

Wallowa braces for annual invasion of tourists

By PAUL WAHL

Wallowa County Chieftain

Mary Wolfe was one of dozens of business owners in and around Wallowa Lake getting ready for the onslaught of tourists this week.

Wolfe, the owner of Mad Mary's in downtown Joseph, and her partner, Jeff Middleton, have been preparing the former restaurant adjacent to her shop to become an ice cream parlor.

"We operated the restaurant for several years, but it just became too much," said Wolfe, a fifth-generation Wallowa County native. "This year, we decided to open Mad Mary's Ice Cream Station."

Umpqua Dairy in Roseburg will provide the ice cream. Wolfe said she hasn't decided yet which 20 of the available flavors will be offered.

In addition to its checkerboard floor, the space is also home to a variety of collectibles courtesy of Middleton, including a Phillips 66 gas pump from 1936 and an Indian motorcycle.

Across the street, Becky Rushton is preparing for a busy summer. She and her husband, Scott, own Outlaw Restaurant and Saloon, in addition to two lodging businesses.

Becky, president of the Joseph Chamber of Commerce, is anticipating a busy summer, "better than last year."

"There have been a lot of positive signs already, she added, noting the scheduling of two new community events in the area and at least one new business, a hot air balloon concession.

Downtown Joseph businesses will have one final opportunity to participate in a cleanup event Wednesday. The previously scheduled event was rained out.

On the shores of Wallowa Lake, summer is beginning to make an appearance after one of the worst winters in recent memory.

The smell of campfires has begun wafting through Wallowa Lake State Park as staff and volunteers work to assure those occupying the 200 campsites and two yurts are given the royal treatment.



EO Media Group photos by Paul Wahl

ABOVE: Kayaks await visiting tourists at the Wallowa Lake Marina. LEFT: Eric Post, an employee of the Wallowa Lake Tram, assists some of the first passengers of the season riding up the Mt. Howard on Saturday.



NEW EVENTS FOR 2017

• **Pudget Sound Antique Airplane Tour**
Forty vintage or classic planes will roar into Joseph Airport July 10. The visitors will be on hand 10 a.m. to noon, and the public is invited to come out and see the planes. A barbecue with live music is planned 5:30 p.m. along with a raffle for rides in vintage aircraft. The event is hosted by the Northeast Oregon Aviation Foundation.

• **Back Country Bash**
Three alternative country acts will take the stage at the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo Grounds Aug. 5, part of the first-ever Back Country Bash. Cody Canada and the Departed will be headlining. Gates open at 3 p.m. and music begins at 4 p.m. A beer garden and food vendors will be available. Tickets are \$40 and are available at backcountrybash-joseph.com. The event is presented by the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo Committee.

May and then move to daily treks in June.

Joseph Branch Railriders also opened Saturday, ferrying passengers by pedal-powered vehicles from Joseph to Enterprise and beyond.

Around the corner, the 150-horsepower electric motor that drives the 19,300-foot haul rope at the Wallowa Lake Tram began churning visitors to the top of Mt. Howard Saturday.

"There's a lot more snow up there than usual, but we're ready to go," said Michael

Lockhart, president of the company that operates the tram.

Constructed in 1970, it is the steepest vertical lift for a four-passenger gondola in North America, rising roughly 4,000 feet.

Lockhart said the tram will operate weekends only in

Marchlewski.

A number of rooms have been remodeled during the winter and bookings have been strong.

The business also offers a miniature golf course and a concessions stand. The sound of go-karts racing their way around the track greeted visitors at Wallowa Lake Karts Saturday. Testing of the vehicles was in full swing.

Proprietor Greg Jarman paused from his lawn trimming to say he was looking forward to a great summer. Besides go-karting, there is a mini golf course, an arcade, a basketball court, a sand volleyball court, a ping-pong table and a horseshoe pit, among other amenities.

Most excited about the start of the tourist season is Jarman's Great Dane Conan.

"He loves the tourists," Jarman noted. "He can't wait for them to get here."

