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OTHER VIEWS

It's spring season for the exciting sport of botany

There was a particular willow-studded meadow along the Sweetwater River where columbines and Rocky Mountain irises rippled in the grass like delicate pastel asteroids zipping in a verdant emerald sky. Family rock-hunting expeditions often paused there as my dad and uncle made certain it was safe to ford the snow-fed stream in lumbering four-wheel-drives. There was time to wander around picking wildflowers — ostensibly for mama, though truth be told, I just liked them.

Botany, zoology and geology were our family sports, so by age 6 I knew irises are less innocent than they appear. "Roots were ground by the Indians, mixed with animal bile, then put in the gall bladder and warmed near a fire for several days. Arrow points were dipped in this mixture, and it is reported by old Indians that many warriors only slightly wounded by such arrows died within 3 to 7 days," my uncle's 1963 Peterson field guide reminds me.

Poisonous or not, wildflowers pumping with life force before plucking always swiftly wither into pathetic victims, becoming limp corpses within minutes of being picked. As I would eventually learn about fashion models, they are best cherished in their native habitat. (Jim Harrison, a literary hero of mine who died last week, amusingly observed "If you've known a lot of actresses and models, you return to waitresses because at least they smell like food.")

Bloom season begins
Some wildflowers on Washington's outer coast are running a few days behind last year. It has been comparatively warm, but heavy overcast denied plants the ambitious head start they got during 2014-15's bizarrely sunny winter. As official astronomical spring began March 20, some local rain gauges pushed above 6 feet for the "water year" that started Oct. 1 — two feet more than our recent normal. Any sensible wildflower can't be blamed for feeling a little washed out and depressed.

Wake-robins, better known in these parts as trilliums, may be an exception. They've been in bloom on the forest floors for the past 10 days, while in 2014 they weren't feeling very enthusiastic until almost mid-April. They are crawling with little insects,



A trillium was backlit by the evening sun on a ridge just above the Pacific Ocean this week.



MATT WINTERS
Comment

possibly a species of pollen beetle, though I don't know my bugs. Northwest plant gurus Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon note trilliums are mostly noted for a relationship with ants, which relish their seeds. After eating an oil-rich appendage on these seeds, ants carry them to rubbish piles, where new trilliums spring up. "This is a reasonably effective mechanism for seed dispersal, especially for plants of the dim, becalmed forest floor," the experts write.

Older than the trees

On March 24 in southern Oregon, Umpqua National Forest issued a plea for people to leave trilliums alone. Picking the flowers this early in the season means that the plant is stripped of its ability to make more energy to store in the root, the U.S. Forest Service said. The depleted root then lacks nutritional reserves necessary for next year's showy bloom to appear.

"The interesting thing about trillium is they can grow to be very old," said Umpqua National Forest botanist Richard Helliwell. "There are trillium in the Siskiyou that are greater than 80 years. In some cases, the trillium can be older than the trees surrounding the plant."

Like many native plants, trilliums were much cherished by traditional healers. They contain a uterotonic, which induces labor and reduces postpartum hemorrhaging, giving rise to a folk-medicine name of birthroot. "King's Medical Dispensatory" of 1898 attributes many additional benefits to trillium roots, including treating "tumors, indolent or offensive ulcers, anthrax, buboes, stings of insects, and to restrain gangrene." Good to know, I suppose, if you're ever stranded in the wilderness.

I recommend the sport of botany — and all sciences — to everyone. Knowing a little about our incredible world will make your life far richer. (Closing with a personal boast, my uncle Tom Bell, who helped spark these interests in me and his many students, will this spring be presented an honorary doctorate from our alma mater, in company with similarly inspirational science writer John McPhee.)

Matt Winters is editor and publisher of the Chinook Observer and Coast River Business Journal, sister papers in the EO Media Group.

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Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

YOUR VIEWS

Big difference between a poacher and a hunter

I appreciate the *East Oregonian* using the term "poachers" for the two criminals who killed and decapitated the two rams along Interstate 84 (something we hear happens to elephants and rhinos by poachers in Africa).

Too many times poachers are referred to as hunters. Anyone who is a hunter resents criminals called by any other name.

I have applied for ram tags since they were first offered, but have never been drawn for this once-in-a-lifetime tag. Every trip on I-84 I watch for the sheep along the road and love seeing them.

I will never understand why someone would want a trophy head that they didn't get in "fair chase." Do they make up a story about their great skill and the thrill of the hunt? How pathetic! Your picture shows a mature full curl ram and an immature baby ram. What is the point? These stupid criminals deserve no human compassion.

