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DUNES *from page 1A*

Blackwell held up an example of Scotch broom to show the students the bright green shrub.

“This is what it is,” Grano said. “You want to try to get the root.”

“As much root as you can,” Blackwell agreed.

Some of the Scotch broom targeted Wednesday still sported black seed pods and the iconic yellow flowers more evident in the spring and summer.

“It’s making more broom,” Blackwell said.

He and Grano instructed the students on the best practice for pulling up the broom and demonstrated how to use the “Puller Bear” brand weed pullers.

“The idea of teaming up is the shovel person will dig the sand away from the root so the saw person can come in and saw it down,” Blackwell said. “The idea is to get the shovel person digging down

around the plant, getting as much root as you can.”

People can also cut the plant at the woody, brown part of the stem, which can kill the Scotch broom below the surface of the sand.

Grano insisted that the safety gear is required.

“When you pull (Scotch broom) up, sand goes flying, or your partner will pull it out and wipe your face with it — not on purpose. But I’ve seen all that happen,” he said. “We used to have it optional to wear the gloves and glasses, but one time we ran out of bandages.”

For the next two hours, the students and volunteers dug, pulled, chopped and sawed their way through two large patches of Scotch broom near the H Loop of Honeyman, ultimately piling plants higher than their heads in large piles.

“It was hard pulling out the roots,” said Jazzlynn, one of the students.

“They started off in separate pairs, but these kids are so kindhearted that they grouped into teams to tackle

large sections of the broom together,” Tregoning said. “They just knew it takes more than two. Nobody had to tell them.”

Student Claire said, “It was fun until we got to a really tough root that we couldn’t get out. It took eight of us to finally get it.”

Grano has worked with Stream Team for many years. Some of the students had previously visited the Oregon dunes in a fourth-grade field trip.

“I felt like we didn’t do as much when we were here in fourth grade,” said Ty. “We were just too little. We got a lot more done this time. We did a lot of fun stuff and helped the environment a lot.”

While the group achieved their goal of razing the patch of Scotch broom near H Loop, Blackwell said volunteers will need to come back to remove any new growth.

“We come through every couple years to comb through an area and make sure it is completely cleared of invasives. At Heceta Dunes, we’ve

been working there for five years, and in some of the areas we’ve gone back two or three times,” he said. “That’s why we try to get the young people involved, since it’s a generational thing.”

Grano agreed. “It’s our generation trying to pass it on.”

After working with the group to pull Scotch broom, Honeyman Park Ranger Katie Pollut led the students on a hike to learn about the dunes. She started near the single tree on the large dune by Cleawox Lake.

“The dunes are always changing, and since they’re always changing, their impact on the lakes is always changing,” Pollut said as she went through the process of erosion and how the dunes formed and led to the creation of the 32 lakes in the dunes.

She also spoke further about the vegetative process of the dunes, and how Honeyman’s forested paths are part of an 8,000-year-old dune.

“Ultimately, dunes become forests. This is exactly what has happened here,” she said. “This dune was a dune about 8,000 years ago and was fully stabilized by the coastal forest coming in.” She gestured to the large dune by the lake. “On most sand dunes that are young and moving a lot, they should look a lot more like the one behind you. There shouldn’t be this many plants because the sand needs to move around. ... By planting Scotch broom and dune grass, we actually accelerated the process. We’re seeing dunes turn into forests in less than 50 years. That’s quite the change.”

After a hard morning’s work pulling the broom and hiking around the recreation area, the students were rewarded with the option for a bit more recreation, this time in the form of sledding down the dunes.

For Tregoning, “I want to take the kids on a restoration project each quarter, so every 10 weeks,” she said.

See DUNES page 9A

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Great viewing along the Port Parking Lot and Bay Street. Tributes and treats for Veterans will be available at Veterans Memorial Park and at several local restaurants.

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