

DEER from page 1A

“So in general, if you look at the whole city, we’re about at the benchmark for what we expect,” Kirchner said.

However, there are areas of Dunes City that more than double the benchmark. Hilltop Drive, Spruce Lane and Clear Lake Road have a population of 8.2 deer per mile. The reason for this — “Folks are most likely feeding the deer,” Kirchner said.

He explained that the department has been receiving complaints about deer in Dunes City, particularly with people providing food for the deer and other wildlife.

“Feeding the deer is a problem,” Kirchner said. “Some people scatter [the food], some people have deer feeders, some people are feeding by hand.”

The food that the deer doesn’t eat is left on the ground, which in turn attracts bears.

“That creates a whole

chain of problems,” Kirchner said. “You’re deer friendly, but then you’re bringing the bears. So the bears get habituated to people.”

And when bears get habituated, problems occur.

“They start breaking into houses and tearing into sheds,” Kirchner said. “And then it becomes a human safety issue, and [the state] has to remove the bear.”

While the bears are attracted to the food left for the deer, the cougars are attracted to the overpopulation of well-fed deer.

“When there’s a high density of deer, the cougars come to eat the deer. So then we get another human safety issue,” Kirchner said.

This is a cycle that Dunes City has been witnessing. While ODFW did not do a count on cougars and bears in the city, there have been multiple reports of bear sightings and the Dunes City home page has video of cougars in the region.

“I saw a cougar at 9 a.m. in the daytime, which I know is highly unusual. I think that’s starting to happen. We need to get rid of the concentration of deer,” Councilor Duke Wells said.

There are certain ways to go about getting rid of the deer. If the deer were deemed a public nuisance, at that point the city would be able to obtain kill permits for the animals. The animals would be trapped, euthanized and the meat would then be required to be donated to a nonprofit, like a food share, per ODFW rules. Horns and skins could be sold for a profit to help pay for the costs of hunting and trapping.

ODFW would not allow the deer to be relocated to another area.

“You’re just relocating that problem to another area,” Kirchner said. “A lot of habitats outside of here already have deer populations, so we’re not moving deer around. There’s disease issues

and things like that.”

The idea of birth control was also suggested by residents of Dunes City, but ODFW does not recommend that, either.

“The deer here, it’s not a closed population, so the deer are migrating in and out,” Kirchner said. “There’s constant movement in deer. Birth control is a year-round effort, and even with birth control you’re going to have damage. We don’t do that.”

So the city is left with two choices — either euthanize a portion of the current population, or have people stop feeding the deer. ODFW recommended the latter.

“If the feeding would stop, then the deer population would cease,” Kirchner said.

Even before Kirchner spoke, it had become clear to Dunes City that a culling of the deer was not a popular choice in the area, even with those reporting problems with the deer.

Multiple people spoke at the beginning of the meeting council meeting, starting with resident Derek Wells, who presented a survey he took from 21 random houses in the Hilltop and Spruce Lane area.

“Out of the 21 [homes] I went to, only one person was against the deer,” Wells said. “Basically, a good majority of them just didn’t want to see them taken away or euthanized. They were thinking a fine for people that kept feeding them was the best solution.”

Wells said he understood that there were strong feelings about the deer, but there should be other solutions beyond culling.

“I’ve got friends that bring their kids out in this area just to be able to see a nice buck or does or whatever,” he said. “I’m a hunter myself. You can go into the woods, day after day, and it’s pretty hard to see any animals anymore. So, I think it’s a privilege to have them here.”

Resident Jamie Gorder echoed what Kirchner said, pointing out that relocating deer creates more problems. She provided research showing only 16 percent of deer survive relocation.

“That’s, on average, an 84 percent mortality rate, which is just staggering to me,” she said. “There are things we can do to address this. ... We can encourage people to

plant flowers and shrubs that are not pleasant to wildlife. Yes, have that discussion on building fences, and using deer repellants.”

She ended her comments by saying, “The deer aren’t crossing the road. The road is crossing into the forest.”

Resident Jerry Jensen spoke on how residents need to educate themselves on wildlife.

“Myself as a hunter, in the past five years I’ve learned way more than I thought I would might know, with the deer being directly involved with them,” he said. “And yes, there’s people that would love to come out to see the deer and just be amazed by what it is like to have them around. I think it’s just something we need to get educated on in order to live with them, and enjoy them.”

Bonnie Allen, who sits on the city’s planning commission, pointed out that the city currently has restrictions on fences being six feet tall, “which is actually not prohibitive for a deer if they’re truly determined to eat your garden or your roses,” she said. “So I would consider an option where we could add a provision to the code where fences could be as high as 10 feet if warranted.”

Resident Juliana Johnson, who was one of the first people to bring up issues with the deer in the area, stressed that she also did not want to see the deer killed, or even removed. However, she was frustrated by her inability to block the deer.

