

Research looks at growing cougar population in mid-coast region

A few decades ago, cougars in the coast range were practically unheard of.

But as Oregon's healthy cougar population has expanded into north-west Oregon from population strongholds in the Blue Mountains and south Cascades, ODFW is observing more cougar harvest, sightings and damage complaints along the coast.

Researchers have studied cougar home range sizes, population densities and diet in the Cascades and eastern Oregon, but not along the coast. A new study aims to change that through a research effort that will collar 10 adult cougars in the Alsea Wildlife Management Unit, which includes parts of Lincoln and Benton counties.

ODFW will work with volunteer

agents who have hounds to tree cougars in the study area so ODFW can immobilize them, take samples including blood and DNA, and get them fitted with a GPS collar.

Location data collected from the collars will be used to calculate home range size and habitat selection.

Like similar research in other parts of the state, the study will also use scat detection dogs to refine a cougar population estimate for the unit and to analyze their diet.

The scat provides DNA data used in capture-recapture models that estimate population size and density.

The diet analysis provides impor-

OREGON'S STATEWIDE COUGAR POPULATION IS ESTIMATED AT 6,400.

tant information on what percent of common prey items (deer, elk or small mammal) are making up area cougars' diets.

Collaring of the cougars will begin this month and will continue until 10 adults are collared or April 1, 2019.

Once a cougar is collared the GPS unit will collect location data for 17 months.

It is legal to harvest a collared cougar but ODFW prefers that hunters not shoot a cougar with a collar if possible.

Hunters who do will need to contact ODFW and return the collar so the data can be retrieved and the collar reused, plus complete the normal check-in process that is required whenever a hunter takes a cougar or bear in Oregon.

"Better data means better science based management decisions, and this data will help refine our cougar population estimates for this region," says

Jason Kirchner, district wildlife biologist in Newport. "This research will help ODFW manage for a viable population of cougars and assess effects on their prey populations, so we can improve management and conservation decisions for both cougars and ungulate species on the coast."

Oregon's statewide cougar population is estimated at 6,400.

The Alsea Unit is part of Zone A, the Coast/North Cascades Zone, which has an estimated population of 950 cougars of all age classes.

The research is being funded through federal grants from the Wildlife Restoration Act and donations from Oregon Wildlife Foundation and the Oregon Hunters Association.

STEP meeting to offer tips on in kayak on the Siuslaw

The Wednesday, Nov. 1 Salmon Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) meeting will feature two local fishermen who will share their methods to catch surf perch in the ocean and how to catch fish from a kayak.

The first speaker will be Terry Barret. He will show the gear and the bait that he uses to catch surf perch. Barret will also tell when and where to fish for these tasty fish.

Surf perch fishing is open all year and the limit is 15 fish.

The second speaker will be STEP member Roger Eming. He will show the equipment and methods he uses to catch

salmon and ling cod from his kayak. Eming will have some very interesting stories to tell about his fishing experiences because angling from such a small vessel brings unique challenges.

Come to the STEP meeting and learn how you too can fish from your kayak.

Florence STEP meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month in the back room of the Florence Elks Club, beginning at 7 p.m.

The public is always welcome to attend STEP meetings.

For more information, call Ron Caputo at 541-997-4961.

ODFW adds extra retention day for sturgeon anglers

Recreational sturgeon anglers will get an additional day today, Oct. 28, in the Columbia River from Wauna to Bonneville Dam under rules adopted Friday by fish and wildlife departments from Oregon and Washington.

The extra fishing day was approved after staff reviewed harvest data that showed 4,700 anglers harvested fewer than 200 legal-sized sturgeon during the first sturgeon retention day on Oct. 21.

Biologists attributed the poor harvest rate to heavy rain and wind, which made fishing difficult.

Once again, the open area is

on the mainstem Columbia from the Wauna power lines, located approximately 40 miles from the river mouth, upstream to the fishing deadline at Bonneville Dam.

Legal retention size is 44- to 50-inch fork length. The bag limit is one legal-sized white sturgeon per day, and no more than two for the year, regardless of when they were caught.

By permanent regulation, all sturgeon fishing is restricted to a single barbless hook. This year marks the first time since 2013 that sturgeon retention fishing has been allowed between Wauna and

Bonneville since the lower Columbia and Willamette were closed due to concerns about legal-size sturgeon abundance and other indicators of population status.

The number of legal-sized sturgeon has improved since then to the point where fishery managers believe the population will support a small recreational fishery.

The Willamette River from the falls to the river mouth, including Multnomah Channel, remains closed to sturgeon retention but catch and release angling is allowed. The Gilbert River remains closed to all sturgeon angling.

In a separate action, the states adopted rules making it illegal to fish at night for salmon, steelhead, shad, sturgeon, trout and whitefish in the Columbia River from Buoy 10 upstream to the old Hanford townsite, effective today through Dec 31.

The intent of the rule is to liberalize night fishing for other species such as walleye and catfish.

For more information, visit ODFW's Columbia River Regulation Update page at myodfw.com/recreation-report/fishing-report/columbia-zone.



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Crab harvesting closure extended on Oregon coast

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife have announced the immediate closure of recreational and commercial crabbing from the north jetty of the Coquille River, which includes the bay in Bandon, to the California

border due to elevated levels of domoic acid.

This includes crab harvested in bays and estuaries, and on beaches, docks, piers and jetties.

The recreational crabbing season in the ocean closed coast-wide on Oct. 15.

The announcement extends

last week's recreational closure.

Crab harvesting from the north jetty of the Coquille River to the Columbia River remains open in bays and estuaries, and on beaches, docks, piers and jetties.

Despite the closure, crab and shellfish products sold in

retail markets and restaurants remain safe for consumers.

For more information, call ODA's shellfish safety information hotline at (800) 448-2474 or visit www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/Shellfish/Pages/ShellfishClosures.aspx.

COASTAL GEM WALKERS TO JAUNT ON HALLOWEEN

The Coastal Gems Volkswalkers monthly "Come Walk with Us" jaunt will be on Tuesday, Oct. 31. The group will be walking the Newport Historic year-round event.

This 10K walk includes

some steep inclines that could be problematic for wheelchairs or strollers.

Walkers will meet at 9 a.m. at the Commons in Yachats to carpool to Newport. Walkers can also meet at the Hallmark Inn in Newport at 9:45 a.m. to

register.

The group walks in any weather, so come prepared.

As always, leashed pets are welcome on walks, but carry water and cleanup materials for pets.

This walk requires a 6-foot

non-retractable leash.

For more information or directions, call Maryann Brown in Waldport at 541-961-4279.

The club website is at www.yachatscoastalgems.org.

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