

Interstate 84 bighorns captured, transported

2016 Owyhee hunts canceled

By **GEORGE PAVLEN**
East Oregonian

Wildlife officials took to the skies earlier this week to capture 26 bighorn sheep from Philippi Canyon along Interstate 84 in Eastern Oregon and move them to the Diablo Mountain and Coglan Buttes herds in Lake County.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife also captured seven Rocky Mountain sheep from the Lookout Mountain Unit in Baker County and moved them up to Washington as part of the Hells Canyon Initiative — a joint effort by state and federal agencies and sportsman groups to restore bighorns in the area.

Trapping bighorns is a dramatic operation that requires firing nets from a specially designed gun out of a moving helicopter. Once captured, the sheep are blindfolded, restrained and taken to a location where ODFW biologists and veterinarians test the animals for diseases.

The bighorns are then trucked to their final destination and introduced to their new herds. ODFW posted footage of the operation on YouTube, where the video has been watched nearly 500 times.

ODFW works every year to thin overpopulated herds of bighorns and supplement those that need new individuals for genetic diversity. It's all part of a decades-long effort to restore the native animal to its historic range.

Bighorn sheep were first reintroduced to southeast Oregon in 1954, and the population has since grown to 3,500-3,700. Bighorns were brought to northeast Oregon in 1971, and now total roughly 800.

Disease concerns

After moving sheep from Philippi Canyon — known as the I-84 herd — ODFW began stepping up disease testing in the Whitehorse Unit of far southeast Oregon in Malheur and Harney counties. A particular strain of pneumonia is now affecting sheep in the unit, which previously led to deaths in Nevada's Santa Rosa Mountains more than a decade ago.

"These bacteria can persist in sheep populations over long periods of time, even decades, and move long distances and across state boundaries," said Colin Gillin,



ODFW biologists and veterinarians test bighorns from Philippi Canyon for diseases before transporting them to the Diablo Mountain and Coglan Buttes herds in Lake County.

wildlife veterinarian with ODFW.

Meanwhile, a more recent outbreak of pneumonia has hit bighorns in the neighboring Owyhee Unit. Helicopter surveys detected a 50-60 percent reduction of sheep between March and December 2015. Samples taken from sheep harvested by hunters tested positive for the disease on both sides of Owyhee Canyon.

"Our biggest concerns at this point is the level of infection, how prevalent the bacteria is in our herds, and whether we can devise a management strategy to mitigate the effects of a pneumonia outbreak," Gillin said.

The outbreak has prompted ODFW to cancel bighorn sheep hunting in the Owyhee Unit for 2016. Any hunter who has already applied for this hunt as a first choice can cancel the application for a refund or change their application.

Disease was one of the factors behind the sheep's annihilation in Oregon in the 1940s. Bighorns are now one of the rarest game mammals in Oregon today, with fewer than 100 tags offered in 2015. Bighorn hunts are considered



ODFW used a helicopter to capture 26 bighorn sheep from the I-84 herd at Philippi Canyon, transplanting the animals to herds in Lake County.

a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity locally.

Hunters have since been an integral part of helping restore bighorns

to the state. Groups like the Oregon Foundation for North American Wild Sheep also lend their help and expertise.

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SKI REPORT

Spout Springs Tollgate, Ore.
Conditions: Good snow-fall, coverage. Open on weekends, including Friday and Saturday evenings.

Anthony Lakes North Powder, Ore.
New snow: Trace
Base: 58"
Conditions: Big storm dropped 13" on Wednesday, wintry-mix fell on runs on Thursday, Friday.

Ski Bluewood Dayton, Wash.
New snow: 4"
Base: 76"
Good storms through weekend, terrain parks open.

Ski Fergi Joseph, Ore.
New snow: 4"
Base: 25" on top
Conditions: Fresh snow, groomed runs, open Jan. 23-24, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mt. Hood Meadows Government Camp, Ore.
New snow: 2"
Base: 104"
Conditions: Poor. Rain-fall throughout week. Rain-soaked hardpack groom. Rain-soaked snow off the groom. Avoid tree wells and ride with a partner.

Some outdoor gear stores lure customers with beer

By **MARK FREEMAN**
(Medford) Mail Tribune

GOLD HILL— River runners who venture into the new Sawyer Station can peruse the rows of Sawyer's signature driftboat oars, check out the newest in stand-up paddleboard paddles and wash it all down with a pint of Southern Oregon Brewery's Killer Rabbit ale.

Instead of being kids in a candy store, customers can be like adults in a craft brewery at Sawyer, which is one of a handful of local outdoor-oriented businesses turning to beer and wine sales as a way to get more people in their stores instead of shopping for their gear online.

Sawyer has been pouring pints of local beer at the company hub in Gold Hill since June, luring in anglers and boaters from the nearby Rogue River to finish off their days on the water with a cold one, or two.

