

OTHER VIEWS

Connie Dunham



The history of the wolf is complicated

The gray wolf has become quite a controversial animal in the West. Do you know the history of the wolf that is here now and the historical wolf which used to inhabit the Western states?

According to Edward Goldman, the wolf subspecies known to have historically inhabited much of the Rocky Mountain region around Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Eastern Oregon and Washington was *Canis lupus irremotus*, a medium to large wolf commonly called the Timber wolf. Just to the east of that was a wolf subspecies *Canis lupus nubilus*, that inhabited the Central Plains. There are variations on this toxicology, but this is a commonly accepted one. Although both smaller than the largest wolf subspecies, they were capable of taking down large mammals and, as settlers moved west, they learned that domestic livestock was an easy prey.

They were also known to be quite dangerous to humans and adapted to killing not only European settlers but native Americans for centuries before that. I have a 14-page list of people killed by wolves in locations worldwide and many in the states. Recent history lists Kenton Carnegie, who was killed by wolves in Saskatchewan just north of Montana in 2005, and a woman jogger in Alaska shortly after that.

The wolf, which was captured in Canada and brought down to be released into Yellowstone National Park and in Idaho — which did not approve the dump of wolves — was *Canis lupus occidentalis*. It is the largest of the subspecies of wolves on the North American continent. Their jaw size and strength are far greater than any of the other subspecies. There were other wolves similar to the *irremotus* that they could have captured, but they chose this biggest of the wolves, who can easily weigh 150 pounds.

If you really want to know the story of how that all transpired, look up wolf expert Jim Beers. He worked for the National Fish and Wildlife Service for decades, and investigated how state firearm taxes were stolen by this agency. It trapped and transported the 60-plus wolves that were brought down from Canada because the government wouldn't authorize the money to do it legally. The money amounted to over \$40 million and was never repaid. The story reeks of government corruption by environmentalists who filtered into the agency.

In less than 20 years, the wolves in Yellowstone killed almost the entire herd of 19,000 elk. There are very few left that even stay in the park. Guides and packers were put out of business in that area and hunting was ruined. The wolves dumped in Idaho also decimated the elk herd in the central state and hunting has almost stopped in many areas around there.

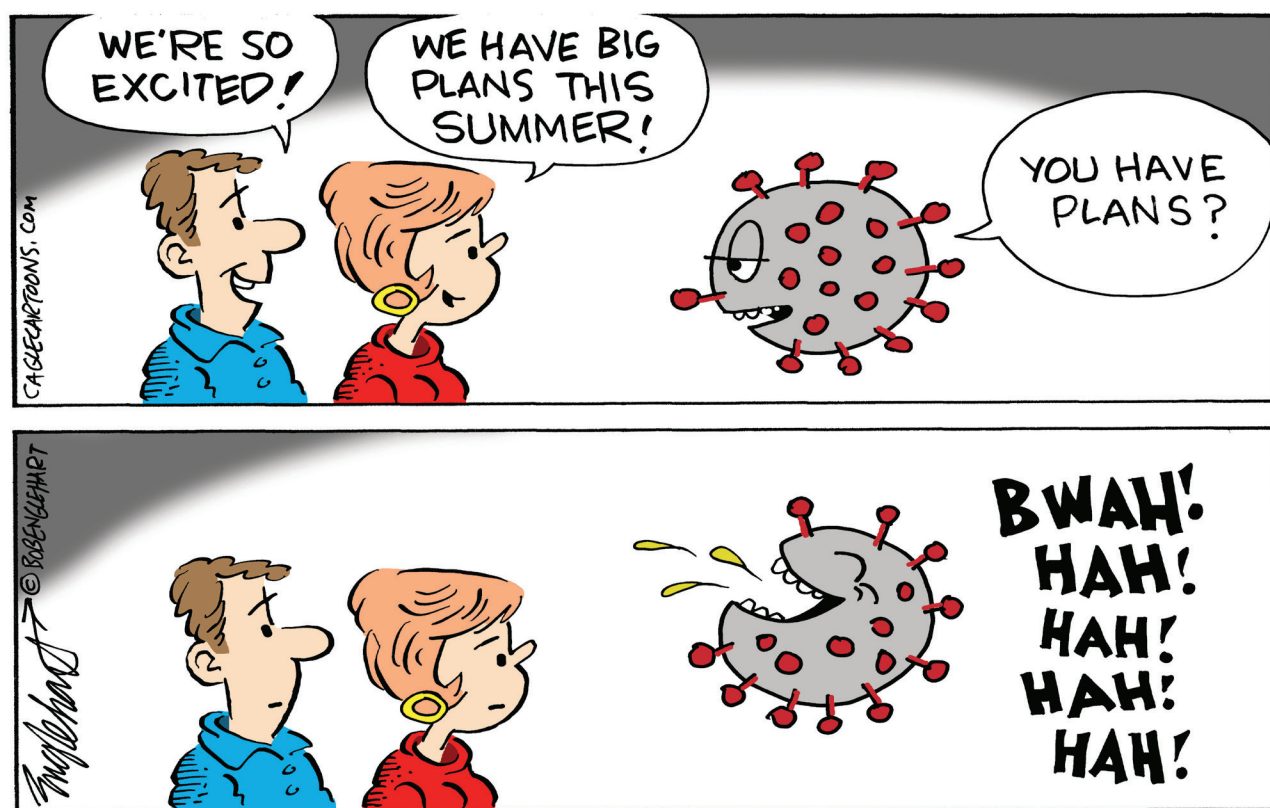
The other expert to look to is Val Geist, a professor at the University of Calgary, and a 50-year expert on wolves. He was not anti-wolf, but had the common sense to say that the wolf does best when it is in unpopulated or very thinly populated areas. He regarded them as dangerous to humans, not only because they can be habituated to consider humans as food, but because they carry some very dangerous diseases. That includes rabies and a canine tapeworm that can spread to herbivores and humans in the form of Hydatid disease (larval stages can form cysts in human organs).

