

Hunting helps our economy

We often praise hunting for its cultural value, but not as often for its value in dollars and cents. Hunting Works for Oregon is trying to change that. The newly created organization is based off similar ones in the Midwest, which gather local partners to spread the gospel of hunting's economic impact on rural areas.

EDITORIAL
The voice of the Chieftain

According to a study by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, \$248 million is spent annually by hunters in Oregon – about \$1,200 by each of the 196,000 men, women and children who tote a rifle or bow into our mountains and meadows.

Yet that economic shot in the arm for rural Oregon is in danger. Hunter participation is in steep decline, down more than 15 percent in the last decade alone.

Gary Lewis, a member of Hunting Works for Oregon and a high profile outdoors writer and television show host, said myriad factors are to blame.

Hunting has gotten much more expensive, as everything from purchasing tags to buying the gas to get to a trailhead has increased in cost.

And since the state went to controlled hunts in the mid-1990s, hunters often have to plan ahead more than six months in advance to secure a tag. No longer can you look out on a bright fall morning and just go hunting.

But even with advance planning, the tag and lottery system means hunters many not be able to hunt the places they know best. That decreases their success rate, and later their rate of returning to the sport.

Rules and regulations and paperwork have only grown, too, and rather than fight the fuzzy bureaucracy or take the chance of making a costly mistake, hunters are just packing up and going home.

There are also access issues. Some of the best private hunting land, which used to require just a handshake and maybe a little gift of whiskey to secure access to, is now being sold at top dollar to guides and their richest clients.

The increase in predators is certainly another factor, but one we feel often overshadows the root causes.

Because the main culprit is habitat degradation, and the urban sprawl that has put more space between us and the wild places where animals live.

Internet and video games and fewer young people familiar with the outdoors hasn't helped.

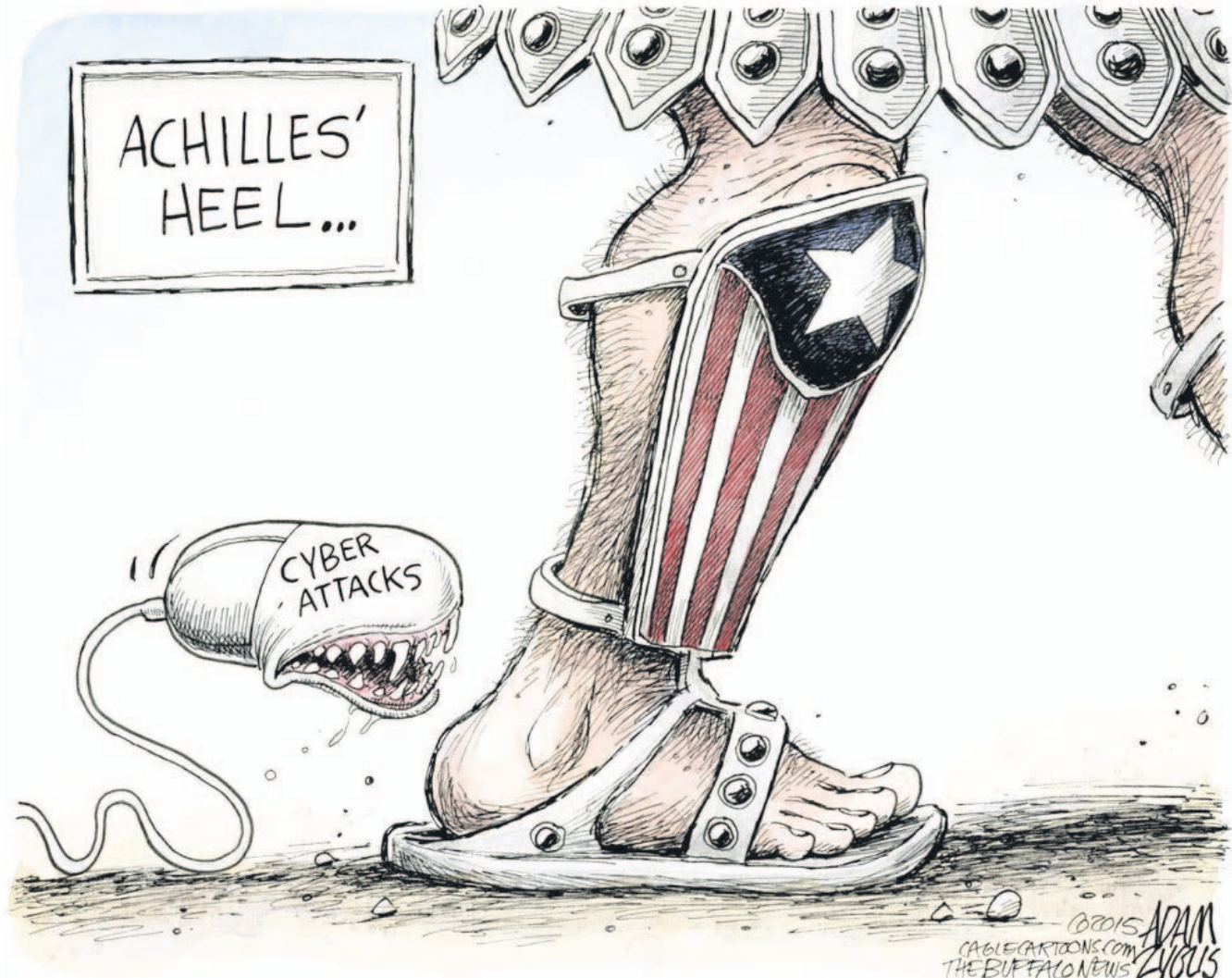
But neither have hunters in some respects. Lewis said many believe roughly 50 percent of big game animals killed in Oregon are poached – an awful statistic that shows the ethical hunters are paying for the misdeeds of those who don't follow the rules.

