

## BLOOMIN' BLUES



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Lomatium sp.

## More early spring sprouts

By BRUCE BARNES  
For the East Oregonian

Here are two more spring favorites for early wildflowers. They are both found in open places in and around the Deadman's Pass exit.

The first is in the genus *Lomatium* in the carrot family. When photographed, the plant was mostly flat on the ground, about four inches across, with the flowering stalks about a half inch high. As is typical of many species of *Lomatium*, when they first appear and bloom, they are quite difficult to tell apart. The photo shows the tiny yellow flowers in nine clusters, each cluster with about 20 flowers.

I didn't try to identify this *Lomatium* species. It could be one that will reach over a foot high by mid-summer. This particular plant was growing in gravel at the side of the road, but they also grow in grassy areas. Be aware that most plants in the carrot family are not edible and many are quite poisonous. There are several different *Lomatium* species blooming already this spring, including in the Deadman's Pass area.

The second plant is commonly known as Prairie Star, and usually isn't seen for another couple of weeks. It prefers open grassy areas, sometimes crowded in with other plants as in the photo, sometimes in bunches of



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Lithophragma parviflorum "Prairie Star"

several stems, and often as a single stalk by itself. Occasionally it grows in rock crevices. The Latin name for the plant is *Lithophragma parviflorum*. *Lithophragma* means "rock breaker," as plants of the genus were once believed to force cracks in rocks. *Parviflorum* means "little flower."

The leaves are deeply cleft into narrow segments that form a whorl, which eventually becomes a couple inches across.

The small, half-inch flowers have five white petals that are each deeply cleft into three narrow segments so that the overlapping petals look like a white fringe. The white flowers make them easy to spot in meadows and on open hillsides where they grow to about a foot high.

## Body found in Grand Canyon identified as missing teen hiker

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. (AP) — A body found last week has been identified as that of a 14-year-old hiker who went missing nearly two weeks ago while hiking a remote part of the Grand Canyon during a family trip, authorities said Monday.

Jackson Standefer, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was crossing a creek on April 15 when he and his step-grandmother, LouAnn Merrell, lost their footing and were swept away.

The cause and manner of death for Jackson Standefer is pending, said Trish Lees, a spokeswoman for the Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office.

Merrell, the wife of Merrell Boot Co. co-founder Randy Merrell, is still missing.

Park rangers spent days searching with a helicopter, ground crews, drones and a motorized inflatable boat before the search was scaled back.

A body believed to be Standefer's was found last Friday by a commercial river trip and transported by helicopter to the medical examiner's office.

Standefer was an eighth-grade student at The McCallie School, an all-boys boarding institution in Chattanooga. The teen was active in outdoors programs, crew

team and a youth Christian group, school officials have said.

Mark McOmie, Standefer's uncle who is a dentist in Chattanooga, said he was asked by the Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office to send Standefer's dental records to them Monday morning, and he heard the identification was made within hours.

"It's over. We're no longer looking for Jackson. We have the body," McOmie said, adding that he didn't immediately know of funeral plans.

"We had a celebration of life for him last week in Chattanooga. An hour and 15 minutes. And it was awesome," added McOmie, who described his nephew as a well-loved boy who was always smiling.

Standefer and his step-grandmother, who is from Utah, went missing during a hike from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon to an area known as Tapeats Creek.

They were on a trip with Standefer's mother and Randy Merrell.

Tapeats Creek is in a remote area of the Grand Canyon.

Experienced hikers say the trail that the group took involves an arduous hike down the canyon that ends in stunning, unique views.

## ODFW brings back 'premium hunts'

### Special tags allow for preseason hunts for deer, elk, more

East Oregonian

For the second year, the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife is offering "premium hunts" across the state for deer, elk and pronghorn.

As with other controlled hunts, the deadline to apply is Monday, May 15 and the application cost is \$8.

Money raised through premium hunt sales will be used by ODFW for special projects to improve big game populations and provide greater hunting opportunities.

Premium hunts are special hunting tags with a months-long season, giving hunters time and flexibility to harvest an animal. The bag limit is any-sex, and there are no antler restrictions. Both residents and non-residents may apply, and cost the same as regular deer, elk and pronghorn tags.

Tags are limited, with one premium deer tag available in each of Oregon's 67 wildlife management units, one premium elk tag in 59 units and one premium pronghorn tag in 27 units. More than 28,000 hunters applied for a premium deer tag in 2016, along with nearly 29,000 hunters for a premium elk tag and 12,180 hunters for a premium pronghorn tag.

The most applied-for units for



Photo contributed by ODFW

C.J. Zita, right, of Echo, pictured after taking a Columbia Basin buck during a 2016 premium hunt. Graham Derbyshire, of Hermiston, is left.

premium hunts were the Metolius for deer, Mount Emily for elk and Juniper for pronghorn, while the least applied-for units were the Sixes for deer, Klamath Falls for elk and Sprague

for pronghorn. The seasons run from Sept. 1 through Nov. 30 for deer and elk, and Aug. 1 through Sept. 30 for pronghorn.