He was also concerned that the introduction of wolves to human-inhabited areas would lead to crosses with dogs that would ruin the genome of the pure wolf. He also felt that active wildlife management of wolves and ethical hunting of game animals were a better way to keep biodiversity in ecosystems and save wildlife the brutality of being eaten alive by wolf packs. He was an expert witness on animal behavior, environmental policy and wildlife law enforcement, so his work is considered valuable.

Lastly, it's been said that the only thing that will change our state legislature's opinion on protecting wolves is an attack on a wolf supporter's child or pet when they start coming into the suburbs of Portland or Salem. Our children, pets and livestock don't matter over here. We have a choice ahead of us: manage the wolf population and protect the rights of people to preserve their livelihoods, or risk the collapse of our economic base and see all services shutter their doors.

Then no one will enjoy the beauty of this wonderful area except the wolves.

Connie Dunham is a longtime rancher with her husband Jim. The first wolf pack that came into the county was in the divide area and they lost calves to them. She became part of a group called Oregon Wolf Education that kept residents informed of wolf activity in the county.



Digging deep into an environmental scandal takes patient reporting

OTHER VIEWS

Les Zaitz



The announcement from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in January was eye-catching.

The agency was fining a polluter \$1.3 million for illegally dumping wastewater more than 1,000 times — and over three years.

The agency declared those to be “serious violations of water quality regulations.”

And, it said, the polluter “has not been doing its part” to limit pollution.

This was no industrial giant ignoring Oregon's environmental ethos.

This was another government body — the Port of Morrow in Boardman.

Investigative project

At the Oregon Capital Chronicle, we sensed there was much more than a one-day headline here.

We elected to devote our limited resources to a careful, deep investigation into the matter. The objective was to find out how these violations occurred, how long they had been going on, and what the state had done to stop them.

Let me explain how we did that work, which so far has resulted in two investigative reports. We want you to understand how we do our work. We want you to trust the reporting. The most recent investigative report published last week: Water contamination worsened as DEQ went easy.

Alex Baumgartner, who reports on environmental issues, took the lead after the January announcement.

“My first thought was — three years? Was someone asleep at the wheel?” she wrote in explaining her initial reaction to the press release.

This is the kind of project the Capital Chronicle was born to do. Here, we saw a duty to hold government officials accountable, to see if they had done their duty.

Quickly, it became evident this would be a tough investigation. Fortunately, we had reserves to link up with Alex. Two University of Oregon journalism students — Cole Sinanian and Jael Calloway — had been assigned to us for continued training through the Catalyst Journalism Program.

Meantime, Deputy Editor Lynne Terry and political reporter Julia Shumway picked up extra work to keep our news

report flowing.

The investigative team's work proceeded on the two basic prongs of investigative reporting — documents and interviews.

Alex made a series of public records requests to DEQ and the Port of Morrow. Under Oregon law, anyone — not just reporters — has a legal right to see all but confidential government records.

Documents are vital for several reasons. They help assure accuracy. They are better over time than human memory. And they record actions taken by government officials — an unchangeable history.

Interviews are just as important. They provide sources the opportunity to educate reporters on complex matters, to explain their own actions and to address findings revealed by documents.

Getting public records

One of the first discoveries was that violations by the Port of Morrow stretched back for years, but there had been no public announcements.

“I found there had been many over the years that weren't on the DEQ enforcement database” online, Alex explained.

Then there was understanding the science of wastewater, the difference between nitrogen and nitrates and water quality standards.

The documents were laced with technical language — and mysterious acronyms. The team had no choice but to be diligent, dive in and learn the lingo.

Alex said that over the weeks she found she “could speak fluently and understand fully what the DEQ staff, scientists and even farmers were talking about when they were talking about FMRs, WCPFs, MOAs, PENs, RWUP, WQSIS, OM&M, etc.”

Cole and Jael did a great deal of the reporting to understand those technical issues.

