

# Siuslaw News Community Voices

## SIUSLAW VALLEY FIRE & RESCUE

## Megafire moments come home



By PETE "BOA" WARREN  
Recruitment & Retention  
Coordinator for SVFR

Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) recently awarded six of its own with highly-coveted Challenge Coins in recognition and appreciation of their dedicated voluntary service in two task-force conflagrations working Oregon and California.

It has been an especially cruel summer for those devastated by a rash of western mega-fires. The Chetco Bar Fire swept through more than 200,000 acres in and around the Chetco River and Brookings, Ore. Crews battled flames fanned by the "Chetco Winds" in this, the largest fire in the nation this summer.

SVFR Capt. Andy Gray led a valiant effort with fellow firefighters PJ

Crescioni and Levi Green aboard a SVFR Quick Attack vehicle, joining firefighters from many departments.

Firefighter Crescioni described the scene immediately upon entering the active zone as their convoy drove through Brookings with lights and sirens, saying, "It was like a hundred thousand times bigger than anything we've ever seen."

One week after Captain Gray's team returned from the Chetco Bar conflagration, a SVFR engine and crew were deployed to one of the most devastating and costly fires in California history. Three SVFR Firefighters — Kyle Orozco, Tony Miller and Blair Campbell — were designated as Oregon Task Force 1 and were the very first Oregon engine and crew in state history to assist Cal Fire. It was a distinctive honor for SVFR.

Other Oregon fire companies assisted as well, but ours was the first.

Engine Boss Orozco and his crew departed just after midnight, checked in at the designated rendezvous in Goshen, Ore., and commenced the 12-hour drive to Santa Rosa, Calif. Upon arrival, they were granted only enough time to stow their gear and set up cots in the 3,000-plus firefighter tent city at the fairgrounds. Then, they were immediately

deployed to the fire's front lines to protect structures. They worked a 24-hour assigned shift before returning to rest after what amounted to a 54-hour duty cycle, including travel from Florence.

Back at the fairgrounds, just on the other side of a fence, were many of the displaced evacuees watching the plumes of smoke rising above the areas they had just retreated from. Among the memorable experiences our firefighters brought home was the sight of so many affected by this devastating conflagration. As they searched through burnt homes for remnants of anything resembling something of important or sentimental value, they came to deeply empathize with those who lost everything.

Observing from afar, we see the devastation brought to these people. They are just like you and I, but the emotional after effects are burned into the psyche of our brave firefighters who embraced and cried with those who are forever traumatized by that tragic experience.

*Pete "Boa" Warren can be contacted at 541-997-3212, or the main SVFR station, 2625 Highway 101, or email Boa@svfr.org.*

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## NATURAL PERSPECTIVE — Turkey Time



By EMILY J. UHRIG, PhD  
Special to the Siuslaw News

Thanksgiving is around the corner and the pride of place at many tables will doubtlessly be the traditional turkey. However, as we gear up for the big day, most of our thoughts are likely to focus on the bird in its fork-ready state rather than any other aspects of its life.

The store-bought turkeys are a domesticated species bred to be much larger than their wild counterparts. Wild turkeys can be found throughout Oregon, but are not native to our state and were first introduced in the 1960s.

Turkeys have since become popular with hunters and a bane for some Oregon communities where roving flocks have become a messy nuisance to yards and gardens.

The tom turkey, the male, is perhaps the best-known image of the species and a ubiquitous Thanksgiving icon with his prominent fan-shaped tail. The wattle hanging from his chin and the fleshy appendage, called a snood, dangling over his beak are also rather striking features.

From a human perspective, the tom may not be the most handsome of birds, but his odd countenance is important for attracting female attention. For instance, females prefer to mate with males that have longer snoods and wattles as these characteristics are associated with male health, possibly indicating he has a good resistance to parasites.

A characteristic even more observable on the traditional Thanksgiving table is the distribution of so-called "light" and "dark" meat in the turkey. Families are often firmly

divided regarding which is tastier, but for the turkey the light and dark meat represent two types of muscles that differ in their athletic performance.

The darker meat is found in areas of the body that must be more resistant to fatigue. Turkeys travel mainly by walking or running and can reach speeds around 19 miles per hour.

Their legs, therefore, need to have endurance and the associated muscles are rich in a type of protein that stores oxygen and helps the muscle resist fatigue; it's this protein that gives the leg muscles their darker color.

As turkeys fly relatively little, or not all in the case of farmed birds, the flight muscles in their breast have much less of the protein and consequently are lighter in color.

This Thanksgiving season, as you're basting and buttering in the kitchen and bantering at the table, consider some of the interesting aspects of the turkey's life beyond the plate.

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Photo by Kathleen Wenzel

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