

# The noble red-tailed hawk



**BIRD-WATCHING**  
EH Van Blaricom

I took this photo of a juvenile red-tailed hawk on the cross-arm of a power pole about a month ago. Red-tailed hawks belong to the family of Buteos, which are soaring hawks. They are the most numerous and wide-spread Buteo in North America. Even so, they are sometimes difficult to identify as there are dark phases and light phases, male and female, adult and juvenile. They like to nest in tall trees but prefer to hunt in open country where their main prey are meadow mice and rabbits. However, I once watched a red-tail holding down a mallard duck that was still squirming in its talons. One of the common names for red-tails is "chicken hawk," which caused a lot of kids to shoot them with their .22 rifles. Most farmers protect them as they consume thousands of mice that are very damaging to their crops.

Most of these red-tailed hawks that nest here in Wallowa County migrate to as far away as Panama, but a few can be observed here in winter. By far the most common Buteo that can be seen sitting in dead trees or power poles here in Wallowa county in winter are rough-legged hawks. They nest in the Arctic Zone, where their



The red-tailed hawk.

Courtesy of E.H. Van Blaricom

main prey is lemmings, but they have to come down to Oregon and Washington to find mice and gophers. By the first of April, the rough-legged hawks go north and the red-tails are the dominant Buteo here in the county. Unlike the rough-legged hawks that sit on a pole or dead tree while conserving their energy, the red-tails fly over the farmland searching for their food. Even when they are circling high on a thermal they are scanning the ground for rodents.

When the numerous colonies of Beld-

ing ground-squirrels come out of hibernation in March, the red-tails time their nesting to raise their young on ground squirrels. I should mention that they will only catch and eat live squirrels and will never eat any of the dead squirrels that the hunters leave lying all over the ground. They leave the dead squirrels for the magpies, ravens and, yes, bald eagles, to dine on. I guess you could say they want to be considered as hunters and not as scavengers. A noble thought for a lowly "chicken hawk."



Courtesy of OSU Extension Office

4-H members take a good look during the annual Wallowa County Horse Judging contest on April 3. In the photo are: Addie Royes, Rosie Movich-Fields, Libby Fisher, Bailey Vernam, Marli Tracy, Eva Anderson, Destiny Barney, Cassidee Harrod and Rylee Wilcox.

## 4-H announces spring horse judging results

Wallowa County Chieftain

The 2016 horse judging tour was held Sunday, April 3. Twenty-two 4-H members judged four equine classes, one class of oral reasons, one class of identification and a class of hay. The members judged an English Equitation class, a class of mares, ranch geldings and a class of Paint gelding at the fairgrounds.

A total of 350 points in the judging contest was possible. Gabrielle Wells, a senior, was the overall high point judge with a score of 316.

It was the first horse judging contest of the year. Members will have an opportunity to judge again at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show and at the Wallowa County Fair.

Their scores will be compiled and the top intermediate and senior judges will qualify to represent Wallowa County at the state competition.

In the Senior Division (ages 15-19), Wells placed first (316), followed by Maddie Tracy (311) and Marli Tracy (309).

In the Intermediate Division (ages 12-14), Deidre Schreiber (303) placed first, followed by Cassidee Harrod (293) and Rylee Wilcox (292).

In the Junior Division (ages 9-11), Johanna Wells (296) was first, followed by Josi Coggins (287) and Bailey Vernam (283).

The lone first-year junior to compete was Lily Royes (277).

# County steelhead season extended until April 30 on several rivers

Wallowa County Chieftain

Spring steelhead anglers can fish the Grande Ronde, Wallowa and Imnaha Rivers — including Big Sheep Creek — through April 30 due to 2016 regulation changes that went into effect Jan. 1. The previous closure date was April 15.

The extension was a result of ODFW's regulation simplification process last year. Through public input, ODFW

learned that local anglers thought steelhead fishing was cut short in some years despite great catch rates in mid-April.

"The suggestions from anglers led to changes in the regulations, resulting in increased fishing opportunities," said Jeff Yanke, district fish biologist in Enterprise.

Anglers should note that the Rondowa area, at the confluence with the Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers, will still

be closed to ATV access after April 15. Anglers can still hike in from Minam or Palmer Junction.

