

BOARDMAN

Firefighters knock down motel fire

East Oregonian

A small fire at the Riverview Motel in Boardman scrambled local fire crews Friday afternoon, but the damage was minimal.

Chief Marc Rogelstad of the Boardman Rural Fire Protection District said a Boardman police officer called in after seeing smoke at the motel located at 200 Front St., between Interstate 84 and Riverside High School.

No one was injured in the fire. Rogelstad said the flames, which appear to have started in a stack of mattresses that were along the south end of the building, shot up the structure's



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Boardman firefighters mop up at the scene of a fire at the Riverview Motel on Friday in Boardman.

two-story outside wall. However, he said, it appeared the damage was contained to the outer portion

of the structure. The chief said firefighters needed to tear out some of the wood to ensure the fire hadn't gotten

into the wall.

The cause of the fire was still under investigation, Rogelstad said.

Eight personnel from the fire district responded. Although firefighters from Irrigon were initially called for mutual aid, Rogelstad said they were told to stand down shortly after Boardman firefighters arrived on scene.

The motel's manager declined to give his name or discuss the fire. A pair of motel occupants, who asked not to be identified, said they were grateful the blaze didn't result in very much damage to the building.

"We got lucky," the woman said.

BIRDS: During migration, can fly up to 270 miles a day

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set, Simons set up his camera on a tripod to capture some photos of the birds, which had made the city hall chimney near the city council chambers their temporary home. He also counted the birds as best he could. He would give the data to Vaux's swift researcher Larry Schwitters, who documents roost sites for the Audubon Society. Simons counted about 500 birds.

Pedestrians craned their necks to see where Simons was looking.

"All kinds of people stopped," he said. "They asked why I was watching the bats."

As the birder good-naturedly set them straight, he heard the sound of a helicopter taking people on sightseeing rides. He realized the craft's trajectory was directly over the chimney.

"The swifts saw the helicopter and dropped vertical, 500 black ribbons falling as fast as you can imagine," Simons said. "They all dropped out of the sky, backdropped by the sunset, then turned toward the river."

Within several minutes after the helicopter flew over, he said, the birds were back. They spent several nights inside the chimney before heading west to Portland and then south to Mexico for the winter.

Simons, Skirvin and the rest of the bird club invited a Vaux's swift expert to town now that their interest was piqued. They wondered if the birds would return, how they found the chimney and more about these tiny creatures.

Schwitters, who contracts with the Audubon Society, is something of a Vaux's swift detective. He finds chimney roost sites along the birds' migration routes and works to ensure their survival.

The brick chimneys are disappearing, especially in earthquake-prone Southern California. When he learns of a possible new site, such as the one in Pendleton, he gets excited. The roost sites are dotted along the route, including chimneys at churches, schools, homes, businesses and college buildings such as Agate Hall on the University of Oregon campus. The birds fasten themselves to the inside of the brick, overlapping their bodies and moving downward as the temperature cools and upward as the air warms.

During migration, the birds can fly up to 270 miles a day. Roost sites are at most an easy day's flight apart as they fly south to Mexico for the winter.

Schwitters thinks the swifts will return to Pendleton, possibly in April on the way back north, but almost definitely in September during the southern migration. He doesn't know what led them to the Pendleton chimney. He said sometimes wind or a rainstorm interrupts their travels to an established site and they look for something close by.

Bird club members say they've heard reports of the insect-eating birds nesting in northeast Oregon and flying in small groups over the Umatilla River, but hadn't yet seen a large local roost site.

Besides the decline of hollowed-out trees and chimneys, the population is also affected by pesticides.

"The same pesticides that kill bugs also kill the birds that eat bugs," he said.

The more roost sites along the migration routes the better, said Schwitters. He and the members of the Pendleton Bird Club will await the swifts' return.

"They may return or they may not (in April)," Simons said. "We'll have volunteers out there watching."

SCHOOL: EOU started the Oregon Teacher Pathway program to help

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isn't explicit with most teachers. Instead, teachers and students of the same minority group have shared cultural traits that lead to higher student achievement.

"Minority teachers go into it with a different lens than white teachers," he said.

But many hurdles remain in front of minorities who could enter the profession.

Agricultural jobs in the area pay a comparable salary straight out of high school while teaching jobs require a four-year degree. Even if a minority student decides to attend college, teaching might not be the most attractive option.

With minority students more likely to graduate college with student debt than their white peers, many minority students choose to pursue more lucrative degrees.

Medina said many of her friends in Hermiston pursued business degrees, a field she was interested in until she started volunteering at West Park Elementary School as part of a peer mentoring program.

After enrolling at Corban University in Salem, Medina was able to pay for much of her tuition with scholarships. When Medina started to take the mandatory tests the state requires to obtain licensure, she worked up to three jobs to cover the fees.

A new path

Local districts have been aware of the disparity for some time and are seeking ways to address it.

Hermiston School District Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith said the district participates in job fairs in Washington, Idaho and Montana and is considering expanding into California and Arizona.

While the expansive presence exposes the district to wider pool of applicants, it also presents a new set of problem.

Beside the fact that each state has a different teacher licensing process, homesick teachers tend to go back to their home states after a few years. As a result, many local districts have started their own "grow your own" programs, which usually involves peer mentoring and teacher shadowing.

The Umatilla School District, which had a 34-to-1 minority student to teach ratio in 2013, started such a program.

The program boosted the number of Hispanic educa-

tional assistants and secretaries, but Superintendent Heidi Sipe said Latino teachers are still hard to come by.

Hermiston also has a larger ratio of Hispanic classified personnel. The district used to use some of their federal money to help classified employees become teachers, but those funds have since been redirected.

To help districts in their effort to close the gap, EOU started the Oregon Teacher Pathway program.

Spearheaded by Easton-Brooks, the program identifies minorities interested in teaching through Eastern Promise's Success 101 class.

Students that are recommended by faculty are put in a special Pathway class and participate in weekly peer mentoring at local elementary schools. All students that complete the program are automatically admitted to EOU, where they pay \$45 per credit hour instead of the standard \$134.

Pathway members that graduate from EOU's Masters of Arts in Teaching program get priority hiring in the three districts participating in the program — Pendleton, Umatilla and Milton-Freewater.

Pendleton's Strong Response

Even though the Pendleton School District has the lowest minority population

at 33 percent, Easton-Brooks singled the district out for having one of the stronger responses to the program.

The district is unique in the sense that it draws heavily from the Umatilla Indian Reservation, which presents a new set of cultural issues.

Marissa Baumgartner, 19, is an aspiring teacher, a Pendleton High School graduate, a former Happy Canyon Princess and a tribal member.

While she initially planned to pursue a career in elementary school education, she's since switched career tracks to early childhood education after getting a job at the Cay-Uma-Wa Head Start on the reservation.

Like Medina, Baumgartner's teachers were almost all white. While she valued her educational experience, she would have liked to have an American Indian teacher. She said some of her teachers didn't understand certain Indian customs, like root digging in the spring and funerals that spanned several days.

Baumgartner said it can be hard for some tribal members to leave the reservation and find affordable college opportunities.

While some districts are already experiencing positive results from the Pathway program, the Hermiston School District decided to pass after showing initial in-

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