

Quick takes

Wolves delisted

“About time. Now let’s get those tags.”
— Jodie Turk

“Not good. They need to be protected or they’ll be up on the list again. This is a native species that deserves to live in its habitat, love it or hate it you’re not Mother Nature.”

— Joshua Stenovich

“I have seen way more wolves in the last few years than I should in a lifetime.”

— Celie Sturm

Umatilla County honors vets

“I was at the event and I literally felt goosebumps as I looked around and realized these were the people who put their lives on the line for the cause of freedom.”

— Evad Gewtools

Council cracks over road plan

“This is just childish on the city’s part. This is another reason the gas tax didn’t pass: People around here know that the council doesn’t give a rats behind what people think.”

— concernedforgrowth

“Let’s quit trying to be something we are not and start trying to support what is here and making this a small town community where people can afford to water their lawns.”

— Elmer Emmons

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week’s takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Pendleton needs more positivity

The Japanese have a saying about whining and complaining: They say a person is vomiting weakness. Sadly, in Pendleton, one doesn’t have to work very hard to find a very vocal minority that relishes every opportunity it gets to spew weakness on its fellow Pendletonians.

Anyone who has ever read a self-help book or heard a motivational speaker knows that confidence is a prerequisite for success. Negativity begets losing; positivity begets winning. Those are indisputable truths regardless of whether you’re talking about an individual’s psyche or the collective psyche of a community.

Why then, it must be asked, would true-blue Pendletonians run around slandering their own community to anyone who will listen? Do they realize they’re sabotaging their community’s ability to grow? Do they want their community to fail? The answer — in most instances — is no; they love this community just like the rest of us. They behave that way for the following reasons:

1. Predisposition Towards Negativity: They don’t realize that just because they think it’s smart or funny doesn’t mean they should say it; just because they don’t understand the opportunity doesn’t mean it isn’t real; and just because failure is a possibility doesn’t mean it will happen.

2. Misguided/Misinformed: They’re attempting to affect positive change, but don’t know how to go about it. Making assumptions without all the facts, grousing about town, and writing letters to the editor are ways to get attention, but not ways to effect positive change.

3. Ulterior Motive/Political Agenda: Doesn’t like current leadership and has a Machiavellian belief that any harm done today will be justified by gains made from new leadership and a new strategy. The



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Comment

flaws in that philosophy are that it’s incredibly subjective and no plan is ever given time enough to work.

4. Fear of Trying/Failure: Afraid to back any idea for fear it might fail and then they’ll look bad. Safer to not back anything, then they can always say, “See how smart I am? I told you that would fail!”

Why didn’t you listen to me?” It’s much easier to sit back and tear ideas apart, much more difficult to develop and implement them.

None of those are criminal offenses, but all serve to undermine our collective confidence, which damages our ability to attract good people and good businesses. We, as their audience, need to be less receptive. If we truly care about our community, then we need to defend it. It’s our responsibility as Pendletonians to challenge them.

If we were on a team together, which in a sense we are, then those folks above would all be asked to get on board or get off the team. As a community we don’t have that luxury; however, each and every Pendletonian should understand his or her effect on the team.

The Seattle Seahawks derive such strength from their rabid fan base that they consider them an illegal 12th man on the field. That is the undeniable power of positive energy. Unfortunately, the reverse effect is also possible. Growing a community requires a team effort. A winning team requires we set aside self-interests and personal vendettas. It requires we support our team, even when we’re down, and even if we don’t always like

the play that’s called. As Alabama’s 3-time national champion football team exits the locker room, there is a reminder that reads, “Out of Yourself and into the Team.”

Many people and organizations, the city chamber, Round-Up City Development Corporation, Pendleton Development Commission and others, have been working extremely hard to help grow this community. Can we improve? Of course, there are always areas to improve. But rest assured, we have been growing and will continue to grow. It may not seem like it, but there’s been more than \$150 million invested in this community in just the last three years. Almost every major employer has expanded and/or hired new employees in that same time period. If you think that’s the case in every rural town in America, then you need to go visit more rural towns.

