

Library Notes from Lower Umpqua Library District



Lower Umpqua Library District (LULD) is having a bingo library borrowing program for all ages. Participants in Library Bingo will earn raffle tickets throughout the year by borrowing items from the library such as books, movies, and magazines, which will be used towards quarterly and annual prize drawings.

Library Bingo is a similar concept as the Summer Reading Program, except that it is year-round, includes movies as well as books, and is open to adults in addition to kids. The generalized bingo card will cover the breadth of the library's collection in adult, young adult (teen),

and juvenile age categories and there will also be specialized bingo cards focused on specific subjects, such as cards for subgenres of romance and speculative fiction. For example, if you are interested in reading books in a specific genre such as romance, you could earn raffle tickets by reading up to 25 different types and specializations of that genre, such as 25 kinds of romance novels (romances set in different time periods and regions, with different types of plots, paranormal romances vs. historical romances, etc.). Effort has been made to meet a wide range of interests so that there are bingo cards available that appeal to as many different people as possible.

LULD is participating in the countywide *One County, One Book* contest in which middle schoolers can read a specific book, create a project about it and submit their entries to the library. Participants will compete with other kids from throughout Douglas County. Submissions are due by January 23rd. This year's book is *Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia Wrede, which is a fantasy

novel involving a princess and a dragon. LULD has two copies of this book available for checkout.

Six neighborhood library modules (weatherproofed bookcases) are available throughout LULD's service area. A new module was recently installed outside the Oregon Coast School of Art in Gardiner. It joins the neighborhood library modules at Highland Pool in uptown Reedsport, at the fire stations in Winchester Bay and Wells Creek, at Smith River store on Lower Smith River Road, and in Ash Valley near the junction of Elk Ridge Forest Road and Loon Lake Road. Books and DVDs may be borrowed from neighborhood library modules on an honor system basis and are kept stocked by LULD staff and by volunteers.

As a reminder, preschool storytime continues to be held at LULD every Wednesday at 11 am.

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Invasive Pests a Major Impact in Oregon

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by the Oregon Department of Forestry and research partners indicate the insect is now widespread across the northern Willamette Valley. Traps placed between Portland and Salem captured more than 500 beetles across roughly 30 monitoring sites, spanning counties including Clackamas, Washington, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill.

Those numbers matter because they indicate the beetle is established rather than newly introduced. Invasive species specialists say early detection can sometimes allow eradication, but once populations are widespread, management shifts toward mitigation and damage control.

Unlike insects that defoliate trees, the Mediterranean oak borer causes harm from the inside out. The beetle burrows into oak trees and introduces a fungus that disrupts the tree's vascular system, limiting its ability to transport water and nutrients. Over time, affected trees experience dieback, declining health, and eventual death. The process can take years, making early symptoms easy to overlook.

Oregon white oak is considered particularly vulnerable. Once common across valley savannas and foothills, white oaks support hundreds of plant, insect, bird, and mammal species. They are also valued for their drought tolerance and role in wildfire resilience. Many of the remaining stands already face pressure from development, habitat fragmentation, and prolonged drought.

Foresters report that stressed trees appear to be most susceptible to infestation. Drought conditions, soil compaction, root disturbance, and prior disease all increase vulnerability. That means oak stands near roads, homes, and agricultural fields may be at higher risk than trees in intact natural areas.

What concerns land managers most is the lack of proven treatment options. Insecticide applications can be effective on individual high-value trees, such as those in parks or historic sites, but results have been inconsistent and are not practical at a landscape scale. Removing infested trees can

slow local spread but does not stop beetles already established in surrounding areas.

While the Mediterranean oak borer does not appear to kill trees as rapidly as the emerald ash borer has devastated ash species in the Midwest and East, officials caution against complacency. The ecological impact of losing mature oak woodlands would be significant, affecting wildlife habitat, soil stability, and long-term forest diversity.

