

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Poaching wolves only makes matters worse

If anyone wanted to help out the animal rights crowd in its efforts to reinstate federal Endangered Species Act protection to all wolves, all he would have to do is randomly kill the predators.

Since wolves were reintroduced into parts of the West, animal rights activists have been hollering that, unless wolves are fully protected under the ESA, they could be indiscriminately killed.

In a few parts of Eastern Oregon, that appears to be happening. In the past two years, eight wolves were poisoned and seven were shot and killed.

This was not someone protecting himself or his livestock. This was someone poaching and breaking the law.

Animal rights and environmental groups are pushing right now trying to convince the federal government to reinstate ESA protections for wolves in the Northern Rockies. Just last week, we published a column by two members of the U.S. Senate making the case for state management of wolves in Idaho and Montana.

The senators are 100% correct. Idaho, Montana and other states where wolves have been imposed on ranchers and others have done their best. Reinstating federal protections would take management decisions out of the states' hands.

If you think there are problems with wolves now, wait until management decisions are returned to the hands of federal bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

No one has been more vociferous than the East Oregonian's sister paper, Capital Press, in criticizing how the reintroduction of wolves has been managed. Time and again, we have stood up and pointed out the shortcomings of federal wildlife managers and the unfairness their actions have inflicted on ranchers, whose livelihoods depend on their ability to raise cattle and sheep.

The basis of those criticisms was that wolves have been allowed to run roughshod through portions of the rural West, attacking cattle, sheep, wildlife and other animals such as working dogs. Capital Press argued that ranchers also were the victims but were willing to follow the law.

Ranchers have worked hard to use non-lethal means of separating wolves from cattle and sheep.

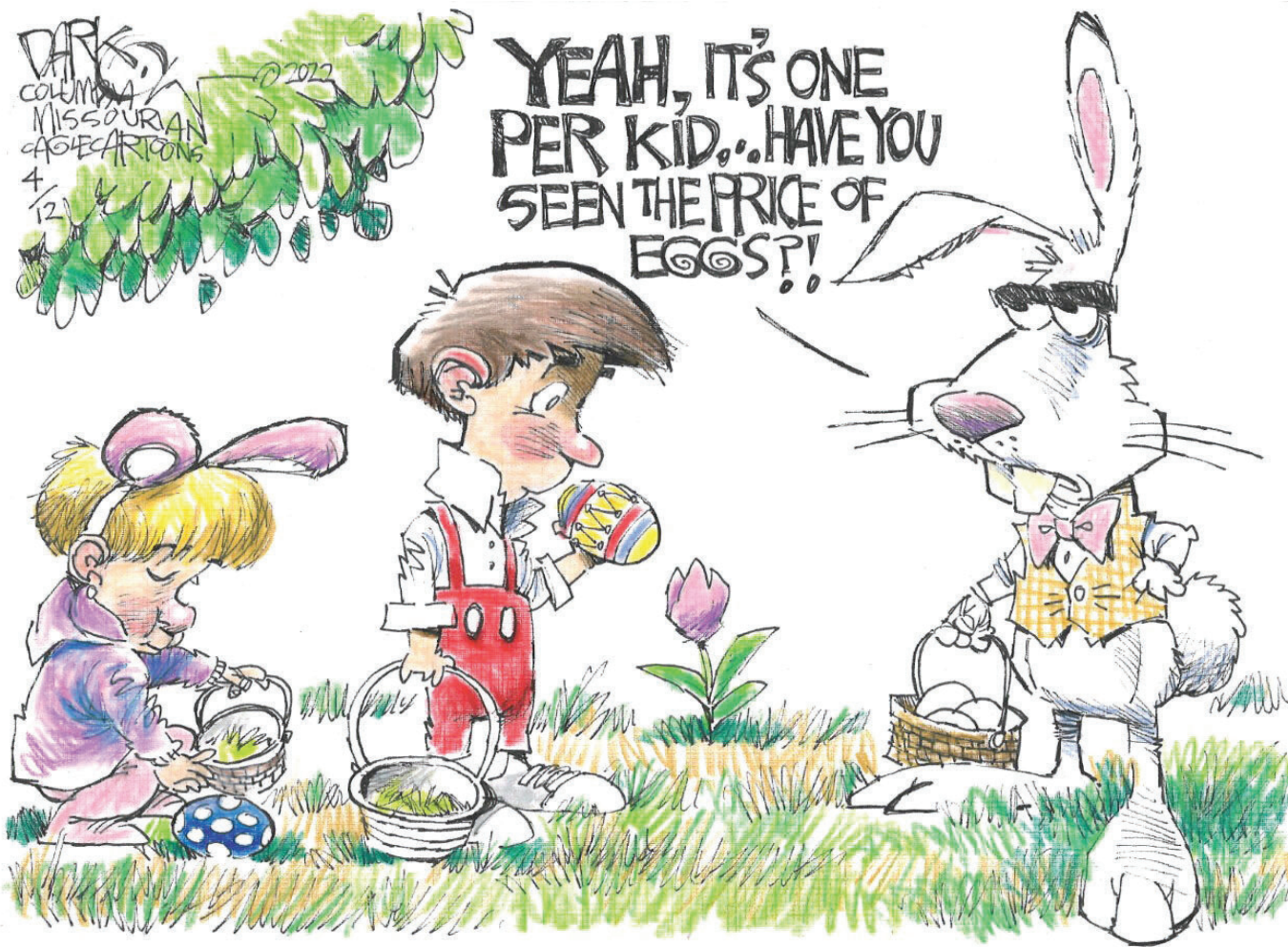
But all of that is for naught when irresponsible parties take the law into their own hands. It accomplishes nothing — except to put law-abiding ranchers on the defensive.

