

Wildlife rescuers return bald eagle to Yakima Valley

By DONALD W. MEYERS
Yakima Herald-Republic

PARKER — The bald eagle didn't waste much time once the cardboard box that held him on a trip from Pendleton to the Sunnyside Canal near Parker, Washington, was opened.

The raptor took a couple steps out of the box and, with a flap of the wings, was airborne, flying across the rest area along the Yakima Valley Highway, alighting on a nearby tree and surveying the area, to the delight of the volunteers from the bird rescue group that had released him.

"It's perfect," said Shelly LaPierre-McAllister, one of the rescuers. "He is there (in the tree) and getting his bearings."

For the group, the release was a happy ending to the eagle's story, as well as a reminder of the danger that lead fishing weights and shot pose to wildlife, especially raptors.

The bird was found the morning of Jan. 9 near Zillah, suffering from what turned out to be lead poisoning. But, thanks to volunteers from Pendleton-based Blue Mountain Wildlife, he was able to recover and return to the Yakima Valley.

Blue Mountain works with orphaned, sick and injured wildlife, treating them so they can be safely released back into the wild, as well as educating the public on how their actions affect the environment and wildlife.

LaPierre-McAllister said she and her husband received a call from Yakima County dispatchers



Donald W. Meyers/Yakima Herald-Republic

Shelly LaPierre-McAllister, a volunteer with Blue Mountain Wildlife, Pendleton, releases a bald eagle Jan. 29, 2022, near Sunnyside Dam in Parker, Washington. LaPierre-McAllister picked up the eagle earlier in January after it was reported sick in the Zillah area, and the Pendleton-based rescue group treated it for lead poisoning.

about a sick eagle found near Zillah. "He was really, really sick," LaPierre-McAllister said. "He was laying on his chest with his wings out."

She said the bird had vomited earlier, suggesting that his last meal was the cause of his illness. She picked up the unnaturally docile bird and, working with other volunteers in relay, shuttled him down to

Blue Mountain's facility in Pendleton, where a blood test showed the eagle had a toxic amount of lead in his blood.

Lead poisoning

Lead affects birds' neurological and reproductive systems, which can cause them to lose their sense of balance and interfere with their ability to fly. As a result, eagles can

starve to death.

At the facility, the eagle received chelation therapy to remove the lead from his system. The treatment involves injecting chemicals that bind with the lead and allow it to be expelled.

In her blog, Blue Mountain Wildlife's Executive Director Lynn Tompkins said the eagle quickly responded to treatment, and had no

sign of lead in his system after the first course of therapy.

"It may be that his exposure to lead was acute and the lead didn't have time to move from his blood to other organs in his body before chelation removed it," Tompkins wrote.

LaPierre-McAllister and Michelle Rosenkranz, a Blue Mountain volunteer from Kennewick, said the bird was poisoned either by eating an animal that had been shot with lead ammunition or had swallowed lead fishing weights.

The use of lead by hunters and anglers is something that Blue Mountain is trying to stop, urging people to use non-lead alternatives, such as steel or copper.

"We want to get the message out to stop using lead," Rosenkranz said.

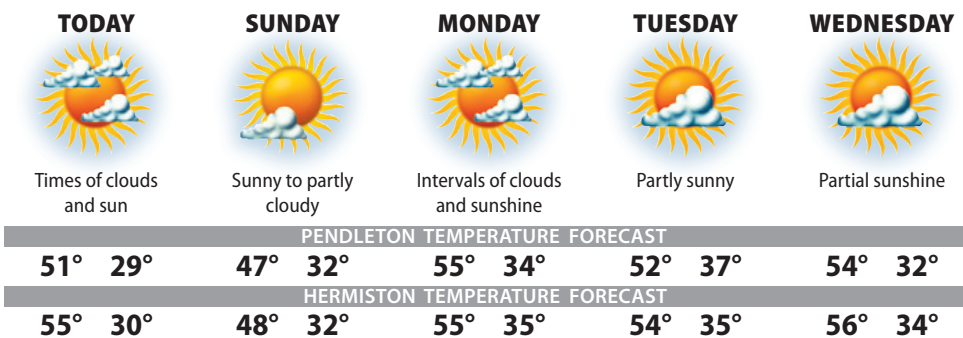
On Jan. 29, the eagle was placed in a used cardboard shipping box that, appropriately, had U.S. Postal Service tape on the side depicting an eagle. He was returned to the Yakima Valley by another relay of volunteers.

