

BLOOMIN' BLUES



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Balsamorhiza sagittata, Arrowleaf Balsamroot

Arrowleaf balsamroot a common spring sight

By **BRUCE BARNES**
For The East Oregonian

Name: Arrowleaf Balsamroot
Scientific name: *Balsamorhiza sagittata*

This isn't the first time I've written about this plant, but it has been 12 years since the last time, and it's a very showy common plant. The Arrowleaf Balsamroot grows in British Columbia and Alberta, and the western U.S. to the Rockies. Each plant produces a broad clump from a large taproot, and take several years to become large enough to flower and produce seed. It is found throughout the Blue Mountains from low to moderate elevations or somewhat higher.

The genus name *Balsamorhiza* literally means balsam root. Balsam is an aromatic fluid found in a number of different plants. *Sagittata* refers to the arrowhead shape of the leaf. This particular shape is referred to in botany as sagittate.

Arrowleaf Balsamroot is about 2-3 feet tall and wide. The flowering heads are seldom more than one per stem. As is typical for the sunflower family, the heads have a central disk

with many tiny flowers, and an outer ring of 8-25 flowers that each have a single large yellow petal. Small bracts underneath the head are often densely covered with white woolly hair. The leaves are quite large, each one arising from the root on a long stem about as long as the leaf blade. Leaf blades are shaped like an arrowhead, usually 8-10 inches long, with two large lobes flaring to the side or pointing backward at the base, and the leaf tip tapering to a point.

Many Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest made extensive use of this plant. Food uses included dry seed cakes, peeled young stems, roasted seeds ground for flour, cooked roots, baked young shoots, and seeds mixed with deer grease, pine nuts and berries. Roots and seeds were considered a principal food. The leaves were used in roasting camas roots.

Other uses for the plant included using roots in the preparation of incense for ceremonies, and using leaves to lay salmon on after the salmon was cleaned.

Where to find: Watch for the plant on open grassy slopes and in meadows. When in bloom, it is easy to spot from 100 feet or more.



Photo contributed by U.S. Forest Service

Morel mushrooms are beginning to sprout in the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests.

Spring mushrooms sprout in Blue Mountains

East Oregonian

Springtime means mushroom hunting season is underway across the Blue Mountains, and regulations are in place for commercial mushroom hunters on Forest Service land.

A commercial permit is required for mushroom hunters who harvest, possess or transport more than one gallon of mushrooms in Oregon, or more than five gallons in Washington. Any amount less than one gallon in Oregon or five gallons in Washington are considered "free-use" mushrooms, but are for personal use only and cannot be sold, bartered or given away.

An industrial camping permit is required for mushroom hunters camping overnight in national forests, though they are not allowed to camp in developed campgrounds. Permits

are available only at the local ranger district office, and cost \$2 per day with a minimum purchase of 10 consecutive days. Annual permits are available for \$100.

Commercial mushroom hunting is prohibited in wilderness areas.

All mushroom hunters on the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests must display a recreation pass in the windshield of their vehicle when using a designated fee trailhead. Northwest Forest Passes cost \$5 per day or \$30 for the year, and can be purchased at www.discovernw.org. The Malheur National Forest does not require a recreation pass.

It is up to individual growers to determine if the mushrooms they pick are edible. Many varieties in the forest are poisonous, though guide books may help with identification.

Philippi Park reopens for second year under nonprofit

Island adds new amenities, trails

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Philippi Park has reopened for the second year in a row following several years of closure due to budget cuts at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The park, located about a mile upstream from where the John Day River enters the Columbia River, offers family-friendly camping, fishing, swimming, boating and hiking. It is accessible only by boat, with the closest launch point at LePage Park, exit 114 off Interstate 84.

Established by the Army Corps in 1973, Philippi Park quickly became a hit with boaters and anglers, drawing 13,000-plus visitors annually and hosting large bass fishing tournaments. But the agency decided to close the park in 2013 amid cutbacks and high maintenance costs.

Darrell McSmith, who owns All Points Media in Beaverton, remembers family trips to Philippi Park as a kid and decided to step in, forming his own nonprofit organization to help restore and reopen the park. Volunteers spent months sprucing up the 24-acre campsite last year, and it was ready to go by Memorial Day Weekend.

