

Sighting in Hermiston could be a bear, biologist says

Report first made by UPS employee Oct. 21

ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A dark and fuzzy photo of a possible bear is circulating around social media, causing rigorous argument. While some people believe the image in the photo is a bear, other people are not so sure.

Maybe it is a dog, they say. A few people even claim it is a calf.

A UPS Customer Care Center employee made the first report Thursday, Oct. 21, at 1 p.m. after he saw

the animal near his work on Westport Lane, Hermiston.

A Umatilla County sheriff's deputy responded to the call, arrived on the scene and took photos that are now causing all the debate.

Steve Cherry, district wildlife biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said a bear sighting is possible.

"You never know," he said.

The odds are not great of a black bear being seen where it was, but he would not rule it out. He has seen photos of the sighting, and he said "they all look like they could be a bear."

The nearest population of



Umatilla County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

A Umatilla County sheriff's deputy on Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, shot this photo of a possible bear off Westport Lane in Hermiston.

black bears lives around 30 miles away from the report of the sighting, Cherry said. That population lives toward the Blue Mountains, just outside of Pendleton.

When young bears leave their mother, they sometimes wander as they search for a new home. Cherry said such a bear, right now, would be getting ready for hibernation

and would be looking for a food source.

A stray bear, in this situation, could be attracted by trash cans. There would be few other sources for food in the area, so it would likely move on to a different place.

Mark Kirsch, John Day watershed manager for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said the presence of a bear in Hermiston would be "very atypical."

"I can't remember another one," he said.

Kirsch said he can't speak to the exact motivation that would drive a bear out of the mountains and toward the desert, but added animals' motivation to wander is "typically tied

to their stomach."

People should not be worried about an attack, Cherry said. Bears, unless they are overly familiar with people, are afraid of us.

If people come face-to-face with a bear, they should "act big," Cherry said. They should stand tall and shout, keeping their eyes on the bear. Backing up is fine to do, but people should not turn and run. Such action may encourage bears to pursue.

Most times, bears will run from people when people do not act fearful in front of the bears.

East Oregonian reporter Bryce Dole contributed to this report.

ANSWERING THE CALL



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

An ambulance and fire engine race through downtown Pendleton on the way to a call on Monday, Oct. 25, 2021.

Trial delayed for Kennewick man accused in 2020 road rage killing

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A trial for a man facing charges of second-murder in a June 2020 road rage shooting has been delayed, according to Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus.

Jaime Ubay-Farfan, 25, of Kennewick, faces charges of second-degree murder, unlawful use of

a weapon, possessing a weapon as a convicted felon and pointing a firearm at another person.

The state has accused Ubay-Farfan of killing Tracey Scott Medows, of Hood River, on June 20 near Lamb Road and Interstate 82 outside of Hermiston.

Primus said the defense counsel asked to delay the trial because Ubay-Far-

fan's original attorney is no longer employed with Intermountain Public Defenders, Pendleton. With new counsel, Primus said it was "too quick for them to get to trial."

"This is more of a need for more time for counsel to have the opportunity to be prepared," he said.

Primus said the court has a hearing to set a trial on Nov. 9.

Boardman police chief warns of holiday crime

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Parents will not be the only ones shopping this holiday season, according to Rick Stokoe, Boardman chief of police. He has been warning people about thefts they can expect to increase in the coming months.

As a newcomer to social media, the chief said he is surprised about the information people share. Specifically, he is flabbergasted at how people let others know about their vacation habits.

When folks announce vacations, or even post selfies on planes, they are revealing that their homes are unguarded. Seeing these posts, burglars are free to do some Christmas shopping in the vacationer's houses.

Stokoe added, burglary is

not unique to Boardman. It is not even common there, he said. He is concerned it will increase, though.

He also said he is worried about package thieves, individuals who steal deliveries from porches and doorsteps. Criminals, especially during the holidays, are known to follow delivery trucks. When a driver stops and leaves a package at a home, a thief follows them and takes the package.

