



Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Snowy plovers (not the nest on Clatsop Spit).

SNOWY PLOVERS SPOTTED IN FORT STEVENS

First sighting in decades

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
EO Media Group

Three years ago, Fort Stevens State Park designated a half-mile portion of the beach as a “Western Snowy Plover Management Area” and invited the endangered birds to nest there. No snowy plovers took the park up on its offer.

But this week snowy plover nests were spotted at Clatsop Spit — the first time since the 1980s that anyone has seen the birds there.

Vanessa Blackstone, a wildlife biologist with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, says the sighting is even more exciting because it connects the Western Washington state and Northern Oregon snowy plover populations.

The possibility for this overlap was one big reason why the department originally picked the Clatsop Spit area, bordered by the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean, as a management area.

“Oregonians have helped plovers return to the North Coast, and Clatsop Spit is an important link between our Tillamook County birds and those that live in Washington,” Blackstone said. “Plovers nesting at Fort Stevens is a huge step for species recovery and people who support a healthy environment. We can all be proud of this moment.”

So far, the state reports seeing one nesting pair with three eggs on the river side of Clatsop Spit. Such sightings prompt special precautions within the management area. Several activities are restricted, including dogs (even on a leash), vehicles, kites, drones, camping and fires. People walking along the beach are required to stay on wet sand areas and keep to official trails.



Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

A snowy plover (not the nest on Clatsop Spit).

Signs on dry sand identify plover nesting areas. Snowy plovers nest in shallow sandy scrapes. Eggs and chicks are well-camouflaged and can be accidentally crushed by people or pets. Repeated disturbances that cause parent birds to flee the nest — permanently or temporarily — can also be lethal for eggs.

Last year, the sighting of snowy plover nests and one successful hatchling marked a major success at Nehalem Bay State Park south of Manzanita in Tillamook County. That same year, three chicks also hatched at the Sitka Sedge Natural Area near Pacific City. The nests in 2017 were an important turning point for Oregon’s conservation efforts in the northern part of the state. In 2015, the first nest since conservation began in earnest at Nehalem Bay failed.

There is a chance that the male snowy plover nesting in the Clatsop Spit area now is the same one that successfully nested in Nehalem Bay last year. The bird carries a similar colored band.

If it is the same bird, he likely

bypassed Nehalem Bay this year because winter storms kicked up piles of driftwood onto the beach, eliminating good nesting habitat, Blackstone said.

This year, there is evidence that a chick may have hatched at Sitka Sedge. There are no confirmed nests at all at Nehalem Bay yet.

The habitat at Clatsop Spit isn’t always guaranteed. “The river moves things around so much,” Blackstone said. But down by the South Jetty, habitat happened to accumulate.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which owns the land and leases it to State Parks for recreational use, plans to further develop that habitat as the agency goes about jetty repair work in the future.

Western snowy plovers were listed as a threatened species in 1993. Sitka Sedge, Clatsop Spit and Nehalem Bay are just some of the snowy plover management areas the state oversees through a legal agreement between the parks department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

BRIEFLY

3 mountain climbers who fell about 300 feet rescued on Mount Hood

MOUNT HOOD (AP) — Three climbers who fell about 300 feet on Oregon’s Mount Hood have been rescued.

Portland Mountain Rescue says it keeps rescue teams ready on the mountain for emergencies and went to the mountain’s Hogsback area at around 10,750 feet elevation on Monday morning.

The three climbers were rescued by Monday afternoon.

A man was airlifted to a hospital to be treated for back and shoulder injuries. A woman had a shoulder injury. Another woman had an ankle injury. Rescue leader Steve Rollins tells CBS affiliate KOIN mountain conditions were difficult and slippery. He says climbers need to be careful about the techniques and equipment they use.

Climber Kevin Huang says the area where the other climbers fell is “very steep” and “can be tricky” for people who aren’t used to it.

Body of climber retrieved from Mount Adams

PORTLAND (AP) — Search and rescue crews recovered the body of an Oregon climber who fell on Mount Adams.

Yakima County Sheriff’s Office spokesman Casey Schilperoort says the body of Alexander Edward, of Hillsboro, was retrieved Wednesday after other climbers discovered it Sunday at around the 8,500-foot elevation of the mountain.

Schilperoort says earlier efforts to retrieve Edward’s body with a helicopter were not possible due to inclement weather conditions at the location where he was found.

Schilperoort says Edward had been reported missing at around the 11,000-foot elevation of the southern Washington volcanic peak.

Officials declared Alexander Edward dead after he fell nearly half a mile while climbing over the weekend.

Authorities did not specify the cause of Edward’s fall.

Four missing hunters identified after crash into river in Idaho backcountry

MISSOULA, Mont. (AP) — Authorities have identified four hunters who remain missing after a crash in the Idaho backcountry.

The Idaho County Sheriff’s Office on Sunday said the men are: Koby Clark of Bozeman, Montana, Reece Rollins of Terrebonne, Oregon and brothers Raymond and Jesse Ferrieri of Mahapac Falls, New York.