BLOOMIN' BLUES

Barrett's Penstemon a rare and endangered plant

By BRUCE BARNES

For the East Oregonian

Name: Barrett's Penstemon
Scientific name: *Penstemon barrettiae*

A few folks reading this will know Barrett's Penstemon does not grow in the Blue Mountains. It was briefly prominent in Oregon's history. The plant is named for Almata Barrett, who discovered the plant in the early 1880s when living in Hood River. The name *Penstemon* refers to the flowers having five stamens, even though one of them does not produce pollen.

This is a spectacular rare plant listed as endangered by the federal government, and at one point caused concern when a second powerhouse of Bonneville Dam was proposed. That powerhouse was to be built right on or near a then-newly discovered location of the plant. It was previously known only in a narrow strip between Hood River and Mosier on both sides of the Columbia. Botanists collected seeds and successfully grew the plant near Mosier and on the cliffs above the powerhouse, avoiding a delay in construction, which was completed in 1982. Since then, several new sites with the plant have been found in the gorge, often growing out of cracks in rock cliffs.

Barrett's Penstemon is a small shrub about 15-20 inches high and up to 5 feet in diameter, with woody branches spreading along the ground and mostly hidden by the upright flowering stems. The evergreen oval leaves stay on the plants through winter, and are gray-green and leathery. The flowers are bright



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Barrett's Penstemon, *Penstemon barrettiae*

purple, trumpet-shaped, and about 1½ inches long. They are crowded on single ascending stems, and tend to all face the same direction.

As far as I know, all of the plants in the genus *Penstemon* are showy. There are 32 species in Northeast Oregon, and well over 200 species in the western U.S., and many in Canada and Mexico. There is also an American Penstemon Society, which has held its annual meeting in Walla Walla to have an opportunity to see the many species we have in the Blue Mountains.

Where to find: There is an established planting at the north end of the I-84 Mosier intersection right next to the highway, that is just past the peak of its blooming.

For a comparison, next week's article will feature a similar *Penstemon* that is in the Blue Mountains.



Photo contributed by Mike Morehead

Deerspotting

A deer stands in the fog in the Blue Mountains near La Grande. The photographer captured the picture while hunting for mushrooms.

BRIEFLY

Free fishing weekend coming June 3-4

PENDLETON — Free Fishing Weekend is coming Saturday, June 3 and Sunday, June 4 to Oregon. That means no fishing licenses or tags — including the Columbia River Basin Endorsement — are required to fish, crab or clam anywhere across the state.

"Free Fishing Weekend is a great opportunity for friends and families to get out and enjoy a day or two of fishing," said Mike Gauvin, recreational fisheries manager for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. "Lakes and ponds are fully stocked, rivers and streams are open for trout, and don't forget about the coast for crabbing and clamming."

Though no licenses or tags will be required, all other regulations do still apply including closures, bag limits and size restrictions.

Free Fishing Weekend also coincides with State Parks Day on Saturday, June 3, with free camping and day use at state parks across Oregon.

For new anglers, ODFW and sponsors will be hosting Free Fishing Weekend events with volunteers on hand to provide equipment and assistance. Events in northeast Oregon include:

- 203 Pond, Baker City, 9 a.m. to noon
- Marr Pond, Enterprise, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- McHaley Pond, Prairie City, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information, visit the ODFW website at www.dfw.state.or.us.

Man survives 1,000-foot fall into crater

UNION CREEK (AP) — A man has survived a roughly 1,000-foot fall into the Crater Lake caldera.

The *Mail Tribune* reports a 22-year-old had been rescued by helicopter and taken to a nearby hospital Sunday.

Crater Lake National Park spokeswoman Marsha McCabe says the man fell over the rim and tumbled into the crater. She says park rangers had to rappel roughly 600 feet into the caldera just to spot the man.

The extent of his injuries had not been immediately known. How he fell also remains unclear, but McCabe had said she believes slippery conditions on the rim played a role.

Land a lunker? Shoot a trophy?

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