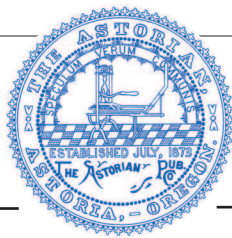


OPINION

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Deer belong in wild, not Astoria

Fifty years ago when my wife, Carol, and I visited relatives in Astoria with our children, there was no deer population in town to speak of.

Beautiful rose gardens in most parts of town were every bit as beautiful as the famous rose gardens in Portland. In fact, people in the northern Chicago suburbs where we lived would spend thousands to have flower gardens of the kind the most modest house in Astoria would have. In those days, the talk in Astoria about wildlife in town seemed to revolve only around "all those blasted raccoons."

Today, there are so many deer around that beautiful roses, tulips and other flowers that used to be so plentiful and such a joy are now just deer candy. Our once flower-filled city is left with only a few flowering plant species, such as rhododendron and the like, that deer look down their noses at.

Not everybody thinks deer are a problem. Our city's kind mayor, Arline LaMear, once told me half the city wants to get rid of all the deer. But the other half loves them. Some folks would like Astoria's deer protected for tourists — even those tourists who block streets to point and gawk while the deer stare back.

Astoria deer wouldn't make good eating by any human standard. The fertilizer spread around yards to keep grass and weeds green makes the animals an unhealthy prospect for a meal. And it takes lots of other kinds of fertilizer and toxic stuff to kill the bugs and encourage flowering plants that deer like to chew on.

I must admit my grumpiness about deer softens in the spring. All those newborn fawns merrily prancing around in back of the house softens my heart and makes me wish they wouldn't grow up. But that wouldn't be fair to either them or to momma deer.

And speaking of momma deer, poppa deer don't seem to stick around much in the spring. The bucks seem to make every effort to avoid even the appearance of family life. "Impregnate and leave all the work to momma" seems to be the buck's credo in the springtime. But hey, that's nature's way.

Should we sterilize them?

My conversation with Mayor LaMear ended my efforts to find an old-deer's home out in



Doe with fawn on Commercial Street.

'Even this grumpy old man can't help but smile when all the springtime fawns begin running around.'

the wild countryside many miles from town to relocate the critters. I thought moving them would solve an Astoria problem while helping coyotes lead an easier life for a while. Those few coyotes I've spotted over the years south of Astoria always looked hungry and certainly weren't overweight. And the two cougars I've spotted in the Olney area in recent years looked positively emaciated and starved.

I must admit, though, I didn't think through the fertilizer issue. There wouldn't be much sense in providing deer for wild coyotes and cougars that'd be toxic for humans to eat.

Actually, the more I think about Astoria's deer, the more I'm convinced modern veterinary medicine gives us the better solution. Females can be made sterile with a vaccine approved by the Environmental Protection Agency, injected by darts fired by compressed air guns. That would solve the deer problem entirely in a few short years. That, no doubt,

would be far more compassionate to a lot of folks than delivering the deer to predators further up the food chain.

What puzzles me most about Astoria's deer population is where they all go to die. And what happens to their bodies when they do die. I have yet to find a dead deer in town, except of course for the very rare roadkill. Nor have I ever found deer bones, antlers, or other deer remains anywhere in town. I find that odd, although the young folks who hike the trails around town may have spotted them.

I often wonder about the mortality rate, because identifiable deer that roam around our part of town seem to disappear after two or three years.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, in a study done years ago, said all wild deer in Oregon (whether white-tail, black-tailed or mule deer) on the average live anywhere from nine to 15 years. So why are Astoria's

deer so short-lived?

Fish and Wildlife also says male deer have a shorter life span than female deer. The department attributes that to all the stress and fighting wild bucks undergo during rutting season.

Not so wild anymore

It seems to me Astoria's deer are no longer the wild creatures nature intended as part of the natural food chain for the animal species. Being so close around humans for so many years, they've morphed into an extremely weak, fragile, and vulnerable animal that no longer can stand adversity — whether it be winter weather, human harassment or other stressful experiences.

The rutting season mentioned by Fish and Wildlife for wild deer is a good example. I've seen rutting fights among wild mature deer only in videos or movies. But I've seen many rutting "fights" by mature Astoria deer in the yard in back of our house. I typed "fights" in quotes because they're not fights at all. Both bucks always act more like they're deer-dancing. Neither is trying to be the strongest buck for the privilege, as nature intended, to mate with a female. And the result is that weak deer are procreating ever weaker deer every year.

And just as all weak living things die much sooner than strong living ones, so do Astoria's deer. It seems to me that's not the right and moral thing for us humans to do to an animal species.

Astorians might be wise to show their youngsters that wonderful early 1940s movie, "Bambi." That Disney movie about a wild deer growing up enthralled us little kids back then. That's, of course, a lifetime before iPhones, texting, selfies and video games. But Bambi instills a meaningful idea of what nature intended a wild animal to become. And it sure isn't Astoria's deer.