The simplest explanation is that hunting has just gotten harder. Lewis said success rates in some parts of Oregon have been cut in half or worse, from near 40 percent down into the teens. Hunting isn't the supermarket – there are no guarantees – but the more successful hunters are, the more they want to return.

Hunting Works for Oregon has plenty of challenges ahead of it in order to stem the tide and see hunter participation go back on the upswing.

We hope they stay out of the political morass and keep their eye on the real prize: reducing costs and expanding opportunities for hunters.

Because right now hunting means a lot to the Eastern Oregon economy, but it could mean much more.



Borders anything but natural

Fishtrap's "Big Read" has us reading Luis Urrea's "Into the Beautiful North." The story is a sometimes lighthearted look at what happens in a Mexican village when all of the young and middle-aged men have gone "to the beautiful north." The village is threatened by bandits, and a gang of young girls – and one gay young man – go north to find one girl's father and six other Mexican men willing to come home and save the village; they'd watched Steve McQueen and Yul Brenner save a Mexican village in "The Magnificent Seven."

Most of what we get about our southern border is stories of illegals coming this way and of efforts to build a security wall to stop them – how much it costs; how new technology is making it stronger; how effective it is, etc. We sometimes hear about children trying to find parents, and sometimes about farmers wanting more Mexican workers to harvest crops. We don't hear or know much about people going the other way, or anything at all about how our borders – or borders anywhere – got to be where they are.

Sarah Abdeldayem, the AFS exchange student from Amman, Jordan, told the Rotary club that over 20 percent of the population of her country is comprised of refugees from the war in Syria. I looked it up: population of about 8,000,000, of which 1,400,000 are refugees. For a time, Jordan actively helped settle refugees, but they are becoming strained – what would we do if one in five of our population, or 60 million of our residents, were refugees from other countries who had walked, driven, ridden donkeys and horses, stumbled across the border thousands a day in fear for their lives? The borders that divide Jordan and

MAIN STREET
Rich Wandschneider

Syria, and that define modern Iraq, Kuwait, and Lebanon, are basically those set by the Western powers at the treaty of Versailles at the conclusion of World War I. The borders that define most of Africa today are those set by Europeans in the process of colonization and decolonization over the past 200 years. In the grand scheme of things, no current national borders have been around long. And in most cases the borders are not "natural" or even set by local inhabitants.

