

## BLOOMIN' BLUES



Photo courtesy Bruce Barnes

Bractless hedgehyssop

## Pale flower found near mud, shallow water

By BRUCE BARNES  
For The East Oregonian

**Name:** Bractless hedgehyssop  
**Scientific Name:** *Gratiola ebracteata*

This plant is one that prefers wet muddy spots or shallow water. It can be found from British Columbia to California to Montana.

It is one of about 20 species that are scattered around the world in temperate and tropical areas.

The genus name *Gratiola* is from the Latin *gratia* meaning favor, referring to the supposed healing qualities the plants in this genus were believed to have. The name *ebracteata* refers to small bracts beneath the flowers of the other species in the genus, which are absent in this species, hence the common name "bractless." Hedgehyssop indicates a similarity to hyssop, a common plant of the mint family.

Though there was once long ago a belief in medicinal value in the plants of this genus, it is apparently no longer the case. There is also no indication of any medicinal or other use for the plant by Indian tribes in North America.

In our area, I have found bractless hedgehyssop in vernal pools. A vernal pool (think spring, as in vernal equinox) is one that holds water from snowmelt and spring rains each year, drying up by summer.

Such pools usually occur naturally where there is a lot of clay in the soil to prevent the water from soaking into the ground.

These pools are common

in parts of California, but not common in northeast Oregon. However, there are a couple of vernal pools in Fox Prairie, along the road to Mt. Emily.

Typical vernal pools dry up very slowly, and as the water level lowers, new successive rings of different plants appear around the edge.

When the pools in Fox Prairie have almost no water and the mud is starting to dry, *Gratiola ebracteata* appears and quickly blooms. The plants are mostly 2 to 6 inches tall, with leaves about 1/2 to 3/4 inch long, and the flower under 1/2 inch — truly what botanists call "belly plants" because of the position you have to get into to really see them.

The flowers appear singly in the leaf axils, are cylindrical in shape and bent slightly at the middle, with five rounded white lobes. Below the lobes, the flower is pale yellowish, and sometimes with narrow greenish stripes.

It really pays to stop now and then, hunker down, and look closely at what is by your feet. I've often found some amazing plants by sitting on a rock and spending ten minutes looking at everything on the ground, discovering that I've missed half of what is out there to see.

**Where to find:** Fox Prairie is the really large, open, flat area somewhat short of halfway from the Mt. Emily exit on Interstate 84 to the ridge by Mt. Emily. Watch for a small, somewhat dried-up pond right next to the road on the left. If the *Gratiola* isn't out yet, there will be other tiny flowering plants.

## U.S. to study economics of the outdoors

By HILARY CORRIGAN  
The (Bend) Bulletin

BEND — Last month, U.S. Interior Department Secretary Sally Jewell announced plans to study the impact that outdoor recreation has on the nation's economy.

Jewell said in a speech then that "by producing credible data on the tangible economic benefits of public lands, we can help the public and members of Congress better understand the benefits of investing in them."

To Teague Hatfield, owner of FootZone and OutsideIN in Bend, the benefits are obvious.

"It's shocking that there needs to be a study" to show the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, Hatfield said.

But often, he noted, debates about public lands portray decisions like preserving land as being beneficial simply for the sake of preserving land.

"As though there's not a human element to it," Hatfield said of such a decision, pointing to the need for runners and mountain bikers to have such preserved places to perform those outdoor activities — otherwise, they're just running and biking around town.

Studies like the one planned by the Interior Department offer "a way to quantify some of the value in public lands," he said.

Area groups and outdoor enthusiasts expect such numbers to bolster the data they have seen from separate trade group and government studies showing the economic boost that outdoor recreation offers — but that has not yet gotten such a comprehensive analysis.