The deer problem in town isn't all about flowers. Or only about a city that used to be filled with gorgeous rose gardens and flower-filled yards. What matters more is our sense of responsibility toward animals in our neck of the woods. Deer belong in the wild far from town as nature intended.

But until they're gone from Astoria, even this grumpy old man can't help but smile when all the springtime fawns begin running around.

Don Haskell is a retired attorney and former Clatsop County commissioner who lives in Astoria.

Water under the bridge

Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers



10 years ago this week — 2008

What was described as an old-time-hippie outdoor festival made a quick transition into an indoor rock show, when downpours washed the Concert for Big Red out of the Clatsop County Fairgrounds and into the Clatsop Community College Performing Arts Center.

After battling with rain for a few hours, festival organizers moved the final few bands playing in the Concert for Big Red fundraiser into the PAC in the late afternoon. The indoor environment provided a much more intimate atmosphere for some of the event's big-name acts.

A crowd of more than 200 roared for the Airplane Family Reunion, a group of four original members of Jefferson Airplane, including founders Marty Balin and Signe Anderson Ettl. The musicians received multiple standing ovations, and onlookers danced in the aisles as the band played classics such as "3/5 of a mile in 10 seconds" and "High Flyin' Bird."

Though they have been known to cause headaches in the Columbia River estuary, dredge spoils aren't all bad.

In fact, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a list of beneficial uses for the sediment it removes from the Columbia River shipping channel each year to clear the way for river commerce.

Case in point: This week the federal agency is spreading 125,000 of dredge material — approximately 12,500 dump truck loads — behind the North Jetty on Benson Beach in Cape Disappointment State Park in Ilwaco, Wash. The \$1.7 million project is a quick fix for December storm damage to a protective sand berm behind the jetty.

In the long run, experts say the ongoing erosion at the site will continue to weaken the jetty and eat away at the beach.

Labor Day Weekend is ahead and it's one of the top boating weekends of the year in Oregon and the Oregon State Marine Board wants to encourage boaters to hit the waterways and invite friends or family along for the ride.

Marine officers will be on the water to assist boaters and keep the waterways safe. "The top violations so far this sum-



A movie poster from 1943. This film popularized the theory that Amelia Earhart's disappearance was connected with secret work for the Navy, according to IMDB.

mer involve not having life jackets, a boater education card or current boat registration. Other violations include reckless operation and alcohol," says Massey.

50 years ago — 1968

Astoria's greatest festival, the annual Regatta, is coming this week, and there was increasing hope that favorable weather will arrive along with it.

The festival will open with arrival of USS Colonial (LSD-18), and USS Frank Knox (DDR-742) at Pier 2 of the port docks. The two Navy ships will remain for the Regatta and the Colonial will act as Regatta flagship.

The subject of Indians fishing in the Columbia River was under examination today in the Astoria area.

Russell Bristow, executive secretary of the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union, said he had received some calls recently from Indians saying they had been questioned by Oregon State Police about fishing in the river without a license.

Bristow said he called the Washington Department of Fisheries and was informed that Washington is giving Indian permits, free of charge, to fish the lower Columbia providing they fish in season.

The brief Columbia salmon season continues to be "terrible," in the view of Russell Bristow, executive secretary of the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union.

Bristow said one boat took 1,500 pounds of salmon Monday night, but other catches ranged from 25 to 200 pounds.

75 years ago — 1943

The first big circus, entirely under canvas, to play Astoria for several years, will be presented at Tapiola park under sponsorship of the Astoria Regatta association.

This is the first time that Tapiola Park has been used for such an event. Use of Gyro field, customarily employed for circuses, was refused several weeks ago by vote of the City Council. The council denied Gyro field because a circus would damage the turf.

Though most famous for its highly-trained elephants, Arthur Bros. Circus also includes other specialty acts. Among them are Captain Van der Wall and his black-maned African lions; the great Sing Lee Sing troupe of Chinese wonder workers who came to the United States from China for the San Francisco world's fair; the Olvera troupe of head and high perch balancers; Miss Eleanor, trapeze artist; Ryans Liberty horses; three rings of educated dogs; Mel Henry and his Funsters; and many other famous circus names.

With 322 exhibits entered, the Clatsop County 4-H fair began this morning in the 4-H building. Featured event of the day will be the pet show this evening.

High among other events of the day is to be the Mutt Dog and Pet show, sponsored by the Kiwanis club.

The long-awaited directive order of the 12th regional war labor board in the dispute of Columbia River Cannery Operators and Cannery Employees was received here from Seattle.

Features of the order are endorsement of the check-off system for collection of union dues by cannery operators, denial of the workers' representatives at hearing of the board in Seattle for a 44-hour work week, and authorization of a pay increase for fishing industry workers here of approximately 15 percent, retroactive to May 1 of this year.