The first year was a success, McSmith said, with about 7,300 visitors over the summer. He expects double that number for year two.

"We're really looking forward to everyone coming out this year," McSmith said. "The more people who come out, the more the longevity of this project becomes real."

Philippi Park will officially open for the season on Sunday, May 21. A soft



Photo contributed by the OPAL Foundation.

Philippi Park opened May 5 for the second consecutive year under the nonprofit OPAL Foundation.

opening was held May 5. McSmith said the park has a little bit of something for everyone, including open camping, volleyball, horseshoes and a sandy beach area for swimming and fishing in the John Day River.

Workers are also building eight miles worth of hiking trails around the property, and installing interpretive signs.

"It's just a gem," McSmith said. "It's one of those unique places that has everything for the family."

McSmith took up Philippi Park in memory of his parents, Paul and Oppie, who both loved the outdoors. He named his nonprofit the OPAL Foundation, which combines their two names.

The OPAL Foundation once again recruited volunteers to prep the park for opening, mowing grass and

clearing brush and branches following this year's especially harsh winter.

"They had more ice and snow out there than they can remember," McSmith said.

The foundation has partnered with the Army Corps on maintaining Philippi Park through a combination of fundraising and donations. Though they cannot charge a campground fee, McSmith said guests will be required this year to register on site and are encouraged to make a donation to keep the park open into the future.

"We've had some great support," he said.

For more information about Philippi Park, or to donate, visit www.opal-foundation.org.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

