

# Beloved river spot Boggan’s Oasis burns

Remote Grande Ronde restaurant, camping business a total loss

By KATHLEEN ELLYN  
EO Media Group

Boggan’s Oasis is no more. The nearly 80-year-old landmark, set three miles north of the Oregon border and next to one of the few bridges crossing the Grande Ronde River, was completely destroyed by fire Saturday. No one was injured in the blaze, according to co-owner Bill Vail. He and his wife, Farrel, have owned the business for 34 years. The restaurant, far from any municipality, is not in a fire district. No fire department responded. “We would have responded if there were a life threat,” said Noel Hardin, Chief of Asotin County Fire District 1. “We ascertained that there was no threat to life. Blue Mountain Fire District is closer, their border is about three miles from Boggan’s, but they are primarily a wildland unit and cannot do structure firefighting.” Farrel Vail said they called both fire districts but understood when they called that they were



The aftermath of Nov. 11 fire that burned Boggan’s Oasis, which destroyed the Grande Ronde River business.

not located in either district. The distance to Asotin also meant that response time would have been at least one hour and the building was already fully engulfed by the time she called. Farrel reported that the fire

began approximately 11 p.m. and burned fiercely. “I heard this noise outside and I stuck my head out and didn’t see anything, so I got back in bed,” she said. “I heard the noise again and lifted the blind on the restaurant

side and saw the flames.” The cabins, which are part of the camping area at the Oasis, were filled with visitors. Farrel approached one of the outdoor guides who was staying there and asked him to enter the building to

“Hell I’m 84 years old. Why do I want to start over?”  
— Farrel Vail, Boggan’s Oasis owner

get the fire extinguishers, but by the time they attempted it the fire was already too hot and the structure was ablaze. “Power lines were down and arcing all over the place, and the people who were here in the cabins were beating the fire out on the banks so it didn’t travel up to the dwellings,” Farrel said. The Vails, who live just 20 feet from the restaurant, are in their 80s and are unsure if they will rebuild the beloved stop for anglers, hunters and road-trippers. They were known their milkshakes, burgers and beer, and local knowledge of the river and being one of the few businesses between Enterprise and Lewiston, Idaho. “Hell, I’m 84 years old. Why do I want to start over?” Farrel Vail said. “We’re more worried about our customers than anyone else. We’re working on our third generation of customers.”

# Endangered orcas compete for salmon

By PHUONG LE  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Harbor seals, sea lions and some fish-eating killer whales have been rebounding along the Northeast Pacific Ocean in recent decades. But that boom has come with a trade-off: They’re devouring more of the salmon prized by a unique but fragile population of endangered orcas.

Competition with other marine mammals for the same food may be a bigger problem than fishing, at least in recent years, for southern resident killer whales that spend time in Washington state’s Puget Sound, a new study suggests.

Researchers used models to estimate that from 1975 to 2015, marine mammals along the U.S. West Coast ate dramatically more chinook salmon — from 6,100 metric tons to 15,200 metric tons, according to a study published Monday in the journal Scientific Reports.

In the same period, salmon caught by commercial and recreational fishing from Northern California to Alaska declined from 16,400 to 9,600 metric tons.

“This really quantifies yet another pressure on recovering the salmon population,” said co-author Isaac Kaplan, a research fishery biologist with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, part of NOAA Fisheries. Other threats to salmon include habitat damage, dams and pollution.

The emphasis typically has been on managing how fishing affects salmon. But this study brings the rest of the ecosystem, including predators, into the picture, Kaplan said.

Researchers have known marine mammals gorge on salmon in certain hotspots, including the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington. But the predators may be eating even more in the ocean than thought.

The authors estimated how much salmon in different life stages four marine mammals ate based on a number of assumptions, including their weight, diet and size. The species included California sea lions, Stellar sea lions, harbor seals and fish-eating killer whales.

The study does a very good job of accounting for who eats chinook salmon during its various life stages, said Andrew Trites, professor and director of the marine mammal



In this Sept. 2017, photo made with a drone, a young resident killer whale chases a chinook salmon in the Salish Sea near San Juan Island, Wash. The photo, made under a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) permit, which gives researchers permission to approach the animals, was made in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries/Southwest Fisheries Science Center, SR3 Sealife Response, Rehabilitation, and Research and the Vancouver Aquarium’s Coastal Ocean Research Institute.

“The question is ... if they’re taking prey out of the mouths of predators farther downstream.”

— Brandon Chasco, Oregon State University postdoctoral student

research unit at the University of British Columbia. He was not involved in the study. “They’ve identified some of the major players, but they haven’t identified them all,” such as other fish, marine birds and porpoises, he said.

The study found killer whales, which increased from 292 to 644, ate the most salmon in terms of biomass, or weight, while harbor seals ate the greatest numbers of salmon, mostly juvenile fish.

