

ATTACK: Dogs injured by ‘large canine,’ likely a wolf

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Neighbor and rancher Colin Cunningham took the two dogs to the vet, nearly 60 miles away in Enterprise, so the men could continue their work of rescuing cattle. Wallowa County Sheriff’s Deputy Fred Steen met them at the Double Arrow Veterinary Clinic in Enterprise and took the report.

“The vet report is that they were attacked by a very large canine, bigger than a coyote,” said Chelsea Matthews. “At this point Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is calling it a ‘probable wolf attack.’”

Scooter took the brunt of the attack and was “roughed up

top to bottom,” said Double Arrow vet tech Darcy Moncrief. Scooter suffered a long puncture wound to his shoulders that required stitches, and now sports three drainage tubes. He’s tired and he’s not much interested in being famous, but he got top quality vet care and he’s going to be okay.

Young Tom had an injury to his face and his “nether parts” and was sore, but didn’t appear to have suffered the muscle puncture that sometimes accompanies wolf bites even when they do not puncture the skin. He’s happy to see anybody and is ready to go home.

Neither Tom nor Scooter, when he’s well, will go back

to looking for cows on Eden Bench in any case, as Buck has decided there is too much risk of their paws being burnt.

Was the attacker a wolf? Probably.

The Matthews report seeing a wolf within a half-mile of the home place twice since the attack, Chelsea Matthews said.

“(Rancher friend) Todd Nash and Buck saw the wolf the morning of the attack when they went up on the home place (on Grouse Flats) to gather cows for shipment,” Chelsea Matthews said. “My sister-in-law, Mona, and I saw him up on Bartlett Bench about a half-mile from our house when we went to meet the semis that

were hauling out the cattle. He’s black and big.”

The wolf is most likely a survivor of the Wenaha pack, displaced by the fires. ODFW East Region Manager Bruce Eddy said the Wenaha Pack had most likely escaped the fire. “My guess is they are so incredibly mobile they can get out of the way of fire,” he said.

Many of the wolves in the area are black, according to State Wolf Program Coordinator Russ Morgan. “About half or more are black,” he said. “But we could have a wolf from anywhere. We just don’t have enough data on the Wenaha area wolves to know them. They’re usually up-slope in the

Timothy and Jubilee areas this time of year. They’re the least visible pack. That wolf could be a wolf traveling through or even a Washington wolf.”

The Matthews have evacuated cows from the home place and continue to search for the cows that had been grazing on Eden Bench when the fire swept the area.

“Most of the home cows have been shipped,” said Chelsea Matthews. “We’ve found 70 head out of the 300 out on Eden Bench. Buck is still finding them. It usually takes two months to gather them. We expect to find them. Lots of them have burned hooves and legs, but they seem to be scab-

bing up well. We’re going to be monitoring them closely.”

When rescued, the Eden Bench cows will stay on Grouse Flats at the home place now that the fire danger is lower.

All in all, Chelsea Matthews said, things are returning to normal. She expected to pick up the dogs and bring them home on Monday, Aug. 31.

“Today (Aug. 31) the kids are starting school (in Troy),” she said. “They’re the only students this year. Other than Troy being packed with firefighters and National Guard, it seems pretty normal. It’s looking better, we’re making progress.”

BLAZE: Falls Creek fire no longer a threat

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With limited resources because of the rash of high-acre fires elsewhere in the state and its location on a wilderness area, only about 30 firefighters initially responded to the blaze. Because of the fire’s proximity to homes, some regulations for fighting wildfires in wilderness areas were relaxed, allowing for the use of chainsaws as well as gasoline pumps and fire hoses placed in creeks near the blaze.

While the fire never grew substantially during any one period, the steep terrain and lack of resources allowed for slow but steady growth of the fire over the next week. After consultation with the USFS, Level 1 (get ready) evacuation notices were issued for homes and structures in the area by the Wallowa County Sheriff’s Office and emergency services personnel.

As resources became available, more firefighters, including smoke jumpers, were added to battle the blaze. Helicopters, sharing duties with the larger Grizzly Bear Complex fire in the northern section of the county, began making regular appearances at a helibase established at the Joseph airport, carrying water to both fires from the site.

The USFS initially set up their command post at the Eagle Cap District Ranger offices in Joseph before moving to the Chief Joseph Days grounds. A Type 3 Incident Command Team, led by Francis Tyler of Halfway, arrived, charged with fighting the blaze.