At the same time, Oregon's waterways are facing a very different invasive threat. The Chinese mitten crab, a freshwater-capable crab native to East Asia, was recently confirmed twice in the Willamette River. These sightings represent only the second and third documented cases of the species in Oregon, but officials say even limited detections warrant attention.

The mitten crab is easily identified by the dense patches of hair on its claws, resembling mittens. Unlike native Dungeness or estuarine crabs, mitten crabs spend much of their lives in freshwater rivers and streams before migrating downstream to brackish water to reproduce. This life cycle allows them to move far inland, using river systems as highways.

In other parts of the world, particularly California and Europe, mitten crabs have caused significant ecological and infrastructure damage. They prey on fish eggs and aquatic insects, compete with native species such as crayfish, and disrupt food webs critical to salmon and steelhead recovery. Their burrowing behavior weakens stream banks, levees, and flood control structures, increasing erosion and maintenance costs.

Oregon wildlife officials say it is too early to know whether the mitten crab has established a breeding population in the Willamette system. However, the species' history elsewhere suggests that even a small number of individuals can lead to rapid population growth if conditions are favorable.

Monitoring efforts for both invasive species are now intensifying. State agencies, universities, and federal

partners are using a combination of trapping, shoreline surveys, and environmental DNA testing to assess spread and population density. Environmental DNA, or eDNA, allows scientists to detect genetic material left behind in water or soil, offering early clues even when physical specimens are rare.

Public reporting is also a key component of detection. Officials encourage



residents to report unusual crab sightings or oak trees showing signs of unexplained decline. Photos, locations, and dates help researchers build more accurate maps of infestation and movement.

The economic implications extend beyond environmental concerns. Oak woodlands contribute to property values, tourism, and agricultural shelterbelts. River health affects fishing, recreation, and flood management. Invasive species often carry long-term costs that fall on local governments, landowners, and taxpayers long after the initial introduction.

Experts note that global trade and travel increase the likelihood of new

Small-Town Libraries Become Community Anchors Again Lane • Douglas • Coos Counties

For many small towns across Western Oregon, the local library is quietly reclaiming an old role — not just as a place for books, but as a community anchor.

Rural libraries from the Umpqua to the Willamette now host job-search help, résumé workshops, veterans' meetups, kids' story time, art events, and basic tech support for seniors. Recent grant programs aimed at rural libraries emphasize that they are "vital community hubs" where residents can get online, apply for jobs, research housing or benefits, and simply connect with other people — often at no cost.

In Lane County, for example, libraries have added Wi-Fi hotspot lending and stronger broadband to serve people who don't have reliable internet at home.

In Douglas County, Master Gardeners and food-security groups use library meeting rooms to run classes and seed libraries, tying literacy and food access together.

Librarians say the biggest shift isn't a new building or a flashy program. It's the understanding that, in a town where other institutions have thinned out, the library may be the last truly public indoor space left: no purchase required, no membership, no agenda other than service. Staff now spend as much time connecting people to social services and local resources as they do shelving books.

Funding pressures and staffing shortages haven't gone away, and some branches still rely on short-term grants to keep newer programs going. But foot traffic is steady, and in many places it's up. Patrons are using computers, asking for help with online forms, attending small events, and — just as importantly — getting out of the house.

For Western Oregon communities that value both privacy and neighborliness, the local library is once again becoming the place where those two can peacefully overlap.

Coastal High Schools Bring Back Skilled Trades Pathways Coos • Coastal Lane Counties

Along the coast, several high schools are rebuilding something that quietly slipped away over the last few decades: hands-on skilled trades programs.

In towns from Florence and Reedsport down to Coos Bay and North Bend, schools are partnering with local employers, ports, and community colleges to bring back classes in welding, carpentry, basic construction, and even maritime maintenance. Students learn how to use tools safely, read plans, and complete real projects. Some programs are already aligning with community college certificates so graduates can walk across the stage with both a diploma and a credential employers recognize.

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