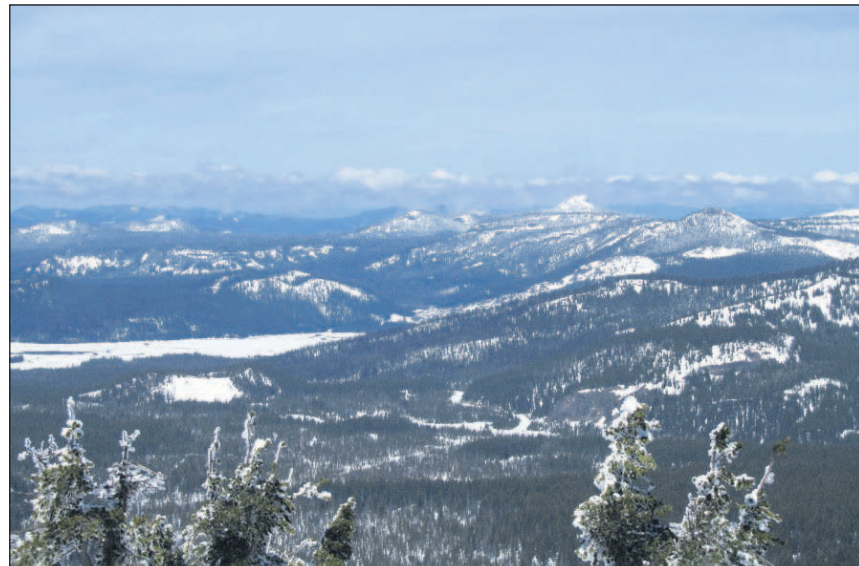
The Interior Department will work with the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis to complete the study, which is still in the planning stages. The study aims to document the value of outdoor recreation to the nation's economy and show data to inform decision-making and improve the management of public lands and waters. The process will include defining the term "outdoor recreation" and will look to capture statistics such as production, employment, compensation, "value added" and other economic factors that depend on the outdoor recreation economy.

"Yet, the role that public lands and waters play in the American economy is underappreciated and not well understood," the statement said. "Attaching a numerical value to recreation resources could help foster the appreciation for, and stewardship of, public lands and waters; help provide a more holistic understanding of local economies; and better support resilient economic strategies and business operations."

So far, numbers have not been very firm on outdoor recreation and its associated products, according to Matt Sybrant, key industry coordinator at Economic Development for Central Oregon. But in recent years, the Colorado-based trade group Outdoor Industry Association has detailed the impact of outdoor recreation in the U.S. — coming out with numbers Sybrant said took people by surprise.

"The number was enormous, how large the industry is," he said.

The Interior Department cited



Mark Morical/The Bulletin via AP

In this April photo the Spinks Lake and surrounding hills are pictured from the top of Tumalo Mountain, west of Bend.

association numbers in its information about its planned study, noting the group's findings that the outdoor recreation industry annually supported 6.1 million jobs and \$646 billion in economic output in the U.S. Of those totals, outdoor recreation in Oregon generated \$12.8 billion in consumer spending, 141,000 direct jobs, \$4 billion in wages and \$955 million in state and local tax revenue.

"That's on par with tech and bioscience," Sybrant said of such totals.

Sybrant called the association's work a catalyst to having outdoor recreation recognized as an industry, a move that could bring more attention, legislation and spending to it. For instance, such attention could lead to greater workforce development or college-level programs related to outdoor recreation.

Sybrant said he was excited to hear the Interior Department and Bureau of Economic Analysis would conduct a large-scale study on economic impacts of outdoor recreation and wants to see the study measure both the recreation side — such as fishing guides — and the production and manufacturing side, such as companies that make paddles. That's where research is needed to see how many of those companies exist, he said.

It's also good to see unbiased research and research expertise directed at the topic, he said.

"The body of research is not very large" so far, he noted.

But data is building.

In March, a report from the Pew Charitable Trusts found that "quiet recreation" visitors to BLM lands in 11 Western states and Alaska in 2014 spent about \$1.8 billion within 50 miles of the recreation sites. Quiet recreation refers to camping, hiking and other activities that don't involve a lot of motor-vehicle use. For Oregon, that amounted to about \$185 million in visitor spending for the year.

In February, Headwaters Economics analyzed how rural counties in the West with more or less federal and protected land compared economically. The group found that from 1970 to 2014, counties with the most federal lands had faster population,

employment, personal income and per capita income growth than did counties with the lowest share of federal lands. And those with protected federal lands performed better in those categories than those with the least protected federal lands.