Survival of the fittest applies to groups as well as individuals. Nobody promised us easy, Pendleton. We’ll attract what we project. We’ll get what we earn. Your ancestors understood that and braved all manner of hardships to carve out a life here. It’s an affront to all Pendletonians, past and present, when someone slanders this community. We need to be better than that. We need lift, not lip. More arm flapping, less lip flapping. The cowboy that rides 8 seconds believes he’s going to succeed prior to ever getting on, despite having been bucked off countless times before. You’re not going to win every battle, but you need to wholeheartedly believe you can. It should go without saying that our team’s going to get a lot further exuding strength than we will spewing weakness.

Steve Chrisman is airport manager and economic development director for the city of Pendleton.

View from the top

By PEPPER TRAIL
Writers on the Range

Today I hiked along a forest trail near my home. Squirrels scolded, a raven croaked. I moved steadily on. Startled at my approach, a deer bounded away, labored up the loose soil of the steep little canyon, and disappeared. I barely paused. There was nothing there

I encountered (jaguars) eight times. One of those encounters was face-to-face. For those few seconds I lived utterly without human privilege, forever changing my place in the world.

Around the end of a log hops a small bird. It does not react to my motionless form, less than 20 feet away. I cautiously raise binoculars to satisfy my curiosity, and see it is a young hermit thrush in ragged late-summer plumage, its patchy face wearing the naive and slightly desperate expression of a college freshman trying to make his way across an unfamiliar campus.

Obscurely moved by the bird, I impulsively decide to renounce, for this one encounter, my position as the dominant species. I will wait, motionless and silent, for the thrush to do what it wishes until it leaves the scene on its own terms, and in its own time. It is 5:59 p.m.

White, male, American, and by any rational standard rich, I perch atop a global pinnacle of privilege. It is both very comfortable and very uncomfortable, though mostly comfortable. The privilege I enjoy, though, is just in relation to my fellow humans. Beyond white privilege, male privilege, or the privilege inherent in being born in America, is an even deeper and less acknowledged boon — human privilege.

The thrush hops about in the scurf of Douglas-fir needles and dust at the edge of the trail, scratching with both feet and twice lunging forward to seize something I can’t see. At 6:04, it crosses the path, and settles beneath that arching cover of a snowberry bush. It fluffs its feathers for comfort and falls into motionlessness. The canyon is silent, but for a slight trickle of water from the drying creek and the souging of wind through the trees. Time passes.

At 6:08, the thrush gives a small shake and leaps up into the snowberry. It gives its first call, a

single chup, and then at 6:10 flies back to the path, where it resumes its quiet foraging. It finds nothing, and at 6:12 flies about 20 feet upslope into a small dogwood, where it gives a series of calls, accompanied by wing-flips. I risk a look with my binoculars; the thrush shows no reaction to my slight movement, but continues to call and flip his wings. The motions resemble food begging

by a fledgling. Perhaps this youth, hungry and alone, is calling to his parents, nowhere to be found.

At 6:14, the thrush flies to the path behind me, less than 15 feet away. It shows no awareness of my presence, and after a minute of foraging, flies out of sight down the creek. For 16 minutes, I had put aside human privilege. It felt like a long time.

It wasn’t. But it gave me a more intimate encounter with another species than I have had for a very long time.

Years ago, I lived in the South American rainforest, doing graduate research. The remote reserve was still home to all its wild beasts, including jaguars. Attacks by jaguars on humans are almost unheard-of, and yet jaguars are definitely capable of killing a person. I encountered the animals eight times. One of those encounters was face-to-face. For those few seconds I lived utterly without human privilege, forever changing my place in the world.