Tyler called the effort a “true interagency operation,” noting the close work of the USFS, Oregon Department of Forestry, Wallowa County services and the Joseph Fire Department. The JFD was entrusted with structure protection and spent about 2.5 days working with the USFS, installing pumps and sprinklers, including some belonging to the department, in areas with endangered homes.

Two public meetings were held at the Joseph Communi-

ty Center to answer questions and report on firefighting progress. The second meeting, held Aug. 28, was held in response to what could have been a make-or-break event on the fire: projected high winds of up to 40 mph and possible thunderstorms on Aug. 29. Tyler and others on the fire told the public the fire was well under control, but a Level 2 evacuation notice was in effect as a “worst case scenario” response to the forecast.

Well into the evening, helicopter after helicopter flew to the fire with sloshing buckets of water in preparation for the event. The promised winds came on the following morning, increasing in intensity through the afternoon, reaching 60 mph at one point. A small amount of rain fell, but the lines held, and the fire gained few, if any, acres during the onslaught.

The fire’s back was broken. Sunday, more rain fell and evacuation levels receded a notch. The USFS released its final daily update, noting the fire as 35 percent contained and that fire operations will ramp down over the next few days.

On the morning of Aug. 31, Wallowa County Sheriff Steve Rogers issued a statement that all evacuation notices are lifted from homes in the fire area. Upper Hurricane Creek Road has the same travel restrictions until further notice. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

FESTIVAL: Lineup ‘exciting’

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From Spokane, Wash., the Marshall McLean Band merges elements of folk, rock and Americana, with thoughtful songwriting and a bold blend of these genres. Another Spokane band, Mama Doll features a unique groove of folk, filled with harmonies and soul.

Representing the far northwestern corner of Washington State are internationally acclaimed songwriters Dave McGraw & Mandy Fer, from the San Juan Islands. Together, their exceptional vocal harmonies coupled with Fer’s pioneering electric guitar work have become a vehicle to carry them around the world.

The 2015 Jam’s musicians from the Portland area include Will West & the Friendly Strangers and Run On Sentence, each with their own special brand of upbeat folk-Americana. The show will also feature a short set by local favorite Sorry, Neighbors (Casey Kiser, Patrick Powers and Matt Harshman). The opening round-robin set on the Tunesmith Stage will feature local songwriters Joey Carper, from Union, Carolyn Lochert of Lostine and Bart Budwig, an Enterprise resident.

Tickets for Juniper Jam 2015 are \$18 at the gate or \$15 in advance at Joseph Hardware, Lear’s, The Bookloft, M. Crow & Co. or online at www.juniperjam.com. Kids ages 12 and under get in free. Gates open at noon.

For complete festival information visit www.juniperjam.com.

GRIZZLY: Fire 20 percent contained

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“We’re not sure what the fire off to the north will mean, so we’re being cautious,” he said.

Cautious is the watchword in any case, according to Incident Command, which warns both firefighters and residents not to become complacent.

The cavalry has also come over the hill in the form of two groups of Oregon National Guard soldiers. The 310 guardsmen made their way to Troy and Grouse Flats and members are reportedly on the line, aiding in the area mop-up. They will remain on site, enlarging the defensible space near structures, widening fire lines and making sure

there is no visible smoke or heat. They were joined by a small contingency of five to eight Washington National Guardsmen providing communications assistance, according to Wilkening.

Firefighting crews from Alaska and New Mexico have also joined the fight. In all, over 1,000 individuals are now working on containing the fire.

The fire continues to burn in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, Umatilla National Forest, and state and private forest land protected by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and Oregon Department of Forestry.

South of Troy, mopping up and widening of fire lines

continues and Incident Command reported on Tuesday that 20 percent of those lines are in a condition that should contain the fire and prevent it from spreading in those directions. Along the southeast corner of the fire, workers are busy dropping hazardous trees along 62 road.

The Grizzly Bear Complex fire is now listed as comprised of 18 lighting cause fires — Bear Ridge in Washington, a 4,500-acre fire, was added in recently. The larger complex has not yet joined Bear Ridge, but is expected to, shortly. Treatment has already been done to keep the fire from “going crazy” once the Complex and Bear Ridge join up, Wilkening said.

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