Not all hatchery steelhead reach their final destination at trapping facilities before mid-April, and the extension is intended to increase harvest of those fish. For example, according to Yanke, in the Imnaha River approximately 35 percent of the expected run is holding in fishery areas, which equates to about 400 steelhead that are still available for harvest.

April showers sometimes cause local rivers to rise which can dampen fishing success.

"Despite the variability of spring river conditions, this extension will help increase steelhead harvest during years with low snowpack or late runoff," Yanke said. "Last year on the Imnaha was a great example where some of the best catch

rates were during mid-April."

Extending the season does come with a few additional challenges, according to Yanke. For example, steelhead smolt releases occur in April which irritates anglers because they are catching the 6-inch smolt versus the adult steelhead.

"I know it can be frustrating trying to keep smolt from your bait, but the good news is that they don't hang around very long," Yanke said.

And for a majority of the anglers, the annoyance is worth it. Approximately one million smolts are released from the Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers to begin their long journey to the ocean.

"Our research clearly indicates that releasing smolts in April maximizes their chances of survival, which in turn produces more adult steelhead to catch one to two years later."

## HOME

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Plew also scored a run and drove in two. Frolander finished 2 for 2 with a pair of runs scored.

### Cubs 15, Bulldogs 7

Wallowa Valley gave up five quick runs in the first two innings behind pitcher Natalie Williams before settling in and pounding out a big win in the second game.

The Cubs plated five runs in the third and four more in the fourth to go up 13-7.

Shelby Moncrief went 3 for 3 with two walks, two RBI and four runs scored. Darby Gasset had two hits and drove in three runs. Madison Plew was 3 for 4 with two runs and an RBI, while Lexie Gasset drew three walks and scored twice.

Wallowa Valley hosts league foe Grant Union (0-0, 5-2) for a double header starting at 1 p.m. Friday at Jensen Ball Fields.

## ALPINE

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On any given year in April, Wallowa County golfers chomp at the bit to get on the course, but with this season an extra level of enthusiasm has been added by Bivens' exuberance and Currie's cooking. The clubhouse revamp has created an energetic flow all the way down Golf Course Road to the parking lot.

Bivens, who claims he's the "I've been everywhere man," is unstoppable.

"We want golfers, whether

they're having a good game or a bad one, to feel comfortable at the 19th hole. We also invite the public to come for lunch, and/or play golf," he said. "Music brought me to the county, but it's the people in this beautiful place that make me want to stay."

As warm weather continues, golf course activity is high. The greens crew is working hard to keep up with the fast-growing grass and to rid the greens of snow mold, all the while showing a courtesy to golfers on the course. A thank you to volunteer Chuck Haines, who has hand-raked fallen branches from about every tree on the course, and earlier, Ron Layton, who cleaned debris from greens.

Enterprise and Wallowa/Joseph high school golf teams can be seen after school practicing for meets, as well as the E.H.S. Invitational on Friday, April 29.

Congratulations to Joseph freshman Tori Suto on her Pendleton Invitational win.

The first-time Bomber Tournament, scheduled Saturday, April 30, has been appropriately named in honor of the B-24 Liberator and crew that conducted a successful emergency landing on the golf course in 1944. Sign up now.

Rochelle Danielson is an Alpine Meadows member who resides in Enterprise.

M. C R O W & C O .



L O S T I N E , O R

### ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Nyssa on Friday. She struck out seven batters over seven innings and drove in the winning run with a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the seventh.

Madison went 4 for 7 from the plate, scored three runs and drove in three more during the two games.

She also made the Enterprise High School honor roll each of the first two quarters this school year.

Congratulations, Madison.

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## Introducing Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Adrian Davis

Dr. Davis will be based in La Grande and sees patients at Wallowa Memorial Hospital every other Monday and Tuesday.

- Sports medicine, orthopedic trauma, hip/knee osteoarthritis
- Dr. Davis served as physician for the USA Rugby Team, and several other professional Pittsburgh sports teams
- Education: medical school at Indiana University; orthopedic surgery residency at St. Louis University; sports medicine fellowship at Alleghany General Hospital

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