**Parks studies**

Every year, the National Park Service reports on the impact to the economy from visitors' spending on their trips to parks. The Park Service last month said visitors contributed about \$32 billion to the economy in 2015. Visitors to Crater Lake National Park spent about \$52.2 million in communities near the park, with a cumulative benefit of about \$71.2 million to the local economy. The \$52.2 million represents direct spending, such as at restaurants, while the \$71.2 million includes ripple effects, such as the produce that a restaurant buys.

Such data help the park understand how its visitors interact with local communities and how the park can better benefit local communities, said Crater Lake spokeswoman Jennifer Evans.

Dan Morse, conservation director at Oregon Natural Desert Association, expects the planned study to further quantify and clarify how much the outdoor recreation industry contributes to the economy. Morse noted the Bureau of Economic Analysis acts as the keeper of the country's economic data and that a study from it is viewed as an authoritative and independent source of data, compared with a study from a trade association or related group.

Others also welcomed such detailed review.

"This is of particular value to an area like Central Oregon, which is essentially surrounded by public lands" that residents and visitors use, Central Oregon Visitors Association president and CEO Alana Hughson wrote in an email.

Kreg Lindberg, associate professor of tourism and outdoor leadership at OSU-Cascades, said he hopes such studies raise awareness about outdoor recreation's contributions to people's physical and mental health and to their social connections.

## Montana, Wyoming, Idaho prepare for return of grizzly hunts

By MATT VOLZ  
Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — Hunters soon could be chasing grizzly bears across the ridges of the Rocky Mountains, leaving three states to drum up plans to ensure the iconic species won't be snuffed out soon after recovering from threats to their survival.

The Obama administration in March proposed lifting protections for the more than 700 grizzlies around Yellowstone National Park.

The bears have been considered a threatened species since 1975, but federal wildlife officials say that population has sufficiently recovered to turn over management to Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

Before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service makes a final decision by March 2017, it is requiring those states to outline what their grizzly hunting seasons would look like. The states came up with a coordinated plan late last year to guide their individual proposals, including reviewing the bear population each year, stopping hunting if the grizzlies' overall numbers drop below 600 and banning hunting of female bears with their young.

"This is a historic undertaking because we don't manage any other species like this," Idaho Department of Fish and Game spokesman Gregg Losinski said.

Wyoming's Fish and



Marc Cooke/Wolves of the Rockies via AP

This 2012 photo provided by Wolves of the Rockies shows a grizzly bear near the Lamar Valley in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Three states, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, are getting ready for the possible return of grizzly bear hunting in the Rocky Mountains for the first time in four decades. The three states are coordinating their plans. Montana releases an outline for its hunting regulations on Thursday.

Game Commission approved its grizzly management plan Wednesday, and Montana will release its first draft of what a hunting season would look like Thursday for public comment. Idaho officials plan to discuss the matter next week.

The scrutiny is intense, with wildlife advocates insisting the bear population is still too fragile for hunting and that federal officials reverse course before it's too late.

One advocacy group, Defenders of Wildlife, is worried the federal government is moving too quickly and with incomplete information. It should delay making a final decision until the states' plans to manage the species have been completed and fully vetted, said Jamie Rappaport Clark, the organization's president and CEO who was a former director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"All the work of bringing

back the grizzly bear from the brink of extinction should not go up in smoke because the game plan is substandard," she said.

The plan is being created now because federal wildlife officials are requiring one, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Director Jeff Hagener said Wednesday.

"This doesn't mean that automatically we're going to start hunting grizzly bears as soon as they're de-listed," he said.

The three states use hunting and trapping to

manage wildlife populations from elk to wolves, setting quotas with the aim of preventing overpopulation that could harm habitat and lead to conflicts with people and livestock. Charging hunters and trappers for licenses also provides a major revenue source for state wildlife agencies.

For grizzlies, the actual quota available for each state's hunt would vary from year to year, depending on the previous year's bear deaths.

The three states have apportioned the bears that could be hunted according to their share of the Yellowstone area: Wyoming with 58 percent, Montana with 34 percent and Idaho with 8 percent.

Montana officials estimated their number would be less than 10 bears in most years.

Outside the Yellowstone area, other grizzly populations in Montana, Idaho and Washington state will remain protected. The grizzlies' Alaska cousin, the brown bear, is not considered a threatened or endangered species and is hunted regularly.

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