



WOLF WANDERS TO CALIFORNIA

Thanks to Oregon's wandering wolf, California saw its first *Canis lupus* in the state since 1924. The young gray wolf known as OR-7, but now renamed "Journey" thanks to conservation group Oregon Wild's naming contest, was confirmed in the Golden State via his GPS tracking collar on Dec. 29.

According to Sean Stevens of Oregon Wild, "I'd be hard pressed to think of a more famous or accomplished wolf than OR-7."

OR-7, aka Journey, was the first wolf west of the Cascades in 65 years, Stevens says, and the first wolf in California in 90 years.

California, like Oregon, has not reintroduced the wolves that were once native, but instead has awaited their gradual return. The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) says, "This particular animal is exhibiting normal dispersal behavior for a young male and there is no way to predict whether he will stay in California, return to Oregon or travel east into Nevada."

California DFG officials say they will be sharing only general location information on the wolf because it is protected under the Endangered Species Act. The first known photo of OR-7 was recently discovered. It was taken in southern Oregon by a deer hunter's trail camera. Stevens says, last he heard, the wolf had ventured deeper into California but was still in Siskiyou County.

Oregon currently has about four wolf packs — the Snake River, Walla Walla, Imanha and Wenaha packs — and 24 or 25 wolves, depending on OR-7's location. A new pup was confirmed for the Wenaha pack in December. Only the Walla Walla pack is currently able to be designated a "breeding pair," meaning the pack produced at least two pups that survived through the end of the year when they were born.

State wolf management rules say ODFW can only start removing state Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves when there are four breeding pairs on Oregon's east side and four on the west side. Wolves are federally protected in Oregon only west of Highway 395, Stevens says.

Wolves have been controversial in the West since they were reintroduced and began to disperse. But California's DFG says, "In other Western states the impact of depredation on livestock has been small, less than predation by coyotes and mountain lions," and adds that "concerns about human safety are largely based on folklore and are unsubstantiated in North America."

OR-7 became an international sensation as wolf fans tracked his journey from the Imnaha pack's homeground in northeast Oregon hundred of miles across the state to southern Oregon. Children from Oregon to Finland weighed in on Oregon Wild's contest to name the wandering wolf. The finalists were: Arthur (Arttu in Finnish), Journey, Lupin, Max and Takota. Stevens says the name Journey got about 42 percent of the votes.

— Camilla Mortensen

news Briefs



THINNING HARMS FLIGHTY RODENTS

Oregonians may not know it, but our state's forests are riddled with wide-eyed, nocturnal, gliding mammals. The northern flying squirrel serves many ecological functions in Pacific Northwest forests, and is considered to be a "keystone species." It is a vital part of the diet of the endangered species listed northern spotted owl, and a new study shows that flying squirrels are negatively affected by commercial thinning of timber.

Commercial thinning in regenerating stands of previously logged Douglas fir is supposed to provide a small amount of lumber, reduce fire danger and give trees room to develop old-growth characteristics in which species like the flying squirrel and the spotted owl thrive.

However, a recent study by scientists from OSU and the U.S. Geological Survey found that the thinning actually *reduces* the density of flying squirrels.

Researchers used live-capture traps to catch and count flying squirrels in the Willamette National forest, east and southeast of Eugene. "Our research makes it clear that densities of northern flying squirrels are particularly sensitive to thinning in young Douglas fir forests for at least 12 years after treatment," researchers Tom Manning, Joan Hagar and Brenda McComb conclude.

This study demonstrates that forest thinning presents a tradeoff: It will benefit native species in the long-term, but on a short-term basis it is detrimental to flying squirrels (and therefore possibly to spotted owls).

Hagar says that these findings demonstrate the high level of ecological complexity at play when it comes to forest restoration. "No matter what we do in the forest, there is a positive affect on some species and a negative affect on other species," she says. Although this study found forest thinning to reduce flying squirrel population densities, Hagar says she has conducted other research indicating that thinning is beneficial for the density of

native songbirds. "Forest thinning is a great management tool as long as we are well-aware of the impact," Hagar says.

This study shows that, in the delicate balance of forest ecosystems, the path to restoration is not clear-cut.

— Caitlin McKimmy

MAJOR FIRMS AVOID STATE INCOME TAXES

Many of the nation's Fortune 500 companies, including Intel, Oregon's largest private employer, have paid little or no state income taxes in recent years despite reporting large profits to their shareholders, according to a report released in late December by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) and Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ).

The report examined corporate filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and calculated the sum of all state income taxes paid by 265 Fortune 500 companies that were profitable each of the three years studied, 2008 through 2010. Data on file with the SEC did not allow ITEP and CTJ to determine the amounts paid in taxes to particular states, according to a press release from Chuck Sheketoff, executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

"The report confirms the need for state corporate disclosure laws," said Sheketoff. "Oregonians have a right to know which large corporations are using accounting gimmicks, special laws and tax loopholes to avoid paying income taxes on their profits." Of the 265 corporations studied, 68 paid no net state income taxes in at least one of the years from 2008 to 2010 — even as these companies together reported making almost \$117 billion in pre-tax profits in the years when they paid no taxes.

Find this and other stories on the Oregon economy on the OCPP website www.ocpp.org

IT'S ABOUT TIME

BY DAVID WAGNER

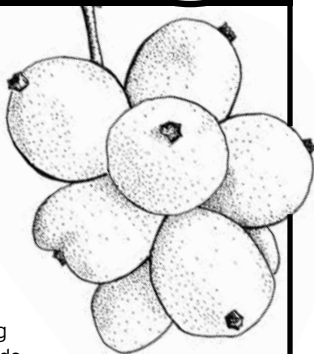


Botanists have an advantage this time of year because they can sense spring coming. True, with the solstice just behind us, most of the official winter is yet ahead of us. Yet buds on the leafless trees and shrubs are swelling, increasing in size easily noticed from week to week. The woodland herbs are emerging from the ground, splashes of bright green.

Those who only watch birds don't have it as good. It is indeed a treat to watch the shovelers and buffleheads cruise around the Delta Ponds displaying their tidy swimming style. They will leave when spring arrives, but there's no way to tell when that might occur just by watching the birds. I'm sure the birds, like the botanists, watch the buds swell and the herbs proliferate. We all wait for the days' lengthening.

Our climate is so mild that few animals hibernate. The animals that remain active often work hard to find food this time of the year. Elk move into lowland forests and eat lichens. River otters can be seen in urban ponds. Birds forage in flocks that include pine siskins from the mountains.

A surprise to a botanist is how long the snowberries hang on to their fruit. They are aptly named, practically glowing white at the tips of slender dark branches. It is one of the few decorations in the valley woodlands this time of year. They must be distasteful to birds, to remain so long. Maybe they are starvation food, last to be eaten?



SNOWBERRY.
SYMPHORICAR-
POS ALBUS

David Wagner is a botanist who has worked in Eugene for more than 30 years. He studies mosses, liverworts and hornworts and teaches moss classes. He may be reached at fernzenmosses@me.com.

LIGHTEN UP

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

When five topless women show up in front of your house, that's not terrorism. That's an answer to a frat boy's prayers.