

# Library staff suggest good reads for everyone



ERIN  
MCCUSKER  
LIBRARIES PROVIDE —  
COUNTYWIDE

Need a book to read? Area library directors and staff have suggestions for all.

Even though libraries have been closed or offering limited services during the pandemic, they are still getting new books and checking them out to library customers at curbside. Whether you love mystery, fantasy, nonfiction or romance, your library has something for everyone's tastes.

One of the services a library provides is called readers' advisory. According to Diana Tixier Herald, readers' advisory is, "the act of putting people together with the books they love."

There is nothing better than sinking into a book that takes you away to a wonderful place, familiar or a whole new experience. The staff at your libraries get to know a variety of books and audiobooks for all

ages. Read on for suggestions from them.

**"The Bright Lands" by John Fram**, suggested by Kristin Williams of the Athena Public Library. This book has characters that are simultaneously sympathetic and repellent, a setting that glistens with Texas heat, and football — that fall tradition we're all missing. It's gritty and harrowing, sometimes confusing but definitely holds your attention right to the bloody,

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disturbing finale. This book is Friday Night Lights, but with murder. Want more after you finish this one? Try "Valentine" by Elizabeth Wetmore.

**"One Long River of Song" by Brian Doyle**, suggested by Kathleen Schmidt of Weston Public Library. The late Brian Doyle possessed an amazing talent for capturing the human condition in a way that has the reader nodding in agreement. This

collection of essays will find the reader laughing one moment and wiping away a tear the next. Each piece is a gem.

**"Germs vs Soap" by Didi Dragon**, suggested by Annette Kubishta of the Helix Public Library. Released in June 2020, this book is timely and helps adults explain to children the importance of handwashing. In its fun format it teaches how germs absolutely do not like soap and

how kids can make sure the germs don't spread.

**"Midnight Sun" by Stephenie Meyer**, suggested by Cecili Longhorn of the Stanfield Public Library. If you want a whole new look at "The Twilight Saga" series, check out "Midnight Sun" — you will get a great glimpse of the story from Edward's point of view. My favorite thing about this book is that you get to hear more about his

family and where they came from. You must check it out!

**"The Witch Elm" by Tana French**, suggested by Jennifer Costley of the Pendleton Public Library. The last mystery to be released by the "Dublin Murders" author, "The Witch Elm" is unpredictable, disturbing and uncomfortable. When you close the book, you'll wonder if you regret reading it, and then stay up all night thinking about whether or not it should have ended differently.

**"From Blood and Ash" by Jennifer L. Armentrout**, suggested by Susie Sotelo of the Umatilla Public Library. Vampires, werewolves, deities, oh my! Captivating, steamy and action-packed, From "Blood and Ash" is a perfect introduction to Sci-Fi/fantasy/romance. You won't be able to put it down!

For contact information for the 12 public libraries in Umatilla County, visit [www.ucslid.org/our-libraries](http://www.ucslid.org/our-libraries).

*Erin McCusker is the district director of the Umatilla County Special Library District. Reach her at 541-276-6449 or [director@ucslid.org](mailto:director@ucslid.org).*

## One practical option to minimize destructive wildfires



WES  
MELO  
OTHER VIEWS

We are in the heart of wildfire season and daily news reports summarize destructive wildfires throughout the western states.

Many of us who are not personally affected by an evacuation, or worse, the loss of one's home, are living with the health hazard of breathing smoke day after day.

Most western lands are "fire prone" and in many circumstances have become heavily overgrown since fire suppression over many decades has interrupted fire's natural action of reducing fuels.

Fire is a natural disturbance that occurs in most wildlands of the West and has influenced plants and animals for millennium, long before man came on the scene. Think through how fire occurred in nature

before human intervention. Science confirms combustion requires heat, oxygen and fuel, and requires a source of ignition. Once fire ignites, natural conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind, terrain, as well as fuel conditions and volume, influence fire behavior.

Burning will continue until a change in one or more of those factors interrupts the combustion process. Wind — even minor breezes — and thermals from fire can carry embers long distances, depositing them on additional combustible material and extending the burn. Fire usually stops when it burns into areas without enough fuel to support combustion, fuels get wet from precipitation, and/or external temperatures will no longer support fire.

Significant changes to ecosystems occur when human activity interrupts natural cycles, including wildfire, enabling substantial fuels to accumulate before ignition. Fire exclusion has led to major changes from historical wildland ecologies in many wildlands of the west. If we hope to reduce the damages currently occurring from catastrophic wildfires, active management of

fire-prone wildlands is critical to mimic the outcome of natural, low intensity fire activity.

