

Piece of sacred meteorite returned to tribe

By ERIN ROSS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

A small piece of Oregon's most storied rock added a chapter to its history Friday when the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum in McMinnville returned it to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

The meteorite Tomanowos, also referred to as the Willamette Meteorite, formed about 4.5 billion years ago, at the start of the solar system. For an unknown amount of time it sped around the sun before falling to Earth. Thirteen thousand years ago, glacial floods carried it to the Willamette Valley, near the city of West Linn.

A little over a hundred years ago, it was donated to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and a few small chunks were sliced off and sold.

And on Friday, a 4.5 ounce piece of the sacred meteorite finally returned home.

Cheryle A. Kennedy, Grand Ronde tribal chairwoman, says she felt overwhelmed by the event. "The representation of a piece of the meteorite being brought back to the people is also representative to us that healing is occurring with us," she said. "That all the parts are being returned, and we as a people can come home as well."

Tomanowos is over 30,000 pounds, making it the largest meteorite found in North America and the sixth-largest in the world. Comprised of iron and nickel, scientists think it may have formed when a long-gone planet shattered. Because of its large



A piece of the sacred meteorite Tomanowos, also known as the Willamette meteorite. It was returned to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde as a donation by the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum.

size and distinctive shape, it's become one of the best-known meteorites in the world.

But long before Tomanowos was donated to the American Museum of Natural History, it had achieved cultural importance to the Clackamas people of the Willamette Valley, whose descendants are members of the tribes of the Grand Ronde. The Clackamas knew that Tomanowos came from the sky, and used the water that gathered in its divots and basins for cleansing and healing.

In 1999, the tribes attempted to regain the meteorite under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. In the end, an agreement was reached with the American Natural History Museum, which recognizes

the cultural significance of the meteorite to the Grand Ronde people, allows them to conduct ceremonies at Tomanowos, and says that if it ever goes off display, it will be returned to the tribes.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde make a yearly visit to Tomanowos, where they hold a private ceremony at the museum. "We express our appreciation from the standpoint that they are keeping something which is very sacred to us," says Kennedy.

The museum's interim executive director indicated in a prepared statement that the meteorite's sacred nature for the Grand Ronde was an important factor in the decision to return it.

"It is a great honor for the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum to return this culturally significant artifact

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

to the Grand Ronde Tribe, so they may share it with generations to come," John Rasmussen, the interim executive director, said.

This is the second piece of the meteorite to be donated to the Grand Ronde, and there are thought to be over a hundred of pieces of the meteorite owned by private collectors across the country. Kennedy hopes there will be more returned.

"I think that when folks hear the story, they will come forward and donate their pieces back," Kennedy says. "Recognizing that as all of the meteorite is returned, it helps make a people whole."

This piece, along with the second, will be on display at the Chachalu Museum and Cultural Center as part of an exhibit called "Witness." It opens in late spring.

Hillsboro man arraigned on rape, sex abuse charges

By BRENNNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

A Hillsboro man found with a teenage girl in a snow-bound vehicle earlier this month pleaded not guilty Monday to second-degree rape and first-degree sexual abuse.

The Clatsop County Sheriff's Office first made contact with Christopher Thomas Knox, 37, after he called to request help getting his rental car out of the snow near the Gnat Creek Campground along U.S. Highway 30.

When they arrived, deputies found through further investigation that the 13-year-old girl Knox originally introduced as his daughter was not related to him, and that she had left

her home without the knowledge or consent of her parents.

Officers later determined Knox may have sexually abused the girl near her home in King County, Washington, and arrested him for second-degree attempted rape.

More information about the case was revealed during further investigation and led a grand jury to indict Knox on second-degree rape and first-degree sexual abuse, Deputy District Attorney Beau Peterson said. He was also charged with luring a minor and online sexual corruption of a child in the first degree.

Knox's bail was set at \$250,000. His next court date is scheduled for March.



Christopher Thomas Knox

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Oregon fish may be removed from endangered list

A rebound for the Borax Lake chub

By JES BURNS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

An Oregon fish is being proposed for removal from the federal list of endangered species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service started the delisting process Monday for the Borax Lake chub.

The chub is a tiny golden minnow that only lives in one place — southeast Oregon's Borax Lake. The lake is small, hot, alkaline and a rather surprising place to find fish.

The fish are believed to have been isolated there after the lake that covered the current-day Alvord Desert began to shrink more than 10,000 years ago. They took refuge around a hot spring that maintains Borax Lake year round.

Unlike many species, the Borax Lake chub wasn't listed as endangered because its population was in decline. It was extended protections in the early 1980s, when geothermal energy exploration threatened to disrupt the spring that provided the fish's only habitat.

Since listing, the 10-acre lake and land around it was



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The tiny Borax Lake chub is being proposed for removal from the endangered species list.

purchased and protected by The Nature Conservancy.

"By doing that, it meant that there was no more grazing right up to the edge of the lake. It meant that the land in close proximity to the lake was not available for mineral or geothermal development, and it also restricted access to the lake," said Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Chris Allen.

The federal Bureau of Land Management then added an extra buffer by designating the public land around the lake an area of critical environmental concern. Allen said the state of Oregon also secured the water rights for the spring, making irrigation diver-

sions a thing of the past.

The Fish and Wildlife Service says it has been putting an emphasis on reclassifying and delisting species when they've met recovery goals.

Because the Borax Lake chub is only found in one small lake in Harney County, over the course of 40 years, wildlife managers were able address most of the threats to the species.

"It is always to easier to work on recovery actions on species with more narrow distributions. And you can't get too much more narrow than the Borax Lake chub," Allen said. "The smaller the range of the species the more you have the ability to control conserva-

tion management of that by land ownership."

But that same limited species range also presents a more dire situation.

"This is it. This is the only place on Earth where that fish lives, the only habitat that's available," said Garth Fuller, Eastern Oregon conservation director with The Nature Conservancy. "It can't disperse. It can't move. There isn't a standby. You don't have a second chance."

That's part of the reason that Fuller would rather see the minnow downlisted to "threatened" instead of being removed from the endangered species list completely, as is being proposed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. He says there are still some threats remaining to the chub.

"I think the largest hurdle is the remaining potential for geothermal development on the private lands in the area. And even though it may seem unlikely, that geothermal reservoir that feeds the lake, that's so critical to the habitat, is still vulnerable to development impacts," Fuller said.

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