BLOOMIN' BLUES

Photo courtesy Bruce Barnes

Big Pod Mariposa Lily

One of the Blues' most beautiful blooms

By BRUCE BARNES
For the East Oregonian

Name: Big Pod Mariposa Lily

Scientific name: *Calochortus macrocarpus*

This is one of the most truly beautiful flowers in the Blue Mountains. The bloom is about 2-3 inches wide at the top, and this photo, with the sunlight coming through the petals shows off its color nicely.

To really appreciate it, however, you have to look down from above into the inside of it. The inside base of the flower has a large, fuzzy, golden nectar gland surrounded by a dark purple band.

The plant is about a foot tall with a slender stem. Its leaves are narrow and linear, and dry up by the time the flower opens. The flower base has 3 long, narrow, petal-like sepals that are often longer than the petals, while the 3 petals are broad and rounded. Both petals and sepals are lavender to deep purple, and have an outer green-tinged stripe down the center.

This plant is one of 5 species of *Calochortus* in northeast Oregon, and probably the most spectacular. It grows from southeast British Columbia to northern California, to Montana to Nevada.

The genus *Calochortus* comes from the Greek "kalo" for beautiful, and "chortus" for grass, referring to the narrow linear leaves. *Macrocarpus* is Latin for big pod, referring to its large seed pod. Though there is much variation in the 60 or so species of the mariposa lilies in western North America, no one would argue the fact that all are impressive.

This particular species was used throughout its range, primarily for food, the bulbs either eaten raw or cooked. Some tribes used the plant for a poultice to treat blisters from poison ivy, and also used mashed bulbs to treat sore eyes.

Unfortunately, the plant is far less common now, and I only get to see it about once in four years. Harvesting the plants is strongly discouraged, as their numbers are so diminished, and they will not survive attempts to transplant them.

Where to find: Look for the plant in dry open meadows, at middle elevations in the mountains.

Courtesy of Oregon Department of Agriculture

Close-up image of the "Asian jumping worm." ODA confirmed that the worm, *Amynthas agresitis*, was found in Clackamas and Josephine counties in 2016.

'Crazy snake worm' unearthed in Oregon

Invasive species could impact forest water retention

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
EO Media Group

A new invasive species, known as the "crazy snake worm" or "Asian jumping worm," has been unearthed for the first time in Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has confirmed that the worm, *Amynthas agresitis*, was found in Clackamas and Josephine counties in 2016.

The significant distance between the two discoveries likely indicates the species is probably found elsewhere in Oregon as well, said Clint Burfitt, manager of ODA's insect pest prevention and management program.

Residential landowners turned the worms over to officials from ODA and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife after noticing its vigorous flipping.

"The behavior is very distinctive," Burfitt said. "Earthworms aren't known for their energetic behavior, but this one is."

The worm's detrimental effects on forest health have also been causing growing concern in the Great Lakes region and the East Coast, said Jim Labonte, an ODA entomologist.

"There's beginning to be a lot of attention to be paid to this there," he said.

Several pathways may be responsible for the worm's movement, including earth-moving equipment, compost and fishermen, he said. The species reproduces asexually, so not many individuals are necessary for an established population.

By rapidly consuming the detritus along the forest floor, the worms remove the protective layer that plant seeds need to sprout and outcompete other animals that depend on this habitat.

Bare soil isn't as effective as retaining water, allowing it to run off more quickly — potentially having an impact on agriculture, said LaBonte.

The change in soil structure also disrupts nutrient cycling, harming the forest's health over time, he said.

At this point, though, it's unknown whether these impacts will be experienced in Oregon as they have elsewhere in the U.S., since the forest type and climate here are different, LaBonte said.

Flying free — a family hobby

By JENNIFER MOODY
Albany Democrat-Herald

David Patton/Albany Democrat-Herald via AP

In a July 28 photo, Bob Stalick of Albany explains how his free-flight model airplane works. The former Albany superintendent will travel to Macedonia this week to document his grandson's entry in the 2016 Junior World Championships.

ALBANY — Bob Stalick can still remember hunching over his mother's breadboard, model airplane parts spread out, getting glue on the dressmaking pins she'd loaned him to hold the kit's pieces together.

Those planes never flew, the north Albany man recalled. But then an attack of polio as a high school freshman left him with plenty of time at home recuperating. He used that time to put together a new airplane model he'd received from his classmates as a Christmas gift, one powered by a tiny gas engine from his parents, reported the *Albany Democrat-Herald.*

When the plane was finished and Stalick was well enough, he took the plane out to the back field of his family's Oregon City farm, started the motor and watched the aircraft rise into the sky.

"Eventually it hit a fence post and broke," he said, "but that was the most amazing day of my life — to see that airplane that I had built out of pieces of wood actually fly."

Emotionally, the former superintendent for Greater Albany Public Schools never really came down from that first flight. At 78 and long retired from a 39-year career in education, he continues to build and fly free-flight model airplanes year-round.

Stalick shared his hobby with his son, Ted, a 1982 graduate of West Albany High School. Ted, now living in Southern California, shared it in turn with his younger son, Alex, now 16. And thanks to Alex, the three generations are traveling to Macedonia, where Alex will compete in the 2016 Junior World Championships for Free Flight Model Aircraft.

Ted Stalick will be part of the support crew for the U.S. team. Stalick himself has been tapped to be the team photographer and journalist.

The three are expected to be back in Oregon by Aug. 9. Alex will be competing against teens from 21 other countries for the championship trophy.

Free-flying model planes don't depend on remote controls for navigation. A competitor wins or loses based on how long the craft, on its own, is able to stay in the air.