According to the *Ravalli Republic*, authorities recovered the SUV on Wednesday from the upper Selway River. The vehicle flipped into the river early Monday in a remote part of central Idaho about 60 miles west of Darby, Montana.

Authorities have continued searching for the men, but Idaho County Sheriff Doug Giddings has described the effort as a “recovery” mission.

Two of the men inside escaped the vehicle with minor injuries and have returned to their homes in Georgia.

Modern-day cattle rustlers? 200 Nevada cows missing in year

By **SCOTT SONNER**
Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Sheriff’s deputies and state agriculture officials are investigating the disappearance of as many as 200 cows in northern Nevada over the past year that may have been stolen by modern-day cattle rustlers across rangeland covering hundreds of square miles.

Investigators haven’t uncovered any proof that thieves took the animals, but authorities in Humboldt County say it would be an uncommonly large number of animals to have died on the range over the winter.

“This is unusual for our area,” Humboldt County Sheriff’s Lt. Sean Wilkin told The Associated Press, adding he’s not aware of any similar incidents in recent years.

Fifty cows or calves were reported missing in late March and early April when ranchers counted their herds as they moved them off their winter grazing range in Paradise Valley about 200 miles northeast of Reno and 50 miles south of the Oregon line. The animals belonging to the Ninety-Six Ranch are

Hereford and black Angus mixes with “96” and the year of birth branded on the left hip.

The disappearance comes about a year after 150 cattle were reported missing in April 2017 on a series of ranches operated by Orovaco in northern Humboldt County farther east toward the Elko County line.

Wilkin said it is possible some of the cattle could have died on the range and their carcasses haven’t yet been discovered.

“It is a lot of land to check. We are talking hundreds of square miles,” he said.

But he thinks that is unlikely, giving the missing animals make up about 10 percent of the herds.

“I’m staying away from the words ‘stolen’ or ‘theft’ because we don’t have suspects or evidence of a crime,” Wilkin said. “However, it is likely the cattle are in fact missing. If they were taken, it would have taken multiple trucks to haul them away.”

Depending on the size of the animals, he estimated 30 to 50 would fit in a single tractor-trailer load.

“At this point, we haven’t

received any tips that would produce any leads on this. So we are reaching out to the media in hope that helps develop something,” Wilkin said.

Doug Farris, the Nevada Department of Agriculture’s animal industry division administrator, issued a statement earlier this month confirming the cattle are missing and reminding ranchers they must report allegations of stolen cattle to the state’s livestock identification program or a state department enforcement marshal.

“If you suspect missing cattle on your operation, please contact us immediately,” he said.

But Farris said in an email to the AP that his agency has no evidence the cattle in Humboldt and Elko counties were stolen.

“We receive reports of missing livestock from all over the state, and there is no reason to believe these two reports are related. Most missing cattle show up on the ranch property or on a neighboring ranch property when more extensive gathering is done or when inclement weather sets in,” he said.

BLOOMIN’ BLUES

Native plants make great landscaping choices

By **BRUCE BARNES**
For The East Oregonian

A couple weeks ago I wrote about how much more robust the plants in the Blue Mountains seem to have grown this spring with the cool weather and lots of rain. The same effect appears to have happened in our yard in town. Our front yard is nearly all native plants with few exceptions. About a week ago I counted 25 species of plants blooming in our yard already, and more have opened up since then.

My wife and I decided six years ago to get rid of our lawn and turn the front yard into a native plant garden. With the help from a local landscaper, the grass and dandelions went the way of Roundup (weed killer, not the rodeo). Then the surface was contoured and a ground cloth was laid down with gravel on top.

It may sound like a lot of work, but actually it really isn’t. We have few weeds to pull each spring. We use very little water; we turn on a couple soaker hoses for 15 minutes each week when it’s hot, and leave about sixty percent of the area



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Local native flowers and shrubs planted in rock mulch provide a low-water, easy-care alternative to thirsty lawns.

alone with no water at all. We don’t mow. Some of the plants are short-lived perennials that last only 3-4 years, but they are easy to replace with new seedlings that pop up around the garden each spring on their own.

Notable natives in the yard include three species of wild buckwheat, two species of balsamroot, a prolific sandwort, several penstemons, three cinquefoil species, wild geranium, columbine, blanketflower, Oregon sunshine, golden currant, gray rabbit brush, arctic sage, winter-fat, mock orange, and basin wild rye.

We bought a number of locally grown plants from a

nursery in Milton-Freewater that is now closed, and from the CTUIR Tribal Native Plant Nursery near Mission, as well as a few from Sandy Ott in Pendleton. The tribal nursery has continued to expand and provide stock for restoration projects, while making plants available for the public.

Digging up and transplanting native plants is not a good idea. Most do not survive transplanting, in many places it is illegal, and the plants may not be acclimated to life in town, and removal from native plants often disturbs the soil and thereby allows weeds to take over the area.