

ISLANDS: Also contain ancient tribal petroglyphs

Continued from 1C

something from a remote and distant world compared to the familiar, irrigated shorelines of northeast Oregon. Isolated from development and interference, the environment shifts dramatically from the rolling sand dunes of Little Blalock to the dense, jungle-like cover of nearby Sand Island.

High up in the weeping willows of Sand Island, it's easy to see the still-empty nests of great blue herons. Farther down the branches, a great egret stops as if to pose, while a black-crowned night heron spies with its brilliant red eyes through invasive false indigo.

"Being out here never fails to fill you with a sense of awe and wonder," Bristow said.

Even wildlife managers don't make it to the islands very often, save the occasional invasive species treatment or nest surveys. More frequent visitors are a surprising number of deer that swim a mile, sometimes more, to make it out to the islands. Occasionally predators, such as coyotes, will also make the trip looking for a meal.

Apart from wildlife, the islands host some significant archaeological findings including ancient tribal petroglyphs. Some are still highly visible in the sunlight, while others have been faded or covered by moss.

Tribal members are allowed access on the islands from their reserved treaty rights, said Chuck Sams, spokesman for the



Pelicans and terns sun themselves on a sand bar near Sand Island on Wednesday in the Columbia River near Irrigon. Sand Island offers nesting birds both ample habitat and safety from predators.

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1969, part of the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, as mitigation for lost riparian habitat following construction of the John Day Dam.

Of the refuge's 26,000 acres, only 1,200 acres are closed to the public,

Bristow said. That leaves plenty of areas where people can still go hiking, bird-watching and enjoy the outdoors.

"These are really special places that are worth protecting," Bristow said.

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A no trespassing sign stands next to a American Indian petroglyphs, lower right, on a rock face in the Umatilla Refuge Islands in the Columbia River.



A great egret stands perched on the branch of a willow tree on Sand Island in the Columbia River near Irrigon. Sand Island offers ample nesting habitat for the native bird populations.

BLOOMIN BLUES

White Trillium an early bloomer

By **BRUCE BARNES**
For The East Oregonian

Name: White Trillium
Scientific name: *Trillium ovatum*



Bruce Barnes

White Trillium is usually thought of as one of the earliest wildflowers to bloom in and west of the Cascades. However, it is also found in the Blue Mountains. The overall range for the plant is from British Columbia to California, and east to Idaho and Colorado. There are 17 species of trillium in the western half of North America, two of which are found in the Blue Mountains.

One species, Purple Trillium, with dark purple flowers borne near the ground, is found west of Ruckle Ridge, from near Thornhollow to the top of the ridge. It is completely replaced by White Trillium on the east-facing side of the ridge overlooking La Grande.

The White Trillium has also been called White Wake-Robin, Bathflower, Buttermilk-Lily, Easter Flower, Ground-Lily, Mooseflower, Snow Trillium, Trinity-Lily, and Wood Lily.

This is a good example of the fact there are no "official" common names for plants. The name *Trillium* is from the Latin for

Trillium ovatum

"three," probably a reference to 3 leaves or 3 petals. *Ovatum* refers to the broad oval leaves.

The photo here was taken near Cascade Locks a month ago. The plant has only 3 leaves united directly to the top of a stalk about 6 to 12 inches high. There are 3 narrow, green sepals beneath the flower, barely sticking out from under the petals.

The petals are a pure white at first, then turn pink to red with age, so the darker red the petals the longer they have been open. If you find a plant in the spring with the 3 leaves but no sign of a flower nor a fruit capsule, it is probably only a few years old, too young to flower.

Research several years ago found that this trillium

lives well over 100 years, and will not survive if its shade from the sun or shelter from wind is removed. If you find one, enjoy its presence, take a picture, but don't dig it up; it could easily be decades before it may be replaced.

Many Indian tribes from Canada to the Southwest have used White Trillium. Medicinal uses for many tribes included treatment for boils and sore eyes. It was considered poison by some, and used as a love potion by other tribes.

Where to find: Look for it in shady, moist forest areas. It should be in bloom on the east side of Ruckle Ridge at middle to upper elevations between now and the next couple of weeks.

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Emily Ann Smith



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