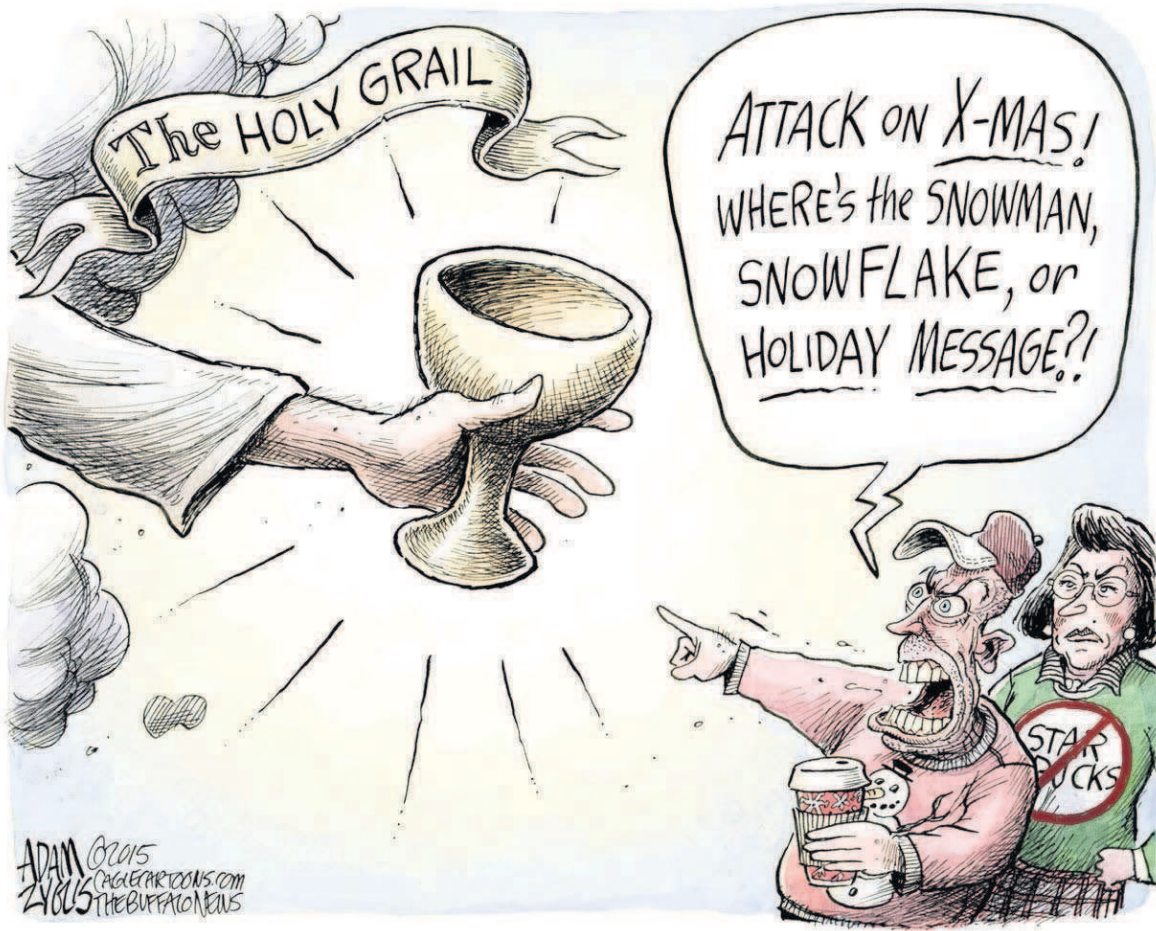
Most of us have never lived in a landscape with large predators. Most have never experienced nature as anything worse than an inconvenient blizzard, a drought that killed the landscaping, a windstorm that knocked out the power. We have lived like kings, and like kings, we never questioned the justice of our privileges.

Monarchies are overthrown, and empires fall. No single species can forever appropriate all the resources of the world for its own. It is likely that climate chaos, acting through epidemics, agricultural collapse, or migration-fueled wars, will end human privilege, if not planetary domination, by the end of this century.