"You know it's the right move when you see kayakers coming in with their dry suits on and fishermen coming in with their waders on," Sawyer co-owner Zac Kauffman says.

Joining Sawyer in pouring pints is Flywheel Bicycle Solutions in Talent and Northwest Outdoor Store in Medford's Bear Creek Plaza, which is prepping to add a lineup of 10 regional brews to its offerings next month. Visitors can drink at the store's reclaimed Sequoia-wood bar



In this Dec. 31 photo, Alan Vos of Phoenix, Ore., has a beer while visiting the Flywheel Bicycle Solutions shop in Talent, Ore. A handful of local outdoor-oriented businesses turn to beer and wine sales as a way to get more people in their stores instead of shopping for their gear online.

or take it home in growlers.

"It was in my business plan when I wrote it seven years ago, and the word growler wasn't even in existence then, but now it's coming into fruition," Northwest Outdoor Store owner Scott Keith says. "It's a place where people can relax and hang out with each other. I want it to be a community hub for the outdoor community."

"Outdoor gear and beer," he says. "It rhymes."

It's a trend the Oregon Liquor Control Commission is tracking and helping to expand as more businesses

look to supplement their regular business with beer and wine sales, OLCC spokesman Mark Pettinger says.

OLCC traces the trend back to the spring of 2012, when a new interpretation of OLCC rules allowed an expansion of where sales of carry-out growlers of beer could be sold, Pettinger says. It began when Bend's Stop-N-Go gas station added a growler station, and now more of these so-called "non-exclusive" businesses are getting the so-called "O-licenses" to sell beer and wine, he says.

The licenses cost \$100 a year and are relatively easy to get, as long as the business remains consistent with city zoning and other local rules, Pettinger says.

Those smaller shops adding beer and wine tend to be in outlying regions around metro areas, with others in urban settings such as in a bike shop six blocks from OLCC headquarters in Salem, Pettinger says.

The shops tend to sport seasonal businesses, and are looking to add beer and wine either as an economic supplement to their regular sales

or to create an ambiance for their customers while there, he says.

That's what put lifelong bicycle man Ian Bagshaw in the bar business nearly two years ago, and he doesn't even drink beer.

The owner of Flywheel Bicycle Solutions bought and remodeled a building on South Pacific Highway three years ago, ending up with a bar-like setting overlooking the repair corner of the shop, Bagshaw says.

"We always liked the idea of having customers watch their bikes getting worked on," Bagshaw says. "Some would even say it would be nice to have a beer."

The alcohol sales seem to have opened cyclists' minds to the possibility that Bagshaw's bike shop might be a place to visit even when their ride doesn't need work.

"Instead of just being a place to buy stuff and get things fixed, it's become a place to hang out," he says. "It's a social hub. It's awesome, and it makes my job more enjoyable."

"For me, being in the bar business after 20-plus years, it was really cool to have some new challenges and step out of my comfort zone," Bagshaw says.

It also gives would-be customers a new reason to push away from the computer keyboard and sip a cold one at the local outdoor shop of their choosing.

Lawmakers, experts explore ways to raise revenue for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

SALEM (AP) — Budget woes at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife have state lawmakers and outdoors experts teaming up to find a new source of revenue for the agency.

A recent Secretary of State audit shows ODFW's costs rising much faster than its revenue, reported *The Bulletin*. Hunters and anglers describe being trapped in a vicious cycle with the department. As ODFW raises license fees to boost revenue, fewer people buy the

licenses.

About 20 lawmakers and leaders from outdoors, tourism and wildlife viewing groups are exploring ways to raise money from wildlife viewers and others interested in healthy wildlife populations.

"Fifty percent of our agency revenue comes from hunters and anglers" and a match from federal funds, said ODFW director Curt Melcher. The projection for future revenue is flat, he added.

Over the last year, the agency has cut 10 percent of its licensed staff, mostly from the fishing side.

ODFW also worked with the Legislature to increase the cost of fishing licenses to fill a budget gap that needed to be addressed immediately.

To help keep the department afloat, the task force is trying to bring hunters and wildlife watchers together.

"In the natural resource and hunting and fishing arenas there

are a lot of conflicting values," said task force member Sen. Chris Edwards, a Eugene Democrat. "We have to come up with a solution."

The task force includes former top officials of the Audubon Society of Portland, a retired attorney, the director of a Salem bike racing association and the vice president of Columbia Sportswear, among other members.

Though task force members have expressed a love of Central or Eastern Oregon, where hunting

and angling is more popular, none of them live there.

The owner of Oregon Pack Works in Redmond said Monday that he isn't surprised by the group's composition.

"Welcome to Oregon politics," said owner Karl Findling. "This is a conundrum we're in right now in this state, geographically, and it's a great example with this task force."

Information from: *The Bulletin*, <http://www.bendbulletin.com>