We are unimpressed by how federal wildlife managers have done their jobs managing wolves. From the beginning, they needed to do more to keep wolves away from livestock.

But we are 100% opposed to illegally poaching wolves.

Doing that only gives the animal rights activists more ammunition in the court of law — and the court of public opinion — to criticize ranchers.

Stop the poaching. It only makes matters worse.



Protecting large trees key to slowing climate change



DAVID
MILDREXLER
OTHER VIEWS

Proposed forest management of the Mount Emily Recreation Area has raised important questions about large trees. I'm an ecologist who studies forest ecosystems and the significant values they provide. I'd like to share a few findings specific to the largest trees in the forest that underscore their outsized benefits to both the forest and local community.

Large trees are crucial in ecosystem water and energy cycles. Large deeply rooted trees tap groundwater resources not available to shallow-rooted plants. During drier months roots lift deep soil water up to shallow, drier portions of soil and release it, sharing water to the ecosystem, including neighboring plants of different species.

A study in old growth ponderosa pine found that during July and August this process accounted for approximately 35% of total daily water usage from the upper soil, adding weeks of water during drought. This allows the ecosystem to continue photosynthesis, storing more carbon and cooling the forest canopy as water evaporates from foliage. Forest canopies can register summer surface temperatures more than 30 degrees cooler than adjacent non-forest cover types, and large trees are the engine of this work.

The water released to the atmosphere contributes to downwind moisture content and rainfall. Intact forests with large trees are positively associated with cool summer temperatures, increased late-summer streamflow and clean surface drinking water.

Among the more remarkable recent discoveries is that massive root systems of large trees link below-ground

ecosystems via mycorrhizal fungal networks and myriad soil microorganisms, forming an interconnected resource sharing and communication network. Large trees function as focal centers of this underground system, revolutionizing our understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of forest ecosystems.

Globally, a 2018 study found that the largest-diameter 1% of trees hold half of all the aboveground carbon stored in the world's forests. In a recently published analysis of carbon storage in six national forests in Eastern Oregon, my coauthors and I found that big trees, with trunks more than 21 inches in diameter (DBH) comprise just 3% of these forests but store 42% of the aboveground carbon. The dominant tree species at MERA, Douglas fir and ponderosa pine, both had the same proportion of stems greater than or equal to 21 in DBH (about 3.7%), yet these stems held 37.5% and 45.8% of total species above-ground carbon, respectively.

As trees grow larger, small increases in diameter add a relatively large amount of volume — the overall effect being that carbon stores increase rapidly with tree diameter. For instance, doubling tree diameter from 10 inches to 20 inches led to a 5.3- to 6.2-fold increase in carbon, whereas tripling diameter led to a 13.8- to 18.2-fold increase. The very large trees (greater than or equal to 30 in DBH) are exceptionally rare in Eastern Oregon — less than 1% of the total stems in the forest. But these giants held an even greater proportion of carbon relative to their small numbers, demonstrating the importance of letting large trees grow larger and accumulate more carbon for climate mitigation now and into the near future.

From its beginning, logging removed the easily accessible low-elevation, large, old-growth ponderosa

pine, Douglas fir and western larch trees. Today, all remaining old trees are incredibly valuable. Even certain diseases disparaged from a timber production point of view add to the complexity of these inherited treasures from an ecological perspective. Small trees pose the greatest fire risk and are most vulnerable during drought relative to mature trees that have reached full root, bark and canopy development and respond to climate variability better. Large trees are the safe vault to store carbon.

It's only through large live trees that large-diameter snags come into existence and provide crucial habitat for a diversity of wildlife species in Eastern Oregon's forests. Snags and fallen trees also contribute to complex long-term carbon and nutrient cycling, serve as substrate for the next generation of seedlings, and contribute legacies that link forest generations.

On the ground they act like sponges, absorbing and retaining water and slowly releasing it during the summer to the soil and atmosphere. A 2020 study found that across Pacific Northwest forests there continues to be a long-term deficit in large live trees and snags from 20th century logging.

Large trees are cornerstones of diversity and resilience for the entire forest community, and they provide many services important to society. We would do well to protect large trees where we can, and a sufficient supply of those that will soon reach large diameter.

David Mildrexler is a systems ecologist with Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands where he focuses on terrestrial systems science, large landscape conservation and the educational programs at Walloway Natural History Discovery Center. He holds an M.S. in forest science from the University of Montana and a Ph.D. in forest ecosystems and society from Oregon State University.

YOUR VIEWS

Join us in voting to reelect Melissa Lindsay

Please join us in voting to reelect Melissa Lindsay for county commissioner. Melissa has worked tirelessly the last four years to make Morrow County a better place to live.

We have contacted Melissa numerous times on road, planning and

other issues and she has been responsive with informed answers that are detailed and have made sense. Morrow County has had rapid growth in the north end for quite some time and keeping things on track in everyone's best interest is not an easy job. We think it is important to reelect a commissioner that is already up to speed and has a proven record to do

the right thing for the whole county.

Melissa has proven she will spend the time and go to the numerous other agency meetings that it takes to get the job done.

Please vote for Melissa, she will continue to do what is right for our communities and county.

**Gary and Casey Frederickson
Boardman**

EDITORIALS

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