



Neal Morningowl snow-boards down the hill by the Community Center fields. Warm Springs saw its first snow of the season just after Christmas.

Fire destroys mobile home before Christmas

Warm Springs Fire and Safety responded to two mobile home fires in a subdivision on Orizt Loop in Warm Springs Dec. 22.

Three fire trucks and nine personnel responded to a fire at residence of Vincent Simtustus Jr., at 2372 Orizt Loop, at 6:54 a.m., that morning.

The mobile home was fully involved, Dan Martinez, Fire and Safety Chief, said, and it was declared a total loss.

Martinez said that interviews with relatives indicated the fire was caused by a base heater in a hallway.

One person, Julia Simtustus, was treated for smoke inhalation.

A family pet, a cat, was lost in the fire.

The Simtustuses are staying with relatives, Martinez said.

A neutral wire in a panel box was found burning at the home of John Marcum, at 2365 Orizt Loop, at 1:33 p.m. that day.

The electricity was turned off and a fire crew spent about two hours at the residence in making sure no fires were hidden in the walls.

Two adults and three children were moved to a Madras hotel until emergency housing could be made available for them. The Red Cross is working with both the Marcums and Simtustuses.

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Cougar: range up to 98 square miles

(Continued from page 1)

Indeed, there are more than enough mountain lions to consider them a tool for managing wildlife, according to Doug Calvin, wildlife conservation officer for Warm Springs Fish and Wildlife.

"Based on current literature and research in Oregon, as a comparison, we figure maybe in the neighborhood of 30 to 40 lions here, based on the prey base and habitat," Calvin said. "But it could range anywhere from 40 to 80 lions, but we don't know because we haven't done a whole lot of research on them."

The last time tribal fish and wildlife was able to perform research on mountain lions was in the mid-1990s.

Between two female mountain lions studied back then, Calvin said, they were shown to have a roaming range of about 98 square miles.

"Females can range from maybe 50 to 150 square mile as home ranges," he said. "Males usually do about twice that, about 100 to 150 square miles. They can cover a lot of ground."

Females, he said, can overlap territories and will tolerate each other, but males do not, Calvin said.

"But males, the dominant males especially, they typically don't tolerate each other," he said.

Younger males, he said, can actually force an older male out of his territory. That could have been why, he said, the male cougar ended up in the vicinity of U.S. 26 at 9 p.m.

"He looked like he was probably an 8-, maybe 9-year-old cat," Calvin said. "He had a few battle scars, but he also looked a little lighter, leaner, than I would have expected him to be, based on his size."

Typically a reclusive animal,

mountain lions stay away from human populations and developments, but have apparently become bolder with the decline of their primary and favored food source, deer. The shortage has forced mountain lions to go eat porcupines, skunks, or horses.

National media have reported that mountain lions have moved eastward, having been sighted as far east as Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan. Luther said the cougars have been able to expand farther east because of record numbers of white tail deer east of the Rocky Mountains.

"That makes for a lot of prey base," Luther said.

The Mountain Lion Foundation, based in Sacramento, Calif., claims cougars have killed 18 people in 66 attacks nationwide in the last 100 years, but half of both attacks and deaths have occurred in the last 10 years.

Most recently, a mountain biker was killed, and another injured, by a mountain lion in Orange County, Calif., in January 2004, and police in Palo Alto, Calif., put down a cougar in a residential neighborhood last May.

A hunting season for the cougars was one of three options tribal Fish and Wildlife presented to Tribal Council. The others allowed tribal members to take them only if the cougar is destroying livestock or domestic animals, or poses a threat to human life; or allowing tribal members to hunt cougars without restriction or bag limit. Both options included the proviso of bringing the downed cougar to Natural Resources for inspection.

The most positive thing about the resolution, Smith said, is that it gives ranchers like him and his father, Buck Smith, the right to defend their herd of about 350 horses by shooting the cougars.

Jason Smith said he and his father have witnessed cougars killing colts. He believes as many

"They're so elusive, you can walk within 10 feet of one and you'd never know it."

Jason Smith

as 100 colts may have been killed by cougars, based on the fact that when he and his father have checked on their horses, they have seen them in groups of only adult horses, when yearlings and colts would be present.

"Lately, they've all been big horses," he said. "There should have been more yearlings and spring colts. We think there are no colts because the damned cats are killing them because they're easy. They don't kill adults because they would have to work at it."

Oddly enough, though, Smith said he doesn't know of any cattle killed by cougars.

Smith said he knows of cougar sightings in six different places on the reservation, including his family's ranch on the southeast corner of the reservation, around Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort and Casino, on Sunnyside Road, at the Jefferson-Wasco county line, and in the Tenino Valley, as well as the one on U.S. 26. The one on the highway might not have been alone.

"I talked to the guy who hit it, and he said there were two," Smith said. "One got away and he hit the other one."

The mountain lion season is much longer than tribal fish and wildlife's bear hunting season, conducted during the fall at the same time deer and elk are in season, because of mountain lions' elusive nature.

"They're a lot more difficult to locate and, unless you have a good set of hounds, the odds of just stumbling into one when you're out hunting deer or elk

are pretty slim," Calvin said.

Smith said the winter might be the easiest time to find a cougar, particularly if snow is on the ground, because cougars barely leave tracks on bare ground.

"They're so elusive, you can walk within 10 feet of one and you'd never know it," Smith said. "Now you've got a little weather and you can take advantage."

Because of their elusive nature and the difficulty in hunting them, though, it appears the only way a cougar may reveal itself is when it's forced to do so.

"No matter how hard you try, you're never going to come close to denting the population because they're so crafty," he said.

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