Natural fire ignition occurs mostly through lightning strikes igniting combustible materials. Studies indicate that before humans intervened, wildland fires generally reoccurred between five to 50 years in most fire-prone wildlands, significantly minimizing major fuel buildup while lessening damage to fire resistant vegetation. Unlike past centuries, human activity is now a major source of wildland fire ignition.

Where there is heavy fuel buildup, once ignition occurs (regardless of the source) wildfires can be devastating, resulting in wildlife death, harming water quality, damaging soils, destroying fire resistant species and creating severe smoke conditions that are especially dangerous for humans with respiratory conditions. Wildfires also endanger the safety and lives of firefighters and civilians, and in the past several years, have destroyed thousands of homes.

Many recent fires in California were

reportedly mostly caused by multiple lightning storms and are an example of what happens when excessive fuels and weather conditions create severe wildfire conditions.

Since humans interrupted the natural cleansing process of wildfires, it is time for proactive wildland management to aggressively focus work on controlling fuels to minimize further severe destructive fire behavior. Fuels management must focus on thinning, prescribed burning and in some cases understory removal, mowing or mulching to reduce fuel loads.

Given the scientific understanding of combustion, that is really the only practical option we have if we hope to minimize destructive wildfires.

*Wes Melo is the vice-chairman of Communities for Healthy Forests, a nonprofit founded in Roseburg to inform the public and policy makers with facts supporting the need to restore and manage forest lands. He is a 1966 graduate of the University of California-Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in forestry.*

## Elephants, birds — and a really big tiger



DR. ANDREW  
CLARK  
A SLICE OF LIFE

Have you ever had an adventure with a wild tiger? A really close adventure?

The last column was about birdwatching on elephant back and this column is a continuation.

The next morning we were out for another birding/tigering adventure in a Maruti Gypsy pickup, the Indian heir to the Suzuki Samurai — a small, light four-wheel drive. You stand in the open back section holding extended rollbars with nice views all around. The drivers are very savvy about tigers and we soon found fresh pugmarks in the dust so we followed those tracks.

Bingo! A full-adult male tiger sauntering along the dusty road, going home after the night's hunt. What an utterly magnificent animal and much bigger than I had imagined — an adult male Bengal Tiger can weigh more than 600 pounds. He left the road to walk through the open forest, so we drove alongside and watched him for about one-quarter mile until he crossed the road in front of us and went into some thick lantana bushes.

And here is where the real adventure begins.

Shortly after that point was another Maruti Gypsy that had run out of fuel, so all the people had transferred into a third Gypsy — about 12 men, women and children stood in the back of that little open vehicle, excited to see a tiger. We knew exactly where one was, so we turned around and led them to that enormous, beautiful, wonderful beast lying in the lantana brush only about 20 to 30 feet from the road. We gestured that the tiger was right there, and moved forward 20 to 30 yards so they could come up and see him.

I had no idea how athletic tigers are. As those people stood there in that little open vehicle, totally exposed, suddenly that enormous tiger burst out of the brush with a snarl, charged the vehicle in a couple of bounds to about 4 feet away, stood glaring the driver straight in the eye — their faces only a few feet from each other — gave a

stupendous sustained roar, then turned and with a bound or two and a soaring leap, disappeared into the bush.

I imagine that driver could have smelled a fresh breakfast of spotted deer on that tiger's breath. I'd read about tiger roars and I've heard lots of lion roars, but I had no idea that any animal was capable of such a sound. It was paralyzing. Having vented his frustration, the tiger was nowhere to be seen again. The Gypsy came tearing up beside us with everyone talking at once, and I'm sure this episode will become family legends for all of us.

This all took less than 10 seconds, and not one of the humans involved reacted at all. We were transfixed and dumbstruck.