Rosenkranz picked up the eagle at Umatilla and drove him to Parker for the release. LaPierre-McAllister, who first rescued the bird, was given the honor of releasing him back into his habitat.

LaPierre-McAllister said the goal is to try to release the birds as close as possible to the place where they were found.

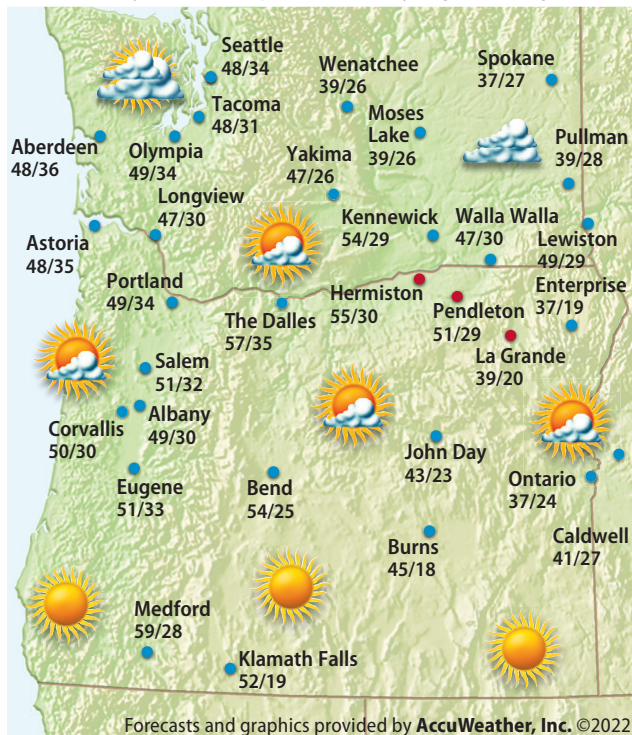
But the group couldn't spend too much time watching the eagle settle in. They were off to rescue another bird in distress.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



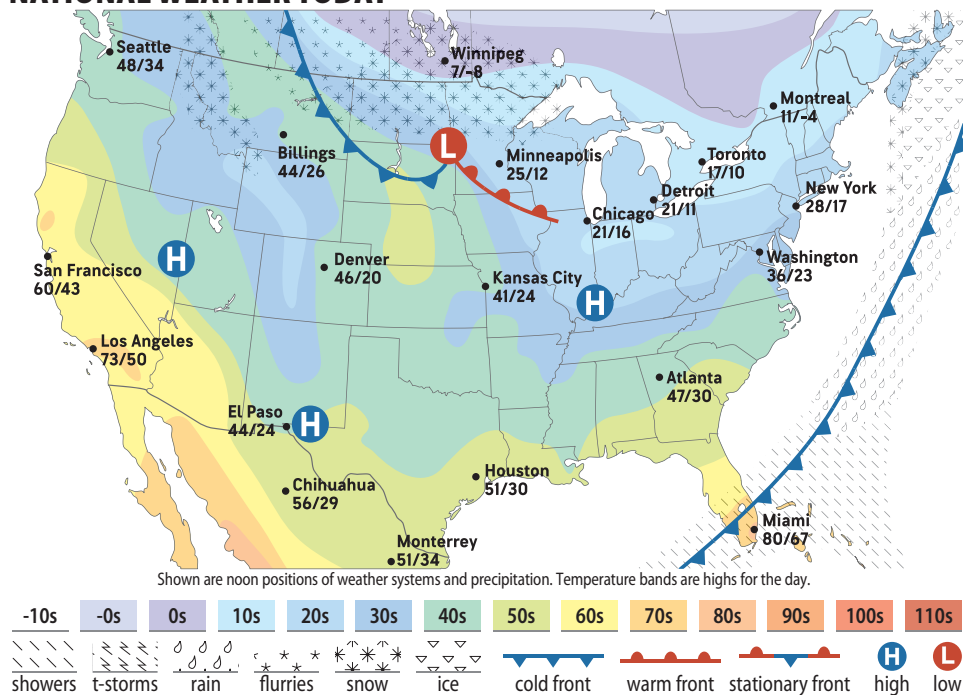
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	41°	26°	
Normals	44°	29°	
Records	66° (1963)	-13° (1989)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.04"		
Normal month to date	0.18"		
Year to date	1.57"		
Last year to date	0.99"		
Normal year to date	1.72"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	38°	25°	
Normals	46°	29°	
Records	63° (2018)	-25° (1950)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	Trace		
Normal month to date	0.14"		
Year to date	0.93"		
Last year to date	0.71"		
Normal year to date	1.28"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	W 4-8	Sun. ENE 3-6	
Boardman	W 7-14	N 4-8	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:12 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	5:07 p.m.		
Moonrise today	9:41 a.m.		
Moonset today	10:37 p.m.		
First	Full	Last	New
Feb 8	Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 2