Nick Baszler, of Creswell, said the length of the hunt gave him the chance to grow as a beginner elk hunter, and he was able to take an impressive bull from the Sled Springs Unit.

Kent Berkey, of Enterprise, also took a mule deer buck in the Imnaha Unit a year ago.

"I looked at more than 60 bucks, all on public lands, and saw two bigger than the one I harvested," Berkey said.

Tim Harms, of Forest Grove, took his first ever elk during a premium hunt in the Heppner Unit, which he described as a "dream come true."

"It was bugling across the canyon, pushing the herd up and out of the canyon bottom," Harms recalls. "At 500-plus yards, the battery in my range finder died. But he turned broadside and down he went."

Premium hunts are considered additional hunting opportunities, so hunters who draw a tag are still able to hunt on a general controlled or regular season tag as well.

Unlike regular controlled hunts, premium hunts do not use preference points and every hunter who applies has the same chance to draw.

Premium hunts are not once-in-a-lifetime, meaning hunters can reapply even if they drew a premium tag last season. Hunters may use any weapon legal for the species during premium hunts.

ODFW is encouraging hunters to apply soon for controlled hunts to avoid long lines for last-minute applications. In 2016, the agency reported more than half of the 467,028 applications were submitted in the last week before deadline, including 74,149 on the final day.

For more information, or to apply online, visit [www.dfw.state.or.us](http://www.dfw.state.or.us).



Photo contributed by ODFW

Tim Harms, of Forest Grove, took a bull elk in the Heppner Unit during his "premium hunt" in 2016.

## Dog eyes poachers, endangered species

LOVELAND, Colo. (AP) — Cash is a different sort of hunting dog. He's on the hunt for poachers and endangered species, using his specially trained nose to help Colorado Parks and Wildlife District Wildlife Manager Brock McArdle.

One of two nationally certified wildlife law enforcement dogs on the beat with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Cash is part of a pilot program to show how dogs can help sniff out poachers, evidence and the territory of certain species of concern.

"He's got a good nose," said McArdle, who is assigned to the Red Feather District.

Dogs as wildlife officers are not as widespread as canine cops on a traditional law enforcement beat, but they are working in the natural resources capacity in more than 24 states, including Kansas, Indiana, Idaho and California. The Colorado pilot program started with one dog, Sci, in the Colorado Springs area within the last year, and Cash joined McArdle in Larimer County earlier this year.

"It's gaining steam," said McArdle. "The whole purpose of this pilot program is to show the benefits of these dogs."

So far, the pilot program is completely funded by donations and grants. Bear Point Kennels donated Cash, and his \$8,000 in equipment and training were covered by a series of grants from Great Outdoors Colorado, the Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Big Horn Society, Colorado Bowhunters Association, Northern Colorado Pheasants Forever and Operation Game Thief.

Also, an internet donation site is set up to help pay for food and medical expenses for both Cash and Sci, anticipated to be about \$1,500 per year per dog.

Cash is trained to sniff out the scents of 11 commonly hunted species including moose, deer, waterfowl and



Pamela Johnson / Loveland Reporter-Herald via AP

In this April photo, Colorado Parks and Wildlife District Wildlife Manager Brock McArdle plays with his canine partner, a black Labrador named Cash, at Wellington State Wildlife Area near Wellington, Colo.

pronghorn. This skill will help McArdle and other officers find evidence and traces of illegally killed animals during poaching investigations.

Cash could help lead officers to evidence, or during checkpoints held in hunting season, he could provide officers with probable cause to search a vehicle.

This particular dog, too, is trained to smell the black-footed ferret and the boreal toad, which are species of concern in Colorado. He can help biologists in the field as they survey locations to see how these species are faring in their habitat or in areas they have been introduced.

Cash's nose can pinpoint where biologists should look, replacing teams of people simply following a grid in hopes of spotting a species.

So this black Labrador, who is about a year old, is part criminalist, part scientist and part ambassador.

McArdle will take him into the community for presentations with

children and other groups to spread education and awareness about wildlife and the importance of stewardship. Though he's been on the job for only a short time, Cash has already made an appearance at a youth hunting event.

Cash, too, may serve as a deterrent to poachers and other criminals, McArdle added.

Cash is nationally certified, so he can work in any state, and though the team is based in northern Colorado, McArdle anticipates helping out when needed statewide and maybe even north into Wyoming.

He hopes that as Cash and Sci (who is dually trained as a wildlife dog as well as a traditional law enforcement dog who can help with arrests) show their skills, Colorado Parks and Wildlife will grow the program.

But for now, the two will remain on the beat, helping with the protection and management of wildlife.

And the hope is that Cash, like his namesake, may leave a legacy.

Have a hunting or fishing photo you would like to show off?

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