

ENDANGERED WOLVES. INVASIVE WOLVES?

A lawsuit over wolf management continues as a furor brews over wolf killings



A PUP FROM THE WENAHA PACK IN
WALLOWA COUNTY OREGON

PHOTO COURTESY ODFW

The Aug. 3 announcement by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that it plans to kill two wolves from the Harl Butte Pack in Wallowa County on Oregon's east side elicited howls of anger and dismay from wolf advocates as well as complaints from ranchers who wanted to see the entire pack wiped out.

Meanwhile in the lawsuit over the state's decision to strip wolves of their endangered species status, local conservation group Cascadia Wildlands chalked up a win when the court ruled that the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and Oregon Farm Bureau could not amend their legal brief to add the argument that wolves are an invasive, rather than endangered, species.

According to ODFW, the Oregon minimum known wolf population in 2016 was 112 wolves. Wolves existed in Oregon until they were extirpated (locally wiped out) in the early 1900s.

Gray wolves were on the state endangered species list until late 2015, when the Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to delist them. In 2016 the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 4040, blocking judicial review of wolf delisting, and Gov. Kate Brown controversially signed the bill into law. Cascadia Wildlands was one of three nonprofits to file a lawsuit against the delisting.

HB 4040 also resulted in the dismissal of the lawsuit, but it was reinstated in July 2016.

According to Nick Cady, the legal director for Cascadia Wildlands, the delisting had more than 10,000 public comments in favor of keeping wolves on Oregon's endangered species list. Cady says the state has "pretty good laws" when it comes to wolves but that the ODFW commission did not use the best available science or peer reviewed research in making its decision.

On Aug. 2, the Oregon Court of Appeals denied the Oregon Cattlemen's Association's motion to amend its lawsuit and argument that "the species of gray wolf being protected under current law is not actually eligible for protection because it is not an indigenous species, but rather, in effect, an invasive species." The OCA relied on information that was not in the agency record to make that argument.

In the motion it sought to replace that citation with a book and study, which the group says ODFW did look at. But the appellate court ruled that ODFW did not consider the book or a study in making its delisting decision and threw the motion out.

Asked if the argument that wolves were invasive opens the door to the idea that cows are invasive, Jerome Rosa of the OCA says, "Cattle are not an invasive species, and that's the most bogus thing I ever heard."

Rosa says cattle are not invasive because "they are managed."

Rosa says the OCA would like to see the entire Harl Butte wolf pack killed or, in ODFW terms, lethally taken. "Calves are being decimated; wolves will do this just for sport," he says.

The state's Wolf Management and Conservation Plan allows for killing wolves as a way to deal with livestock depredation. But rather than wipe out the whole pack, "we will use incremental removal to give the remaining wolves the opportunity to change their behavior or move out of the area," Roblyn Brown, ODFW acting wolf coordinator, says in a press release.

The Harl Butte pack hunts on both public and private lands.

Those wanting to know more on the wolf-cattle debate can check out Predator Defense's new documentary *The Profanity Peak Pack: Set Up & Sold Out* on its website predatordefense.org. Predator Defense is a national nonprofit founded in Eugene.

And at 7 pm Friday, Aug. 11, at the University of Oregon's Museum of Natural and Cultural History there will be a celebration of the new Wolves and Wild Lands exhibit, which includes food, beer tastings and an outdoor movie about Oregon wolf OR-7. "The exhibit and opening event are designed to encourage dialogue about wolf conservation in Oregon," Ann Craig, the museum's exhibitions director, says in a press release.

The MNCH is at 1680 East 15th Avenue, and the exhibit runs through February 2018. More at natural-history.uoregon.edu.

HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

ROB MILLER

"My mission in life is bringing people to nature in a sacred way," says Rob Miller, founder, program designer and lead guide for Cascadia Quest, a Eugene nonprofit that offers nine-day small-group wilderness rites of passage for adults and for 14-18 year-old boys. Outings for teenage girls will be added next year. "Music was where I found my voice," says Miller, a Florida native who started playing clarinet in high school, majored in music performance at the University of Miami, and improvised on saxophone and flute in world beat bands in New York City and on tour. His own band, Rob Miller and Prime Meridian, toured Pakistan, India and Bangladesh in 1999. "Then I stopped playing music professionally," he says. "I shifted my focus from me to we, thinking about community and family." He married an Oregon native, Anna Miller, and moved to Eugene in 2002, where daughter Surya was born a year later. The couple divorced in 2010, but are now "good friends and co-parents." He took up wildcrafting — gathering mushrooms for restaurants and herbs for an herbal medicine company. "I still do that," he says. "But when I took a rite of passage nine years ago, I was so profoundly affected that I wanted to share it with others." He began leading vision quests for adult groups, then added rites of passage for teenage boys becoming young men. Cascadia Quest will host a welcome-home ceremony, free and open to the public, for participants in its August mixed-gender adult vision quest, who will share their experiences noon to 5 pm Sunday, Sept. 24, at the Wayne Morse Family Farm, 595 Crest Drive in Eugene. Learn more at cascadiaquest.org.

