



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
The Morehead's family dog, Lucy, sports a pair of Doggles.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
Mountain peaks reflected in Anthony Lake outside Baker City.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
A rufous hummingbird in the backyard of the Morehead ranch outside Pilot Rock.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
A herd of elk bed down in the snow near McKay Creek outside Pilot Rock.

PRESERVING NATURE



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Barbara and Mike Morehead of Pilot Rock spend a good portion of their free time together roaming Eastern Oregon, taking pictures and then sharing those photos with others.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
A deer and her two fawns stand on a hillside outside Pilot Rock.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
A band-tailed pigeon in the backyard of the Morehead ranch outside Pilot Rock.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
Longhorn cattle graze on a ranch in Prairie City.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
Mike Morehead's interest in photography began while he was serving in the river patrol during the Vietnam War.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
A metal elk ornament is silhouetted as the sun sets over the Morehead ranch on McKay Creek, east of Pilot Rock.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
Apricot blossoms near the Morehead's home on McKay Creek, outside Pilot Rock.



Contributed photo by Barbara and Mike Morehead
A butterfly lands on a flower in the garden of the Morehead ranch outside Pilot Rock.

Moreheads document nature, people in their world

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Barbara Morehead knows all too well the importance of preserving memories.

"I remember when we had moved to Meridian, Idaho, and we were burning boxes with the garbage. Somehow, a box of family pictures accidentally got mixed in with the boxes, and it got burned. I just remember my mom sitting on the porch and crying. I think that was the first time I really realized how important pictures are."

So began a lifetime of careful documentation.

Many in their hometown of Pilot Rock and surrounding communities know Barbara and her husband Mike for their wildlife photography, which includes birds of all kinds, raccoons in their yard and elk in the wilds of Umatilla and Union counties.

Both residents of Pilot Rock for more than 50 years, the couple combine their penchant for photography with a love of the outdoors and deep personal histories with the areas they explore. About once a week, the two pack their camera and some snacks and head out for a long day trip. They travel to the Baker, Enterprise and John Day areas periodically, but most often find themselves in the Blue Mountains, or areas not too far from where they live.

The Moreheads say they have no photography expertise, and use a Canon Power Shot SX60HS camera.

"We just keep it on one setting and point and shoot," she said. "We had disposable cameras for years and did OK."

Mike said they have a couple of key principles for taking good photos: early morning or late evening light, and keeping a camera handy at all times.

"You never know when a photo opportunity will arise," he said.

Subject matter

Their favorite subjects to shoot are usually animals, and they have provided many photos to the Pendleton Bird Club, including several of a rare band-tailed pigeon that they spotted in their backyard. But they try to document more than just the natural world.

They take photos of old homesteads and grain elevators, set against vast fields, and of the sky: storms, sunrise and sunset.

They photograph people when they can, especially senior citizens, many of whom Barbara says don't have any other photos of themselves.

When they get the chance, they photograph historic sites and events.

"We may have those photos in black and white, but we have them," she said. "The history of things that happen here locally — it's nice to have that on film."

Occasionally, they take photos of food. Some of the restaurants they frequent, especially ones in smaller towns like The Thicket in Ukiah, don't have photos of their food to use for menus or online, so the Moreheads started snapping photos when businesses need them.

Though their subject matter varies, they have a common theme.

"We've never sold a photo," Mike said. "It's awesome."

"We just like sharing with the community," Barbara said. "There are lots of elderly people who can't get out. It's their link to the world."

Barbara remembers a man in a retirement home in Portland who used to be a professor at Blue Mountain Community College.

"He loves this Ukiah area," she said. "He

prints out the pictures and lays them out, and everyone that lives there comes and looks at them. That's the joy, just sharing with people."

Exploring

Early last Wednesday morning, the Moreheads set off for one of their adventures. They drive south on Highway 395, heading east at the small town of Ukiah. They follow Highway 244 until Barbara spots a herd of elk — almost too far away to see.

As they search for a spot to take photos, another driver stops to say hello. The man is a local who comes out every evening to watch the elk.

"I've got seven trail cameras out here," he said. "The other night, a baby elk that was left by mom or something came right up to the truck and just looked at us."

He recognizes the Moreheads' name from seeing their photos.

"You guys better get going," he says. "This is the greatest show on earth."

They follow the road along Camas Creek, which glitters in the morning sun.

Crossing into Union County, they hit a gravel road and start to climb. Today, they'll get as high as Anthony Lake, at 7,100 feet elevation.

As they drive, the landscape continues to change. The dry grass of Ukiah gives way to lush green growth, and the forest is heavily populated with pines — first ponderosa and then lodgepole — and an occasional tamarack tree poking the sky.

Usually, the skyheads set out with a loose agenda and stop whenever something catches

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— Barbara Morehead, of Pilot Rock