As individuals, there is only so much we can do to prepare.

But here’s one thing I’m going to try — to practice living without human privilege for a few minutes a week. Let the world be. Watch what happens. Repeat.

Pepper Trail is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News. He lives and writes in Oregon.



GOP at an immigration crossroads

It’s no exaggeration to say that the next six months will determine the viability of the Republican Party. The demographics of this country are changing. This will be the last presidential election cycle in which the GOP, in its current form, has even a shot at winning the White House. And so the large question Republicans must ask themselves is: Are we as a party willing to champion the new America that is inexorably rising around us, or are we the receding roar of an old America that is never coming back?

Within that large question the GOP will have to face several other questions.

The first is: How is 21st-century America going to view outsiders? For Republicans in the Donald Trump camp, the metaphor is very clear: A wall. Outsiders are a threat and a wall will keep them out.

Republicans in the Jeb Bush camp have a very different metaphor. As Bush and his co-author Clint Bolick wrote in their book, “Immigration Wars,” “When immigration policy is working right it is like a hydroelectric dam: a sturdy wall whose valves allow torrents of water to pour through, creating massive amounts of dynamic energy.” Under this metaphor the outside world is not a threat; it’s a source of creativity, dynamism and perpetual renewal.

The second question Republicans have to ask is: Can the party see reality? The great Victorian critic John Ruskin once wrote: “The more I think of it I find this conclusion more impressed upon me — that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for

one who can see.” Some Republican leaders simply lack the ability or willingness to acknowledge reality. Deporting 11 million people is not reality. Building a physical wall across the southern border is not reality. I’m sorry, Ted Cruz, but going back to the gold standard is not reality.

The third GOP question is: How does the party view leadership? For a rising number of Republicans — congregating around Trump and Ben Carson — leadership is about ignorance and inexperience. Actually having prepared for the job is a disqualifying factor. Knowing the substance of government is a negative.

On the other side, people like John Kasich and Bush are becoming more aggressive in their defense of experience, knowledge and craftsmanship. They’ve become more aggressive in making the case that governance is hard and you’ve got to know how things fit together.

In the realm of immigration, the first conclusion any pragmatist draws is that it’s ridiculous to say we just need to start enforcing the laws. The problem, as Bush has argued, is that the laws are dysfunctional. The whole system is wildly broken and it would cause massive dislocation if the rules were actually enforced. The system needs to be reformed.

The other conclusion any pragmatist draws is that for political and practical reasons, the whole system has to be reformed comprehensively and at once. You can’t do anything effective unless all the pieces fit together. As Bush and Bolick argued in their book, “A goal of sealing the border is hopeless without creating an immigration pipeline that provides a viable alternative to illegal immigration.”

As anybody with legislative experience knows, nothing can be passed unless Republican interests are rallied along with Democratic interests, unless Silicon Valley’s political influence is joined by the farm state’s political influence. Doing that requires experience and knowledge.

Republican craftsmen understand this reality. Political naïfs do not.

The fourth question is: How does the Republican Party treat the distrust that is so pervasive in our society?

For some in the Cruz, Trump and Bobby Jindal camps, this distrust is to be exploited. This produces a kind of nihilism. Tear down. Oppose. Scorn. Shut down government but do not have an actual plan to achieve your goals once it’s shut down. Depose a House speaker but have no viable path forward once he is gone.

The other approach is to see distrust as a problem that can be reduced with effective conservative governance. Under Ronald Reagan, faith in government actually rose, because people saw things like tax reform getting done. Republicans in this camp view cynicism as a poison to be drained, not a kerosene to be lit.

On all these levels, the Republican Party faces a crossroads moment. Immigration is the key issue around which Republicans will determine the course of their party. It’ll be fascinating to see which way they go.

One more point. I’m sorry, Marco Rubio, when your party faces a choice this stark, with consequences this monumental, you’re probably not going to be able to get away with being a little on both sides.

David Brooks’s column on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times started in September 2003.