I only hope, and insist, that these two idiots are punished to the fullest extent of the law. This is the time to make an example of these poachers. I don't want to hear they received a fine and were released. If the state won't do it, let some real hunters have a try at them.

Bill Wilson Stanfield

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

OTHER VIEWS



'Fresh face' might be best GOP nominee

One thing that unites many supporters of Donald Trump and Ted Cruz is the suspicion that party elders might try to hand the Republican presidential nomination to another candidate if neither Trump nor Cruz arrives in Cleveland with the 1,237 delegates required to win.

Important voices in the conservative world have voiced such concerns. Rush Limbaugh, for one, has speculated that the Republican establishment will try to "install whoever they want" at a contested convention. (Limbaugh guessed such a final choice might be Jeb Bush or Paul Ryan.)

Now Karl Rove, a man many view as the physical embodiment of the establishment, has poured gallons of fuel on the Republican fire. Appearing on Hugh Hewitt's radio show Thursday evening, Rove said a "fresh face" chosen at the convention might turn the GOP's fortunes around and win in November.

Hewitt asked Rove, "Who is the most electable Republican ... of the people who could be available to run?" All the current candidates have their problems, Rove answered. But there might be an outsider with just the right combination of attributes who could lead Republicans to victory: "If we have somebody who we think has, has been battle-tested, and has strong conservative principles and the ability to articulate them, and they are nominated at this convention, there will be a lot of acrimony from the people who were seeking the nomination. But if it's somebody who has, you know, has those convictions that they can express in a compelling way, we could come out of the convention in relatively strong position ... And a fresh face might be the thing that could give us a chance to turn this election and win in November against Hillary."



BYRON YORK
Comment

Karl Rove has poured gallons of fuel on the Republican fire.

Rove's suggestion — he never named any names — blew up Twitter Thursday night, with many Trump and Cruz supporters expressing outrage. But Rove is not the only one contemplating, or at least open to, a non-Trump, non-Cruz nominee.

As it happened, I had a conversation Thursday afternoon with Milwaukee conservative radio host Charlie Sykes, who has played a leading role — perhaps the leading role — in the #NeverTrump movement in the days leading up to Tuesday's Wisconsin primary. I asked Sykes whether the GOP nominee has to be someone for whom people actually voted in the 2016 primaries and caucuses.

"It's got to go to an open convention," Sykes told me. "What I want to see is (Trump) to come in with fewer than 1,200 votes. If he doesn't win on the first ballot, there's no way he wins the nomination. And frankly, anything that happens after that, I'm fine with."

"Does it have to be Cruz for you?"
"No, absolutely not."
"Does it have to be a candidate that people have voted for in this primary season?"
"No. Look, at this point, there are no good options. There's no scenario in which you go, well that's fantastic. They're all sort of less bad. It's going to be messy no matter what. I don't see any easy exit here. But nothing is as bad as nominating Donald Trump."

After word of Rove's statement came out, another radio host, Atlanta's Michael Graham, agreed with Rove. "If US wakes up Tues after Labor Day w/a sane, likable GOP ticket vs Hillary, nobody will care re: process," Graham tweeted Thursday.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.



OTHER VIEWS

Managing Oregon's national forests

The (Bend) Bulletin

The state of Oregon signed a new agreement this week that should bring more cooperation between the state and the federal government in managing national forests.

Every summer as the wildfires race through the national forests and the air in Bend gets smoky, it's tempting to throw up your hands and think the federal government is never going to get forest management right.

But this agreement — officiously named Oregon Good Neighbor Authority Master Agreement — could make a bit of difference. The state and the federal government already work together on projects in Oregon. This will enable them to do more.

What kinds of things do they do? Here are a few examples:

Oregon has committed \$7.9 million to help the federal government do projects on federal lands in the state.

The Oregon Department of Forestry is planning to use seasonal firefighters and

contractors to do forest thinning on 200 acres outside of Lakeview on the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Federal timber sales money will help cover the costs.

In the watershed of the John Day River, national forest staff members are going to be getting help from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and others to protect fish. They'll be doing things like installing screens on irrigation diversions to keep fish from getting sucked in.

But hold it. Doesn't this mean that the federal government isn't doing enough to manage federal land?

Yes, it does. But if Oregon doesn't do something about it, it means more wildfire risk, it means more challenges with endangered species, it means less revenue for what could be a thriving sustainable industry in wood products.

There is still going to be wildfire, smoke in the air and wasted resources. This is another step, though, toward making things a bit better.