



SHELTER IN THE STORM

A storm passes above an old line shack south of Pilot Rock at Jack Canyon on Friday, May 4.

Photo contributed by Barbara Morehead

Cottonwood Canyon 2.0

East Oregonian

Cottonwood Canyon, one of Oregon’s newest and most expansive state parks, is getting several new facilities to host more campers and activities.

Four cabins, a bathroom and an “experience center” are under construction at the state park on the Sherman County side of the John Day River. The park extends 8,000 acres and into Gilliam County.

Stan Peterson, a park ranger at Cottonwood Canyon, said the projects are expected to wrap up by the end of the summer. The cabins are being built near the current campground, which has 21 sites for tents and self-contained RVs and a group camp for up to 25 people.

The experience center will include classroom space, educational displays and meeting areas, and Peterson said the goal is grow the park’s user base. According to the Oregon State Parks website, annual overnight attendance is 10,536 and annual day-use attendance is 31,244.

The entire expansion was \$1.6 million and funded by the Oregon State Parks Foundation.



Staff photo by Daniel Wattenburger

The experience center is under construction at Cottonwood Canyon State Park on Sunday, May 13.

While the facility likely won’t be complete in time for the Cottonwood Canyon Summer Institute, the Eastern Oregon University summer program will return to the park for its third year on June 17-22.

The camp is for high school students and taught by EOU faculty and students, with an emphasis

on natural and cultural resources in the John Day river valley.

MJ Heather administers the program and said the location is a great place to study Oregon’s unique environment up close.

The camp has room for about 25 high school students, she said, but has mostly filled up. More information

is available at www.eou.edu/cottonwood-crossing.

The park, opened in 2013, is about 15 miles east of Moro and 25 miles northwest of Condon, and offers hiking, boating and fishing. It is surrounded by an additional 10,000 acres of public land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

BLOOMIN’ BLUES

Heat spike affects area wildflowers

By BRUCE BARNES
For the East Oregonian

Name: Annual agoseris
Scientific name:
Agoseris heterophylla

In a previous article this spring, I commented about this being a long cool spring, and I predicted the plants would catch up and we’d have everything flowering at once. Well, things haven’t gone as I expected in the last four weeks. I was up the Umatilla River and found that roadside cliffs had no newly blooming plants, while most of the really early wildflowers are done. While helping at Outdoor School, I found only three plants with flowers in the area around the Kiwanis Cabins. I don’t believe such a lack of blooming plants has occurred in the last 30-plus years of visiting that area in mid-May.

Along with the delayed blooming, I was very surprised with the dramatic increase of plant growth in the region. The bushes and perennial plants have created a nearly jungle-like appearance in general. As an example, while talking to students about plants, I had described the common thimbleberry raspberry with maple-like leaves, and said it was about three feet tall and rarely taller. Later, at the North Fork trail I was confronted by a stand of this plant with stems over six feet tall, much taller than I have ever seen it.

I have since talked with other specialists, and the consensus is that the unusually wet and cool spring is likely the primary cause of the plant growth.

So, getting on with the plant for this week: Annual agoseris is a little cousin in a genus of otherwise much larger plants. It is found from British Columbia to California, to Montana to New Mexico. It is widespread, rather common, but seldom seen



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Annual agoseris, Agoseris heterophylla

due to its size, and tending to grow among much larger plants in open, dry, grassy areas or open woodlands.

The plant is usually 3-6 inches tall when it blooms. The small head at the tip of its erect, leafless stem is much like a shrunken dandelion head, with several tiny yellow flowers in it. There are about 2-3 narrow, linear, erect leaves at the base of the stem that are about half as long as the stem. The leaves sometimes have a few small lobes along the edges.

There are five *Agoseris* species in Northeast Oregon. The genus name comes from the Greek aix for “goat” and seris for “chicory.” Chicory serves as a classification name for plants in the sunflower family, which have milky juice. The species name *heterophylla* is from hetero and phylla which together mean “different leaf.” An annual plant is one that comes up each year from seeds.

I found no resource indicating any medicinal or other uses for this plant.

Where to find: I’ve seen it in partly shady areas of mixed grasses and other small plants among trees up on Cabbage Hill. Look for a single small yellow spot down among the other plants.

Controversial wolf researcher agrees to leave WSU

PULLMAN, Wash. (AP) — A controversial wolf researcher will accept a \$300,000 settlement to leave Washington State University, the school said.

Robert Wielgus, director of the Carnivore Conservation Lab, sued the Pullman school for infringement of his academic freedom.

Wielgus angered ranchers with his research of wolf behavior. He concluded the state’s policy of killing wolves that preyed on cattle was likely to increase cattle predation because it destabilized the structure of wolf packs.

Ranchers complained to the Washington State Legislature, which cut Wielgus’ funding and demanded he be removed as principal investigator on his ongoing

work.

Wielgus then filed a lawsuit alleging the university punished him to placate politicians beholden to ranchers.

The *Seattle Times* reported Tuesday that WSU administrators became worried the dispute would hurt chances for funding its new medical school.

“If wolves continue to go poorly, there won’t be a new medical school,” Dan Coyne, lobbyist for WSU, wrote to another WSU lobbyist, according to emails obtained by the newspaper through a public information request.

The settlement will be paid from the state insurance liability account.

The lawsuit was filed with the assistance of PEER, or

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

Jeff Ruch, executive director of PEER, said the case showed that Washington had politicized its wolf policy.

“Rob published in very prestigious journals. You would think they would be proud of him and have his back,” Ruch said of WSU administrators. “Instead they had a knife in his back.”

The university issued a statement on Monday.

“Washington State University and Dr. Rob Wielgus have reached an agreement under which Dr. Wielgus will resign at the end of the spring 2018 semester and release all claims and employment rights in exchange for two payments totaling \$300,000,

with funds coming from the state,” the university said. “In reaching this agreement, neither party acknowledges any wrongdoing. Both parties view this as an opportunity to sever the employment relationship on mutually acceptable terms, while resolving disputed legal claims.”

While Wielgus’ research indicated wolf kills of cattle are rare, the return of the gray wolf to Washington this century has been met with fierce resistance by some ranchers.

Washington has about 120 known wolves in 22 packs, mostly in the northeastern corner of the state. The state has engaged in the killing of problem wolves, which has outraged conservation groups.