

Eagles: The US Fish and Wildlife Service issues permits to haze eagles

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An animal may die in a field from other causes but be found with an eagle or coyote hunched over it munching away.

When a bald eagle is clearly the killer, there isn't much ranchers can do about it, anyway. Bald eagles may not be an endangered species anymore, but they are still protected.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues permits to haze eagles, but has not issued any to ranchers this year. The agency has fielded numerous inquiries, however.

"(Bald eagles) are demonstrating increasing tolerance for human activity in parts of Washington and Oregon as their increasing numbers — and increasing human populations — create more overlap between human-occupied and eagle habitats," said Jason Holm, a spokesperson for the federal agency.

Parker lives off Brownsmead Dike Lane, an area crossed by sloughs, dotted with open fields and bordered by tall trees. Prime bald eagle territory.

The rancher is keeping his sheep inside the barn for now while he figures out how to keep eagles away. He has started to experiment with placing scarecrows and flags in his fields. There isn't much else he can legally do without a hazing permit.

And he's holding onto the carcass of a gutted 2 1/2-month-old lamb. He found it in a field with a bald eagle sitting on top of it, he said, and he's waiting for federal biologists to take a look and confirm an eagle was responsible. His neighbor, Ed Johnson, went through a similar process recently.

Johnson, whose house is just visible from Parker's property, lost three lambs this spring. Both men are used to dealing with predators like coyotes. Johnson uses guard dogs to protect his flock from coyotes and roaming domestic dogs. But this is the first year in the roughly three years Parker has been raising lambs that eagles have been a problem.

Dirk Rohne, a Brownsmead



Katie Frankowicz/The Astorian

Lambs and sheep share an enclosure on Ben Parker's farm.

dairy farmer and Port of Astoria commissioner, heard from a number of people about eagle issues this spring.

"The bald eagles impacting livestock is a new one," he said. "I can't say anyone was talking about that until this year."

On a positive note, he added, the eagles seem to have taken a major bite out of Brownsmead's invasive nutria population.

Johnson has lived in the area for more than 40 years and maintains a flock of around 55 ewes and 80 lambs. He feels that issues with eagles come in cycles.

When runs of smelt — small forage fish that travel in schools — are strong in the Columbia River, he doesn't see as many eagles. When smelt runs are low, well — "It kind of depends what's around to eat and unfortunately sometimes it's lambs."

For the sheep ranchers in Brownsmead, predation by eagles has not become a substantial financial hit. Ranchers expect to lose some sheep each year to predators.

"I've got nothing against the eagles," Johnson said. "They're beautiful. But at times there would be seven or eight of them sitting around waiting for a little action."

Johnson tends to be philosoph-

ical about it. He's not interested in spending the \$100 on a hazing permit and then more money on things like explosives or other noisemakers to scare the birds. It takes time to get the permit and, besides, the eagles are not a problem every year.

In 1989, Maine was part of a push to establish the Twilight Eagle Sanctuary at Cathlamet Bay, not far from Knappa and Brownsmead. At the time, advocates estimated there were only around 40 bald eagles in the proposed sanctuary boundaries, about half of the total population of bald eagles believed to be in the entire lower river area.

Now, when Maine is out documenting eagle and osprey nests for the state, it is not unusual for him to count more than a dozen bald eagles just on the drive from Gearhart to the Peter Iredale shipwreck at Fort Stevens State Park.

He has seen as many as 21 bald eagles in a single tree on an island in the Columbia River estuary. Recently, birders counted 75 to 100 eagles in a field just outside Astoria.

"A lot of wildlife stories have sad endings," Maine said, "and this is one of those where, 'Oh my gosh, maybe we're too successful.'"

Hunsaker: Phillips will serve as acting superintendent

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Hunsaker has kept her title of superintendent, but has largely been away from the school district over the past few months. She lives in the Portland area with her significant other, Terrence Smyth, who recently resigned as principal of Jewell School and took the same position at Gresham High School.

The school board named Steve Phillips, an executive administrator hired last year to take over from Hunsaker starting next school year, as acting superintendent.

Wendy Crozier, Jewell's dean of students and a former elementary teacher in Portland Public Schools, was named Smyth's interim replacement as principal of the rural K-12 campus. The school district recently hired Jon Wood, the programs coordinator for Nyssa School District in Eastern Oregon, as the principal starting next school year.

School leadership in Jewell has been a revolving door since the departure of Brian Gander, who had been with the school district from 2009 to 2012. Hunsaker joined after a series of three interim superintendents.

Trial: 12-person jury must decide whether Copell is guilty of murder or guilty by aiding, abetting Wilkins

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In his closing statements, Deputy District Attorney Beau Peterson recounted Copell's movements in unison with Wilkins before their arrest without any attempt to leave or contact authorities about the murder. He showed security footage of the two acting friendly while pawning Vinge's possessions.

Peterson pointed to Copell's changing stories about Vinge's murder. Wilkins and Copell initially corroborated denials of Vinge's murder. Copell later admitted that Wilkins had killed Vinge. She later attempted to recant her confession, arguing that they had killed Vinge in self-defense after he attacked them.

"Frankly, what you have is someone absolutely involved in, guilty of murder, lying and coming up with any story they can to get out of it," Peterson told the jury. "I would suggest you think very carefully before you put any stock in anything Ms. Copell says."

Copell's attorney, Alexander Hamalian, argued that Wilkins drove the murder, the selling of Vinge's possessions and the

attempted cover-up. Copell was simply doing what she was told, he said.

The 12-person jury in Copell's trial must decide whether she is guilty of murder or guilty by aiding and abetting Wilkins.

Hamalian has argued there is no DNA or other evidence showing her directly involved in Vinge's murder, nor any corroborating evidence that she helped plan the crime. Copell's presence in the RV when Vinge was murdered does not make her guilty, he told the jury.

"There is not a shred of evidence that (Adeena) Copell participated in the planning or commission of a crime," he said. "There is none. The state wants you to speculate about that. They essentially want you to find evidence of what she did after the fact as evidence of committing the crime, but that's not the law."

During prosecutors' closing statements, Hamalian attempted to have Judge Cindee Matyas declare a mistrial. He claimed Peterson had brought Copell's character into question by calling her a liar, a violation of her rights to due process. Matyas denied his request.

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