“What am I supposed to do?” she asked. “Give me some answers. ... We don’t hate deer. We think they’re beautiful. But we want a little space. ... What do we do to get us some space so we don’t feel threatened by the deer, our animals don’t feel threatened by the deer, and we can walk in our yard without getting poop in our yard and have something that the deer don’t eat?”

One of the things that ODFW suggested was a permit that allows residents to “harass” the deer. While harassing wildlife is illegal, residents can get a free permit through ODFW if the deer are creating problems. This would allow residents to use anything from air horns to pots and pans to scare off animals. It can also work for other animals as well.

By the end of the discussion, it became clear that the vast majority of residents that had been in contact with Dunes City did not want a culling of the deer.

The solution came down to preventing people feeding them.

“In my research, I’ve seen people feeding deer,” Councilor Wells said. “I’ve been shown pictures of their neighbors feeding deer. I don’t think the answer is to transport them or kill them.”

Instead, the city and the community need to work together to stop feeding deer.

“I believe if you get rid of the feeding of the deer in Dunes City, I believe the problem will take care of itself,” he said. “If we get rid of that, we get rid of the concentration.”

While speaking with residents, Councilor Wells had seen multiple photographs of people feeding the deer. However, if that continues, the population will continue to grow, and they will become a nuisance that could lead to a need for culling.

“I think we have to get a lot more proactive on that,” Councilor Wells said. “I believe that we need to initiate a sign program. I don’t mean a paper sign, I mean a metal sign program at the three main entrances into Dunes City, perhaps a sign on Hilltop and Westlake, that states [the city’s no feeding] ordinance.”

Now, Dunes City encouraged residents to be proactive about preventing deer feeding, and speaking out when they see it. Issues can be reported to the city at first, where Dunes City Administrator Jamie Mills would give a friendly reminder of the city ordinance.

“I don’t see the need to get ugly from the get-go,” she said.

After that, there could be a visit from ODFW. If the problem persists, a fine.

“We have to make it mean something,” Councilor Wells said.

While the council did not make any official vote on the matter, at the end of the meeting, Councilor Wells said, “I’m glad to see the citizen involvement tonight. I think that’s how you get things done. It’s a problem in Dunes City for some time, but it looks like we can take care of this in house.”



FRAA ART CENTER

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Classes, Workshops & Events

NEW! 2020 Professional Development Workshops presented by Lane Arts Council and FRAA

January 21st, 10 am - Noon: Unleash Your Creative Potential: Transforming Fear into Action
February 11th, 10 am - Noon: Exhibitions and Galleries Panel
March 9th: 10 am - Noon: Price, Promote & Profit from Your Artwork
Register for one or all three either online at: <http://lanearts.org/workshops-florence/> or at FRAA Art Center

2nd Saturday Gallery Tour Featured Artists - Jerry Schneider and Michaela Butchart

Reception, January 11th, 3-5 pm
Come visit with Jerry and Michaela and enjoy their artwork as you enjoy refreshments.

Next Art Change-Out Day

Monday, January 13th, 2019, 9-11 am
Please pick up your artwork and bring something new.

FRAA's Winter Arts Festival

Held at the FEC, Saturday, January 25th 10 am - 5 pm & Sunday, January 26th 10 am - 4 pm. Join us, watch artisans at work and support and visit with artists & friends.

NEW! Writers on the River - Literary Salons & Workshops w/ Catherine Rourke

2020 Creative Juices: Jump start your writing for the coming year!
Sat., January 25, 2020 10 am - 12 noon
Brand new workshop ~ 5th annual event!
All writing levels and genres, Contact: CJReditor@gmail.com, 541-708-2120

Big Wave Poetry 1st Tuesday Open Mic

Tuesday, December 7th, 2019 at 7:00 pm
Admission is free and refreshments will be available.

Poetry Workshop

Small group meeting of poets to enhance their written word. Last Tuesday of each month, 6:30-8:30 pm Write fraaoregon@gmail.com if you are interested in joining.

Painting with John Leasure

Saturdays 9 am - 12 pm
No painting experience required.
Contact: jnleasure@hotmail.com or 541-991-2754 for details and fees.

FRAA Quarterly Member's Meeting

Tuesday, January 28th, 10:00 am. Come learn what we have been doing, upcoming events, and provide inputs for the future.

For more information about classes, visit fraaoregon.org. To register for these classes, please call or visit FRAA at our Art Center on Maple Street.

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FUUF to discuss 'Vision'

On Sunday, Jan. 12, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Florence Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Dr. Ruth Miller will share a message titled, “Holding the Vision.”

“For millennia, one way that people have survived the dark days of winter is to focus on dreams and plans for spring and summer. Exploring possibilities of how we will build or create or travel during the bright months of spring and summer, helps to

lighten our inner vision — and our spirits,” said Miller.

Drawing on several sciences and mystical traditions, Miller will share how inner vision guides lives and actions and shapes spiritual lives.

FUUF, located at 87738 Highway 101 (at Heceta Beach Road), is wheelchair accessible. Each service concludes with refreshments and a dialogue circle to explore the questions that come up during each service.

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