But our borders, you say, have been here forever. Not really. I remember welcoming Alaska and Hawaii into statehood when I was in elementary school in the 1950s. Years later I learned that statehood for them was not automatic, not desired by all Americans in the "lower 48," not wanted by all indigenous Hawaiians or Alaskans either. I remember also that many Puerto Ricans did want statehood, but that didn't happen. There was a question of language. Which reminds that many of our Southwest states were once part of Mexico. There are American citizens of Mexican descent whose families have been here since before the Mayflower!

Maybe the oddest settling of U.S. borders happened right here, in the Oregon Territory. It had to do with the fur trade, the War of 1812 and resultant political negotiations between Americans and the British.

The British, and their emissaries, the Hudson's Bay Company, wanted a

border at the Columbia River – leaving the lucrative fur trade north of the river on their side. The Americans wanted the 49th parallel – although a strong faction wanted to go further north; their slogan "Fifty-four forty or fight."

In the protracted negotiations following the War of 1812, a solution to the Oregon Question (ownership of the Oregon Territory, as the U.S. called it, or The Columbia District, as Great Britain called it) was "Joint Occupancy," meaning that the two countries equally "owned," or had a right to claim the land as its own – no one asked the Indians who lived in the region what they thought! This condition lasted from 1818-1846, a period that saw fur traders, missionaries, and, eventually settlers scurry to "occupy" the land, with little or no idea of how their individual journeys tied into international politics.

No matter how they got to be where they are, borders have always been porous things that have shifted with wars, politics, occupancy and neglect. And the truth of it is that "hard borders" are a myth. In the long run no amount of money, stone, steel, and concrete on any particular border – think the Great Wall of China or the Berlin Wall – lasts forever.

But real people get caught up in it. Broken Mexican families are heartbreakers; Syria is a tragedy, with thousands dead and millions left, documented and undocumented, in places not their own. Luis Urrea reminds us that survival in and across borderlands is possible – and that humor and compassion might be the oil that makes it bearable.

Main Street columnist Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph.

Issues with Forest Service plan

To the Editor:
I have been uninvolved in the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Service Plan except for attending a couple meetings to find out about protection of the watershed. But, I consider myself a user of the forest and I am aware of benefits I receive even though I am not a cattle rancher, wood gatherer, or four wheeler.

No, I have not read the Forest Service Plan and I suspect there is a lot in it that I would not understand, because I have not studied forest science except for one college course in Botany. So there are things that I think the Chieftain could do that would give me the understanding that I, as a layman, need.

The recent Chieftain article tells me that there are controversial parts in this plan.

What are those parts and why are they controversial? Why are Bruce Dunn and Susan Roberts opposed to them? What is the scientific reasoning behind the Forest Service planning? Why does Paul Castilleja not trust the data? What are his qualifications in data analysis or forest science? The Chieftain could provide a service for its readers by taking each controversial section of the Forest Plan, print the section and explain the reasoning of both the plan writers and the opposers.

I have not been directly involved, but I realize the plan's importance. We must have clean water from our watershed, and the living organisms of

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

the earth need oxygen and sustenance from the forests. The forest floor must be managed to prevent forest fires. Well managed logging practices provide jobs. To be responsible citizens and forest users, we residents of Wallowa County need to know what the heck is going on. The Chieftain can make that happen.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

Media biased against pro-lifers

To the Editor:
On January 22nd the largest march of the year will take place in Washington DC, when 500,000-plus Pro-Life citizens show their objection to the 1973 Supreme Court Roe vs Wade decision permitting abortion procedures any time throughout pregnancy.

This huge annual march in support of Unborn Children will not be reported by any of the liberal press, which demonstrates their extreme bias on the abortion issue.

In fact, the Pro-Life movement is the only major group the Media doesn't call by its own name, but refers to them as Anti-Abortionists.

When you can't call a Spade a Spade, it reveals a hidden agenda to

cover up the truth about the horror of abortion.

Greg Wieck
Enterprise

Leter Policy

Letters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It's acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party's ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we'll consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason compels the exception.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com. (Drop down the "Opinion" menu on the navigation bar to see the relevant link).

Correction
The Chieftain's Jan. 14 story about Destiny Barney's attainment of the Junior Miss Oregon Rodeo title failed to include her stepmother, Ranzie Barney, in listing her parents. The Chieftain regrets the error.

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