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 86° in Immokalee, Fla. Low -32° in Lake George, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



EOU case count a mixed bag

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Like any other entity in Oregon, Eastern Oregon University has not been immune to the sharp increase in COVID-19 cases in the midst of the spike caused by the omicron variant.

The university in La Grande saw a significant rise in off-campus cases in January, while its numbers among on-campus individuals stayed rather steady.

EOU has totaled 259 total positive COVID-19 cases this academic year, since the school began tracking data at the start of July. Of that total, just under 60% of the positive tests came from off-campus students, roughly 18% of the positive tests were from on-campus students.

Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, Eastern totaled 157 cases — 93 were among off-campus students.

From Dec. 6, 2021, to Jan. 1, there were 16 total

cases among on-campus students. By the end of January, that total rose to 40. The rate among employees at Eastern Oregon University saw a similar mild increase, rising from 22 to 45.

Cases among off-campus students saw a significant rise in the same time frame, jumping from 44 cases to 152.

The university had several high points in January, mirroring national and statewide trends as the emergence of the omicron variant led to an increase in cases. Eastern recorded a record-high case count for a single day on Jan. 4, tallying 23 positive cases. The school recorded 21 cases on Jan. 10 and 14 on Jan. 25, all three of which are the highest single days since Eastern started tracking its COVID-19 data this school year.

The previous single-day high was seven cases on Sept. 13.

The numbers echo Union County's COVID-19 case counts, which have averaged just under 37 cases per day in January. The county's high

point was reached on Jan. 26, when the Oregon Health Authority reported 85 cases. During the period from Jan. 17-30, Union County averaged just over 52 cases per day.

Eastern's testing has continually increased throughout the 2021-22 school year, reaching 2,458 total tests through Feb. 2. The 259 total positive tests result in a 10.5% positivity rate. The measurement had stayed steady around 5% through most of the fall, peaking toward the end of January and into February.

Eastern has 50 isolation rooms available on campus in case of infection, but the university has never come close to running out of space in that regard. From Jan. 5-10, 45 out of the 50 spaces were available, the lowest mark that Eastern has reached since the dashboard started tracking data at the start of July.

The vaccination rate among on-campus students stands at 75.7%, with a 24.2% exemption rate. For on-campus employees, 80.1% are vaccinated and 17.7% received an exemption.

IN BRIEF

Burst water pipe in Baker City leaks millions of gallons

BAKER CITY — A mysterious uptick in Baker City's water usage led to the discovery of a burst water pipe that leaked more than 4.5 million gallons.

City officials had been tracking a rise in daily water use for about three weeks, but no major leak had been found or reported, said Michelle Owen, public works director.

But on Jan. 26, Baker City Police received a call about a water leak at the former site of the USA Gas station, convenience store and car wash on the north side of Campbell Street near Albertsons.

Public works employees found a pipe had frozen and burst. Most of the water flowed into a floor drain in the car wash area, which limited damage to the building, Owen said.

"Sometimes it takes a while for those to

show up," she said.

She estimated more than 4.5 million gallons of water had leaked through the broken pipe, about 299,520 gallons per day while it was leaking.

During winter the city typically goes through about 1.5 million gallons per day.

Owen said it's not clear why, or who, turned on water service to the building, which has been empty for a few years. City workers turned off the water, ending the leak.

Greg Sackos, who owns the Baker Towne Square development that includes the former gas station, said the property is under lease to Albertsons.

Sackos said on Wednesday, Feb. 2, he hadn't heard about the leak. He said there had been reports of people trespassing on the property recently.

—EO Media Group

CORRECTION: The gates on The Dalles Dam closed 65 years ago. That number was inaccurate in the article "Salmon are no longer kings of the Columbia" on Page A2 of the East Oregonian in the Thursday, Feb. 3, edition.

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