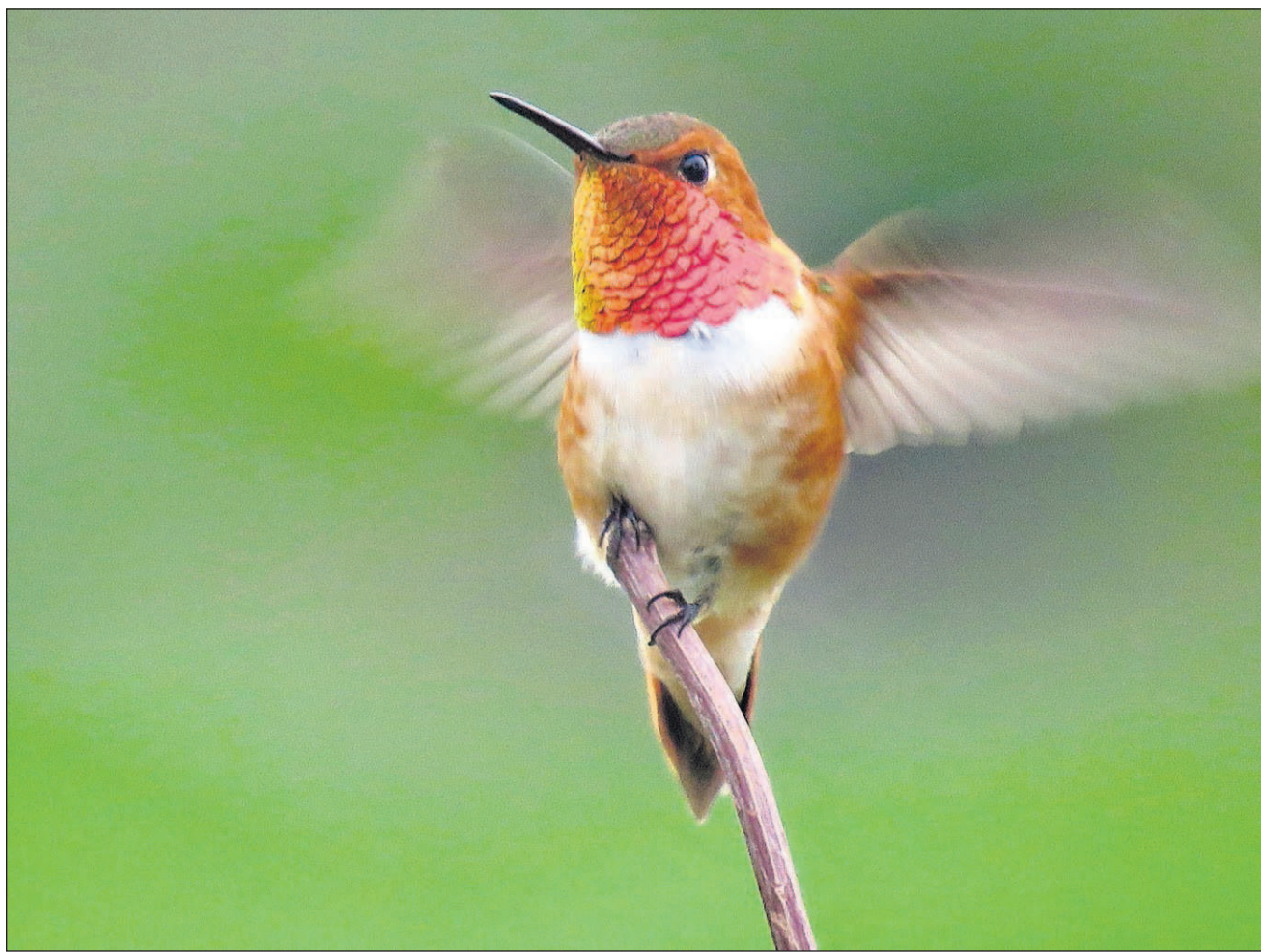


Photo contributed by Barbara Morehead

Humdinger of a hummingbird

A rufous hummingbird spotted in the photographer's back yard on McKay Creek in Pilot Rock.

State legislature debates footbridge ban

By **ANDREW SELSKY**
Associated Press

SALEM — A bill in the Oregon Legislature that would ban a long-planned footbridge over a pristine river for hikers and bikers in the town of Bend is causing an uproar in the mountain town.

Some backers of the House bill, which was considered Wednesday at a public hearing before the Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources, say they want to protect wildlife. Opponents, say many supporters are rich, have property along the river and don't want their views spoiled by hikers, bikers and leashed dogs.

Rob and Karon Kutz, among hundreds of people who wrote to the committee, said a multi-millionaire "doesn't want riffraff near his property."

But David Dobkin,

who described himself as a research scientist, told the committee in an email that a bridge "will adversely impact critical ecological and wild-life values."

The Deschutes River near Bend cuts through lava flows, ponderosa forests and meadows in the shadow of the Cascade Range. Hiking and biking along it is a hugely popular activity for residents and visitors.

The bill in its current form looks nothing like the original. It originally was about financing water storage and water distribution. But, in a practice known as gut and stuff, an amendment revamped it, calling for the bridge ban and removing all references to water storage and distribution. The House passed the redone bill on a floor vote, sending it to the Senate.

The Bend Parks and Recreation District, which had been planning the foot-

bridge for years to connect trail systems in Bend and nearby communities for residents and visitors, was shocked when Rep. Gene Whisnant, a Republican from the resort community of Sunriver 20 miles south of Bend, introduced the amendment.

"The swift introduction and passage in the House was a surprise and should not preempt a public process in Bend," said Ted Schoenborn, chair of the Bend Park and Recreation District Board of Directors.

In a May 4 column, editor Erik Lukens of the *Bulletin* newspaper of Bend wrote: "Here's hoping this turkey gets carved up in the Senate."

Lukens said the situation shows "the capacity of politicians and influential supporters to work the system at the expense of the less wealthy and less well-connected."

Schoenborn said the

"The swift introduction and passage was a surprise."

— **Ted Schoenborn**,
Bend Park and Recreation
Board of Directors

amended bill "would mean the end of the Deschutes River Trail" that had been planned connecting Sunriver and a state park on Bend's north side.

He and other opponents of the bill said this was not a matter for the Legislature to decide.

For his part, Whisnant issued a statement on his Legislature web link on May 2, urging residents to voice their opinions.

"I have received a number of phone calls and emails from Oregonians on both sides of this issue," he said.

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Call outside editor Tim Trainor at 541-955-0835 or email ttrainor@eastoregonian.com