completed

Fish and Wildlife Department field biologists have completed their spring surveys of big game trends and winter survival. Most biologists are very encouraged by the results of their observations.

The mule deer of Eastern Oregon are bouncing back very well in all but a few southeast management units. There was an improved carryover of bucks as a result of the short, 7-day hunting season and forked horn regulation last fall. On top of that, fawn survival improved because of mild weather and good forage this winter. Good fawn crops are expected this spring because of improved physical condition in mule deer does.

In the Central region, which includes Deschutes, Grizzly, Klamath, Maury, Metolius, Ochoco, and Paulina game management units, biologists counted an average of eight deer per mile traveled on fixed trend routes. That is a half a deer per mile improvement over last year. Some 44 fawns were recorded this spring per 100 adult deer, which is an increase both over last year and the six-year average. Winter fawn survival was 79 per cent compared with 65 per cent last year and 62 per cent for an average of the last six years.

Mule deer have made their most spectacular comeback in the northeastern region. Here biologists classified 15 deer per mile on sampling routes. They recorded an average of 57 of last year's fawns per 100 adults this spring for an average 82 per cent fawn survival through the winter. This compares with 28 fawns and 56 per cent survival last year. In several units near 100 per cent survival was noted.

Recruitment of deer numbers to the herds through fawn production and survival is the "answer" to recovery of mule deer numbers, so biologist are extremely happy over the improvements noted this year.

Biologists consider mule deer levels in much of northeastern Oregon to be at or near winter range carrying capacity. The Keating unit, for example, now has the highest deer

populations since systematic records have been kept. In another area, the Murderer's Creek winter range, some 2,200 mule deer were counted this winter, which is also the highest ever recorded.

Spring fawn survival and deer population trends also improved in southeastern Oregon although low fawn numbers remain a problem in Malheur, Steens Mountain, and Beulah units. Although fawn production in southeast Oregon was generally poor last year, survival of those fawns averaged 75 per cent through this past winter and better fawn crops are expected this year because of improved forage and a milder winter.

On the other side of the Cascades blacktail deer populations remain about the same as last year; in some areas a bit better. Fawn production was up last year both from the previous year and from the ten-year average.

For the most part, blacktail deer have winter well and good fawn production should be the rule this spring.

Oregon's elk populations remain fairly stable from one year to the next. As bigger, sturdier animals than deer, they are less affected by extremes of winter weather.

In northwestern Oregon, elk populations in the coastal ranges are gradually declining as the better habitat areas grow back to closed-canopy timber. But this loss is balanced by increasing populations in the Cascades, both as a result of department trapping and transplanting and from natural expansion as new habitat areas develop due to logging.

Elk populations in southwest Oregon are about the same as last year except that slight declines in the Powers and Tioga units were recorded.

Rocky Mountain elk numbers in northeastern Oregon are at an all-time high. Some hunters will find this hard to believe since they've had to scratch harder in recent years. But this was due to competition with increasing numbers of hunters rather than low elk numbers.

Biologists are seeing more

elk now than ever before. Many ranges have tended to shift in recent years from browse or "leafy" forage to grass ranges, a transition that favors elk, usually at the expense of deer. On northeastern management unit trend routes biologists recorded an average of 11.7 elk per mile. This compares with 10.3 per mile last year and 8.2 per mile for the ten-year average.

Antelope populations also remain fairly stable although biologists did note very poor fawn production this year in the Fort Rock-Silver Lake, Juniper, Malheur, River, Maury, Ochoco, and Silver Lake units. Antelope fawn production has been gradually declining in recent years and biologists believe climatic factors and predation have probably been the major

reasons as they have for mule deer. Antelope are on the increase, however, in Baker and Lookout

Mountain units. These units are on what used to be the fringe of antelope range and have not, so far, been open to hunting.

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PROUDLY DISPLAYING their first place trophies from the Mt. Hooders bowling league are members of the Sheppard and Kubitz Construction team. Seated in front from left are Voriece Blair and Shirley

Dunn. Second row from left Betty Chesnut, Eva Kociemba and Fern Hunter. Standing behind are sponsors Glenn and Loretta Sheppard and Carolyn and Wayne Kubitz. (Post photo)



SMILING MEMBERS of Sandy Rexall Drug team display first place trophies awarded Saturday evening at the bowling banquet of the Sandy Men's league and the Mt. Hooders league. Seated are Gerry

Barker, Nancy Barker holding sponsor's trophy and Glenn Bennett. Standing behind from left are Tom Sullivan, Dan LeBrun and Dwayne Vedder. (Post photo)



KEN AND DEYNEE Hallgren show off the second place sponsor's trophy their team won for them. Team members from

left are Norma Miller, Liz Gebe and Irene Gebe. Missing were members Pat Schwab and Jean Stoltenberg. (Post photo)

April deaths climb

Oregon recorded the highest April traffic death toll in 11 years when 63 persons died on the state's streets and highways.

The Motor Vehicles division reported last week that the April death count pushed the yearly toll to 193, compared with 153 traffic deaths during the first four months of 1975.

Non-collision accidents accounted for 24 of the 57 fatal accidents. The next most frequent crash was the head-on collision with 10.

Better driving weather may have been a factor in the toll, with 48 per cent of the fatalities on weekends, compared with about 33 per cent of the fatalities on weekends during the past two months.

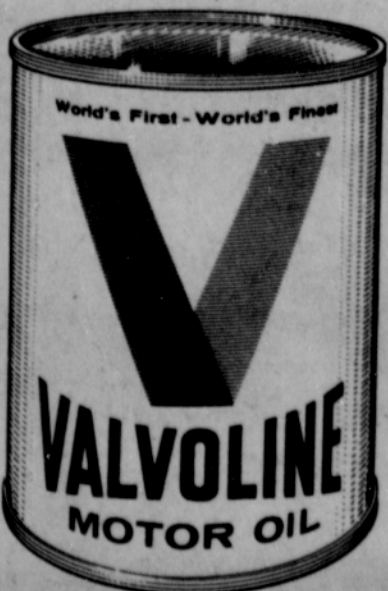
DMV noted five multiple-death crashes, one killing three persons and four claiming two lives each. Saturday, April 10, was the worst day of the month

for traffic deaths when eight were recorded.

The division also reported that of the 35 blood alcohol reports received from county medical examiners to date, 19 or 54 per cent, indicated victims had consumed alcohol before death.

Despite the high toll, 10 Oregon counties reported no traffic fatalities in April. Of those reporting deaths, Jackson and Multnomah counties reported six each; Lane and Polk counties five each; Tillamook and Columbia counties four deaths each; Clackamas, Lincoln, Malheur and Washington counties three; Gilliam, Marion, Douglas, Umatilla and Wasco counties two and Baker, Benton, Clatsop, Coos, Crook, Harney, Hood River, Josephine, Klamath, Wheeler and Yamhill counties each reported a single traffic death.

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