As with the burglary examples mentioned above, porch piracy is not common. The chief has not received many calls about it this year, and he said there were not any major reports of it last year. Still, he said, he wanted to alert the public of it.

People also can take action to prevent thefts. They can schedule deliveries for

when they are home, or they can have items delivered to their workplace, a trusted friend or neighbor.

Stokoe also recommended people refrain from making social media posts about trips away from home. He said people should not make social media posts referencing their outings at all.

He also advised that people look out for one another. If a person sees suspicious activity at their neighbors' homes, people should call the police.

When someone sees suspicious activity at a home, reports it and the police check it out, this is a good thing, he said. Often, police discover no problem, and that is fine. Other times, police happen upon a crime.

Stokoe said it is better to err on the side of caution.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Pendleton gets grant for flood prevention

PENDLETON — The Federal Emergency Management Administration granted the city of Pendleton \$300,000 to conduct a study on the McKay Creek basin to prevent future flooding, according to an Oct. 19 press release from the city.

FEMA approved the grant in the wake of the 2019 McKay Creek floods, when heavy rainfall overwhelmed McKay Reservoir near Pendleton and flood damaged more than 60 homes along the creek. The city cleared sediment from the McKay Creek bed in 2020, but the city study would look for further solutions, including better snowpack monitoring equipment, deepening the reservoir or allocating more storage capacity to flood management.

Grant secured to upgrade school HVAC systems

MORROW COUNTY — Federal stimulus dollars to address the COVID-19 pandemic continue to flow into Oregon and the Morrow County School District is the latest beneficiary.

On Thursday, Oct. 21, the district announced it received a \$2.4 million grant from the Oregon Department of Education's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, a program backed by federal stimulus, to upgrade its heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

According to a press release, the district studied its heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems at school facilities in Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner and found they needed upgrades, such as new heating pumps, an airflow rebal-

ance and new controls to improve ventilation and monitoring. The district anticipates these improvements will result in lower cooling and heating costs and a more consistent indoor temperatures during the summer and winter months.

"We all become very aware of how an HVAC system is working when the weather gets cold and especially when the electric bills come in," Morrow County Superintendent Dirk Dirksen said in a statement. "The Morrow County School District will be able to make substantial upgrades to our systems in our older buildings using federal dollars. This will create a better learning environment for our students while allowing us to spend less time and money keeping aged systems up and running."

— EO Media Group and Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Man faces murder, more in June 2020 Hermiston killing

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A suspect in the slaying of a man in Hermiston in 2020 is not getting out of the Umatilla County Jail anytime soon.

Keith Michael Beridon, 26, of La Grande, is on the hook for two counts of unlawful use of a weapon, one count of felon in possession of a firearm and one of second-degree murder in the homicide of Jesus Eli Lopez, according to state court records.

Lopez's body was found June 9, 2020, in his family's garage, according to

news reports. He died from a gunshot.

Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus said his office extradited Beridon from California. He is in jail without bail, where he will stay for the remainder of the case.

Beridon in September had a bail hearing. Circuit Judge Jon Lieuallen found the evidence showed a strong presumption that Beridon was responsible for the homicide and would not grant him bail, so he remains in custody, Primus said.

Primus said he can't speak to any of the facts in

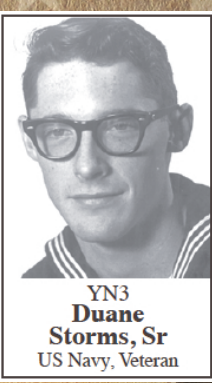
the case, "only the posture of the case, where it's at in the court system." Officials have yet to publicly disclose any apparent motive in the case.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said based on the investigation, Beridon is the lone suspect, but when detectives flew to Orange County, California, after his apprehension, possibly on an out-of-state warrant, he declined to talk.

Beridon's pretrial conference is scheduled in the for the afternoon of Nov. 19 at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton.

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