Scientists also found certain populations of fish-eating resident killer whales in southeast Alaska and Canada waters ate a lot more salmon. But the orcas that spend time in Puget Sound ate about the same volume they did 40 years ago, mostly because their numbers have been relatively constant.

Puget Sound orcas, also known as southern resident killer whales, face greater challenges than their orca counterparts farther north because they have a narrower menu of fish stocks and fewer available fish compared with what they need, Kaplan said.

These whales have struggled due to lack of food, pollution and impacts from boats since they were listed as endangered in Canada in 2003 and 2005 in the U.S. There are now just 76, down from a high of 140 decades ago.

Marine mammal protection efforts including the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972 have meant good news for other populations. Harbor seals, for example, increased 210,000 to 355,000.

Puget Sound orcas consume adult

chinook salmon — also called king salmon because they’re the largest — that migrate back to Puget Sound waters.

“Every other one of those predators has a chance to eat that salmon before. They’re the last ones to sit at the table and get a chance to eat,” said Brandon Chasco, lead author of the study and an Oregon State University postdoctoral student.

Meanwhile, harbor seals feast on millions of smaller, juvenile salmon as they migrate to the ocean from local rivers.

“They’re first in line to eat the prey before they become adults,” Chasco said. “The question is whether those fish would have died in the ocean, or if they’re taking prey out of the mouths of predators farther downstream.”

## New state office looks to improve recreational economy

SALEM (AP) — A newly created state office is hoping to take Oregon’s recreational economy from good to great.

The Office of Outdoor Recreation was created by the state lawmakers last legislative session in response to the decline in the percentage of Oregonians who take part in outdoor recreation, the Statesman Journal reported Sunday.

While the recreational economy continues to be strong in cities such as Bend and Portland, Chris Havel with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department said the state is concerned about other regions that are falling behind and want to figure out what can be done about it.

The new office will begin by focusing on improving access and participation to outdoor recreation and the stewardships and sustainability of resources.

Some have called the new office an unnecessary expense and doubt it will pay much attention to hunting, fishing and motorized recreation because its prominent supporters — Keen Footwear and REI — are known to primarily support hiking, biking and kayaking.

“Despite the fact that hunting is a longstanding and strong economic driver, Oregon’s government continues to ignore it,” said Dominic Aiello, president of the Oregon Outdoor Council, which promotes hunting. “Travel Oregon, the state’s official tourism office, doesn’t even list hunting under the ‘Things To Do’ for outdoor recreation in Oregon.”

Havel denies that the office will prioritize select forms of recreation, but he did recognize that outdoor recreation is a vast industry to work with.

“The only comfort is there’s a large community ready to help, and a hunger to find a better way forward,” he said.

# Kindergartener bags buck under Wisconsin’s new hunting rules

State eliminated any minimum hunting age

By GRETCHEN EHLKE  
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — A Wisconsin kindergartener is among the first youngsters to bag a buck under a new law that eliminates the state’s minimum hunting age.

Lexie Harris, 6, is no stranger to the woods.

Her dad, Tyler Harris, has taken her along on his hunts since she was 3.

But, it wasn’t until Gov. Scott Walker signed the new law on Nov. 12 that Lexie could legally shoot a deer.

Until then, a state resident had to be 12 years old to purchase a hunting license or hunt with a gun. Children as young as 10 could participate in the mentored

hunt program. The new law lets anyone of any age participate in a mentored hunt and the mentor and student are each allowed carry their own weapon.

Harris bought his daughter a youth rifle, which is easier for her to handle and less powerful and has taken her to the shooting range to practice. He also attached a smartphone to the gun scope to make it easier to train the firearm on her target.

On Sunday, Nov. 19, the two headed out to the woods near their rural Medford home in Taylor County, about 230 miles northwest of Milwaukee, where Harris has built a heated hunting enclosure. Harris carried his daughter’s gun. They saw several deer during their time in the wooded shelter,

but waited for the one that would provide a good shot, Harris said.

Soon, a six-point buck strolled into their view. Harris helped his daughter set up for a shot.

“She was shaking,” Harris said. He told her she could take a shot, but only if she wanted to. Lexie pulled the trigger and the buck was hit. The two tracked a blood trail to the carcass not far away.

“She looked at me right away and said, ‘I’m not gutting it because that’s gross,’” Harris said. So, he field dressed the deer and hauled the carcass out of the woods.

Lexie’s grandmother, Karen Zubke, said she’s glad her son believes his child doesn’t have to be a boy to hunt.

“He beams,” Zubke said describing her son. “He’s so proud of her.”



In this Nov. 19 photo provided by Tyler Harris, Lexie Harris, 6, poses after bagging a buck in Taylor County, Wis. Lexie is among the first youngsters to bag a buck under the state’s new law that eliminates the state’s minimum hunting age. She is no stranger to the woods. Her dad, Tyler Harris, has taken her hunting since she was three. But, it wasn’t until Gov. Scott Walker signed the law on Nov. 12 that Lexie could legally shoot a deer.

Tyler Harris via AP