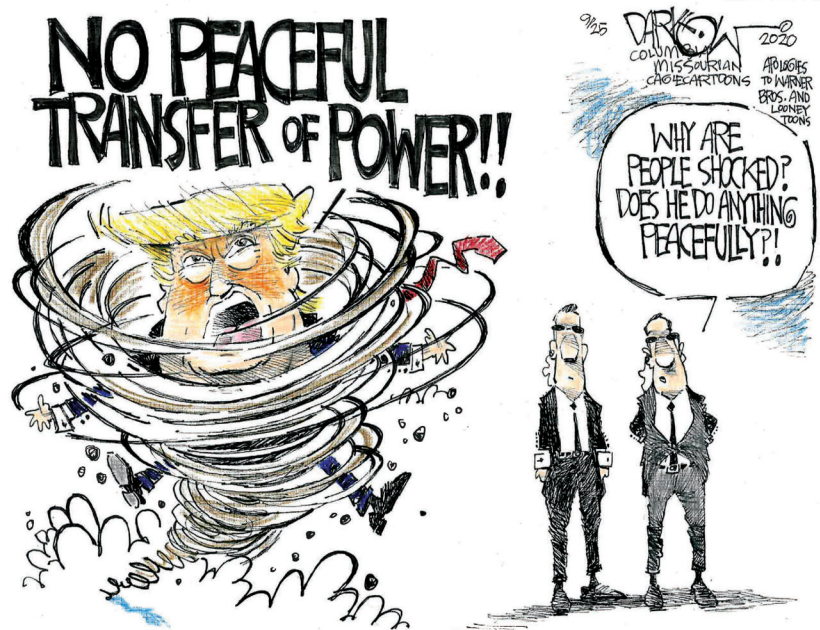
The immediate was riveting, with everyone immobilized and absolutely silent in the shock of what was happening. The aftermath was a combination of stunning and hilarious. The potential could have been disastrous beyond imagination had that tiger jumped into the vehicle on top of all those women, men, and children.

When we were living in East Africa Serengeti country there was a tale about a leopard who became tired of all the attention during his nap time so he dropped from his tree branch through the open roof hatch into a vehicle of tourists and expressed his irritation, leaving them with a lot of scratches, bites, blood, excitement, and memories. Had the tiger done the same it would have been much more serious, seeing as a tiger is nearly five times the size of a leopard and, in their normal hunting strategies, one strike of a forefoot breaks the necks of their prey. They are tremendously strong.

After this episode we spent five days in the steep, rugged hill country of northern India, birdwatching. The birds were exotic and wonderful, the air was pure and sweet and a pleasure to breathe — like Eastern Oregon — and from a high ridge we had horizon-to-horizon views of the Himalayas to the northeast. Wonderous views of that immense, beautiful, and utterly terrifying range of jagged, forbidding mountains.

And then we returned to Delhi for our son's wonderful and joyous Hindu wedding.

*Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.*



## Special section highlights hometown sports



ANDREW  
CUTLER  
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Prep sports is about as American as you can get.

For the last two seasons — spring and autumn — area high school athletes have been blockaded from participating in any kind of extracurricular activity because of the COVID-19 virus.

For a lot of us the virus really hit home when we suddenly realized that those Friday night lights, we are so accustomed to, were extinguished.

There isn't that much economic impact to a prep sports blackout — there are no million-dollar contracts at stake — but the loss of high school and college sports is felt in a different, and I believe, more poignant way regarding our overall morale.

Spring means for many track and field, golf, baseball and softball. Autumn translates into football, soccer, cross country and volleyball. Those sports are part of the normal fabric of our lives, as intricate as social media or an iPhone.

Now, all of that has been put on hold and shuffled around.

In the Oregon School Activities Association's recently adopted school activities calendar, all official sports seasons for the winter, fall and spring (in that order) have been moved to 2021 — from January through June — and condensed into sev-

en-week regular seasons, with a "culminating week" to follow the purely regional competition.

With no high school sports to focus on for a while, we wanted to do something to put it back in the spotlight.

Next week, we will publish a special section called "Sidelined." The section focuses on high school athletes and how they are coping with the unique — to say the least — high school sports seasons that evaporated.

I believe "Sidelined" presents a precise review of how deep the COVID-19 virus has hurt communities across the county, state and nation. The virus, really, has just about touched every part of our lives in one way or another. A year ago, a shuttered high school or college sports season would have seemed the stuff of science fiction. But here we are.

I believe "Sidelined" is a great way to look at a different aspect of the damage of the virus. A lot of sports fans take those Friday night lights for granted. We've grown accustomed to them. To see them go dark suddenly is a shock.

Yet, it can be no less of a shock for the hundreds of high school athletes out there who have had things turned upside down. Sports in small towns across the county and Eastern Oregon take their hometown sports seriously. So, do we. That's why I think "Sidelined" will be a great read. I hope you do too.

*Andrew Cutler is the publisher/editor of the East Oregonian.*