The U.S. team has seven youths in three different free-flight divisions: glider, rubber-powered and gas-powered.

Glider planes are towed into the air by a person running on the ground, Stalick explained. The plane must fly at least three minutes after the tow line is disconnected. After five successful three-minute flights, the time is extended by a minute for each of the next rounds until a winner is determined.

David Patton/Albany Democrat-Herald via AP

In a July 28 photo, Bob Stalick of Albany has model airplanes hanging from the ceiling of his workshop from friends who have died as a way to remember them.

Rubber-powered planes use propellers powered by special rubber bands. Gas-powered models run on timers that cut the fuel after a prescribed number of seconds.

Timers also control the dethermalizers, which flips up the tail of the plane, stalling it out and sending it earthward.

Alex already was competing in the glider division, but the team asked him to join the gas division as well after an unexpected vacancy, his grandfather said.

Fans will be invited to follow the competition via a Facebook page, Free Flight Digest, which Stalick will help fill with photos and copy.

Stalick said he's going to enjoy chronicling the team's adventures, but said he's mostly going just to spend time with his family.

"It's three generations of the same family doing this thing all of us have done some way in our lives," he said.

As a little boy in Oregon City, Stalick remembers running outside, eyes glued to the sky, as the combat planes of World War II roared over his family's home, on their way to prep for battle in the Pacific Theater. "They made the whole ground shake," he recalled.

He built model planes up through high school, then put the hobby aside for a while as girls, cars, jobs and college took precedence. But a broadcasting class at the University of Oregon brought it all back the day he was asked to figure out how to make a model of the solar system spin.

For that project, Stalick said he'd go get a spool of rubber band material at the hobby shop. One look at the plane kits there and he was back to buy one and get started again.

Stalick's first teaching job was English, speech and drama for Albany Union High School in 1960.

It was the back-to-school inservice day and he didn't know anyone, but he overheard a conversation between two shop teachers who were discussing forming a model airplane club.

That club became the Willamette Modelers Club. Stalick has been its editor ever since and currently serves as its treasurer.

The club competes outdoors in the summer — the next event is set for Aug. 19, 20 and 21 in a ryegrass field off Seven Mile Lane near Parker Road; watch for signs — and in the gym of South Albany High School in the winter. Spectators are encouraged.

"The good thing about this hobby, in my opinion, when the weather isn't very nice, you can be inside making them," he said. "When the weather is nice, you can go out and fly them and crash them."

Remote control planes are all very well, but they never held the same fascination for Stalick as the free-flight planes. For 25 years, when he wasn't flying the planes, he was often found writing about them. He was a correspondent for Model Builder Magazine for 25 years, which helped lead to the invitation to be the U.S. team writer and photographer for this year's championships.

He has traveled since 2005 to watch the national competition sponsored by the Academy of Model Aeronautics, but will miss it this year to travel to Macedonia.

That's all right, however, he said. "This is kind of a once-in-a-lifetime thing, as far as I'm concerned."

BRIEFLY

DNR issues burn ban for Washington state

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — The state Department of Natural Resources has issued a burn ban on DNR-protected lands throughout the entire state.

DNR officials said in a news release that due to warm temperatures and below normal precipitation in western Washington, the burn ban issued previously for eastern Washington will apply to the entire state starting Friday.

The ban will be in effect through Sept. 30.

The ban applies to all outdoor burning on state forests, state parks and forestlands under DNR fire protection. It does not include federally owned lands.

The last two wildfire seasons have been the state's worst. More than a million acres burned across the state last year, the single worst wildfire year in Washington history.

So far this year, DNR has had 408 wildfire starts throughout the state.

Skydiver becomes first person to jump and land without chute

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After leaping from an airplane, Luke Aikins rocketed toward earth for two minutes, and then calmly flipped onto his back at the last second and landed in a 100-by-100-foot net in southern California.

Cheers rose from those who gathered at the Big Sky movie ranch on the outskirts of Simi Valley to watch the stunt, including his family.

The 42-year-old skydiver with more than 18,000 jumps made history as the first person to survive a leap without a parachute and land safely in a net.

As the audience erupted, Aikins quickly climbed out, walked over and hugged his wife, Monica, who had been watching from the ground with their 4-year-old son, Logan, and other family members.

"I'm almost levitating. It's incredible," the jubilant skydiver said, raising his hands over his head as his wife held their son, who dozed in her arms.

"This thing just happened! I can't even get the words out of my mouth," he added as he thanked the dozens of crew members who spent two years helping him prepare for the jump, including those who assembled the fishing trawler-like net and made sure it really worked.

The jump — from the death-defying altitude of 25,000 feet — makes Aikins the only skydiver ever to go from plane to planet Earth without a parachute.

Wyoming highway exceeds grizzly death cap

JACKSON, Wyo. (AP) — The number of grizzly bears killed by vehicle collisions on a stretch of highway in northwest Wyoming exceeds the estimate officials expected when a redesign of the thoroughfare was approved more than a decade ago.

At least two federally protected, threatened grizzlies have been run over on a 38-mile stretch of U.S. 26/287 over Togwotee Pass in the past two years.

That is double the permitted unintentional killing of a single grizzly along the road that underwent a seven-year reconstruction at a cost of more than $100 million. The work was completed in 2012 and resulted in a wider and straighter road that was supposed to be safer.

When so-called "incidental take" estimates are surpassed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service customarily produces new documents that permit a higher number of the affected threatened or endangered species to be killed.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, which is in charge of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's grizzlies, has not yet received instruction to revise a 2003 document that assessed the effect of the redesign on grizzlies, according USFWS.