“Only after painstakingly combing through the 50-page 2020 LUBGWMA Action Plan and the Port of Morrow's equally laborious business plan did the scale of the institutional failure to regulate the port come into full focus,” Cole wrote.

And Jael had to develop expertise in nitrates, studying scientific reports. She cites a moment of pride that rewarded her persistence.

“I was able to get through a large and complex document and break it down so any reader would be able to understand the significance behind nitrate levels and the dangerous effects an excess amount can cause,” Jael said.

With the reporting well advanced, the team drafted its first report, published that, and then turned to its second report.

All of it took time — and elaborate vetting.

At the Capital Chronicle, reporters are required to match every figure, every quote against their original source material. No guessing. No “that looks right.” We want it accurate — period.

One further step is reporters provide selected excerpts of a draft to those being quoted or written about. This isn't a usual step in today's journalism, but we consider it essential to not only getting the facts right but to fairly present them.

Sources often use these fact-checking emails to elaborate on points they want to make. But they also flag crucial factual errors. We don't allow sources, however, to amend their quotes or otherwise insert commentary.

Now, the team is taking a short break and then will return to work on Part 3.

This sort of work isn't easy and it doesn't come cheap.

We have reporters to pay, the cost of traveling to places like Boardman, of hiring freelance photographers to illustrate such projects. Sometimes, there are fees for public records.

Reporting resources

If you value this sort of Oregon-grown watchdog reporting, you can help.

We're a nonprofit. We don't sell ads. And our stories are free to everyone. In fact, other Oregon media outlets regularly publish our stories, amplifying their own coverage of state government and politics.

This work is funded entirely by donors — foundations and individuals who believe in the value of trusted information.

You can help buy that next tank of gas, cover the cost of the next batch of records, or even help us grow our staff with a tax-deductible contribution. A donation of \$200 helps with gas. A donation of \$1,000 would help buy more staff time. (Join in here.)

We're here to serve Oregon with this kind of in-depth investigative work that is increasingly rare. With your help, we can do even more.

Les Zaitz is a veteran editor and investigative reporter, serving Oregon for more than 45 years. He reported for The Oregonian for 25 years and owns community newspapers and a digital news service. He is a national SPJ fellow, two-time Pulitzer finalist, including for a lengthy investigation of Mexican drug cartels in Oregon and five-time winner of Oregon's top investigative reporting award. He has investigated corrupt state legislators, phony charities, and an international cult that moved to Oregon, and the biggest bank failure in Oregon history.

10,000 baby boomers retire each day

LAYIN' IT ON THE LINE

Steve Kerby



Think about it: Many people don't get defined pension plans from their employers anymore.

If anything, employers have reduced their 401(k) match, while employees contribute less to their 401(k).

What about Social Security? The IRS tells us a third of today's retirees get almost 90% of their Social Security income. This statistic is alarming; one-third of retirees are wards of the government and live off the fixed income from the government. Additionally, we have another one-third of retirees who get 50% of their income from Social Security. People are retiring, and folks hitting the Social Security system are expected to get 55% of their income from it. So, what are the alternatives for income? Back in 2008, a \$250,000 CD produced \$1,000 a month in interest. Today, this same

CD produces \$25 monthly.

Can that even buy a pair of shoes?

The Wall Street Journal tells us that people have exited the stock market in mass numbers. \$138 billion has been removed from mutual funds since March 2009. At a time when traditional financial vehicles have come under fire, safe money annuities offer the perfect trisect: the guarantee of the funds, competitive interest rates, and guaranteed lifetime income (even if you live to be 113).

Buying gold and silver has always been an answer for falling currency rates. But it has still been tied to rumors, events and speculation. The safe money fixed/indexed annuity effectively sidesteps such issues. Return of principal, income, diversification and liquidity are peerless benefits only delivered by the fixed/indexed annuity.

So here are some talking points for the backyard fence, water cooler or family reunion when people (well-intentioned) question the prudence of buying safe money fixed/indexed annuities. First, safety is not an issue. 100% of all annuity funds must be backed up with 100% “available” assets. In other words, the fixed annuity company has its portfolio already in place to back contractual guarantees. Their cash flow originates with the general portfolio.

Conversely, other investments base their account values on sub-accounts consisting of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. These kinds of accounts generate risk and fees.

Second, you can't lose it all. You don't have to be an investment genius or super disciplined with your annuity option. No matter how you go about it, managing investment money to provide income for 20 years or more requires expertise, commitment and risk-taking.

Third, annuities deliver a level of efficiency that can't be duplicated by mutual funds, certificates of deposits or any number of homegrown solutions.

The challenges facing Social Security and the decline of corporate pensions add up to a “perfect storm” for retirees who might outlive their nest egg.

As an avid outdoorsman, Joseph and the Wallowa area have been a big part of Steve Kerby's life since 1964. Steve is a syndicated Columnists member, a national organization committed to a fully transparent approach to money management. With over 50 years in the financial services industry, Steve specializes and focuses on each individual client's goals. Visit stevekerby.retire-village.com or call 503-936-3535 for more.