

DECEMBER

■ Highest Temperature: 48, on the 18th • Lowest Temperature: 3, on the 6th • Total Precipitation: .49 (avg.: .87)
■ (weather statistics are through Dec. 27)

Halfway Rancher Promoting Workshop On Ranching Successfully In Wolf Country

Living With Wolves



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife photo

A wolf from the Snake River Pack passed a remote camera in eastern Wallowa County on Dec. 4, 2014.

By Jayson Jacoby
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DECEMBER 19 — Shella DelCurto's despair, after a spring when she wondered whether her family's Baker County ranch could survive the arrival of wolves, has been replaced by optimism about the future.

For Shella and her husband, Barry, who run cattle in the Pine Valley near Halfway, late summer and fall constituted a sort of crash course into the biology of wolves.

The couple, who lost a valuable calf to a wolf attack this spring, traveled to Montana and to Pendleton to attend workshops about ranching in wolf country.

They came home with knowledge, to be sure.

But Shella DelCurto said that wasn't the most important thing they gleaned from their travels.

"It's given us hope," she said. "That's the biggest thing. We look at wolves now as another challenge we have to work around."

DelCurto is so enthusiastic about what she learned that she has spent much of this fall raising money to make possible a two-day workshop in Halfway on Jan. 10-11.

Hilary and Andrew Anderson, third-generation ranchers from Montana who deal not only with wolves but also with grizzly bears and other predators, will talk about the ranching techniques that so impressed DelCurto during the four-day workshop she and her husband attended in Montana in September.

"These are people who are living the situation, day in and day out," DelCurto said. "They grew up with wolves — we didn't. They found a way to survive, and to improve profitability. That's the bottom line."

DelCurto said that although she and her husband learned a variety of tactics to reduce the risk of losing cattle to wolves, the core lesson seemed at first counterintuitive to her.

"Before, we just focused on the wolves," she said. "But the idea is that

you focus on your cattle, not on the wolves."

Specifically, DelCurto said the Andersons urge ranchers to train their cattle to move in larger herds rather than to scatter.

Wolves are less likely to attack a group of cattle than, say, a lone calf that has wandered away from the herd, DelCurto said.

Keeping cattle in bigger groups has other benefits, she said.

Large herds are easier for ranchers or their hired range riders to track, for one thing. That's especially valuable for the DelCurtos, who run the ranch by themselves and rarely employ range riders.

When ranchers see more of their cattle on a regular basis they're more likely to find animals that are sick or injured early enough to attend to them, and potentially prevent a minor problem from becoming fatal, she said.

The herding technique can also improve the quality and amount of forage, DelCurto said.

Forest plan draws crowd

By Casey Crowley
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DECEMBER 3 — About 100 people attended a Forest Service meeting Friday at Baker High School, and the possibility that the agency will close roads to motor vehicles was a major topic of concern.

Friday's meeting was one of several "objection resolution" meetings Forest Service officials scheduled after they received more than 350 objections to the revised manage-

ment plans for the three Blue Mountains national forests, released in late June.

Those plans are intended to replace the 1990 management guidelines for the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur national forests.

The day-long meeting included nine separate sessions, each covering different topics including access, timber and vegetation management, fire and fuels management and livestock grazing.

County audit done

By Casey Crowley
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DECEMBER 5 — Almost a year after it was due, Baker County's financial audit for the 2016-17 fiscal year is finished.

The audit, which covers the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2017, was supposed to be submitted to the state by Dec. 31, 2017.

Baker County was the last of Oregon's 36 counties to turn in its audit for that year to the Secretary of State's office.

Pauly Rogers and Co., the Portland accounting firm that was handling the county's audit for the first time, noted in the audit that the firm had to wait for county officials to provide documents needed to finish the audit.

Council will wait to appoint member

■ City will ask candidates from Nov. 6 ballot if they're interested in being appointed

By Casey Crowley
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DECEMBER 12 — The Baker City Council will take its cue from city voters in appointing someone to fill the vacancy created when Carly Annable, who received the second-most votes in the Nov. 6 election, moved out of town.

Councilors, meeting Tuesday night for the final time in 2018, decided to reach out to four candidates who weren't among the winners in the election.

Four of the seven positions were up for election.

The top four candidates, in order, are Lynette Perry, Annable, Ken Gross and incumbent Randy Schiewe.

The four highest vote-getters who weren't elected, also in order, are Doni Bruland, Daryl DeMoss, Kevin Luckini and Morgan DeCarl.

Councilors on Tuesday directed city staff to ask each of the four candidates if they're still interested in serving on the City Council.

False alarm puzzles 5J officials

By Chris Collins
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DECEMBER 7 — Baker School District Superintendent Mark Witty Thursday night expressed his disappointment and concern for the false alarm that sent law enforcement and emergency service workers scrambling to South Baker Intermediate School Wednesday afternoon.

Witty told the Baker School Board at its Thursday meeting that the alarm was activated by a malfunction in the "technical components" of the system, which is provided through Alpine of Richland.

Witty said investigation by District officials and Alpine representatives have determined that the false alarm was not related to the phone system.

Closes Freeway, Delays Ski Area Opening

Wind wreaks havoc on freeway, at Anthony Lakes

By Jayson Jacoby
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DECEMBER 17 — Hurricane force winds Friday afternoon toppled a semi truck and trailer on Interstate 84, prompting the closure of the freeway through Northeastern Oregon for about three hours.

Gusts also overturned a shack at the top of the chairlift at Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort, forcing the ski area to postpone its planned season opening on Saturday.



Photo courtesy of Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort

Winds gusting to 61 mph on Friday toppled the shack at the top of the Rock Garden chairlift at Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort. The resort will open for the season Dec. 22.

Chickenpox cases in 2 schools

By Chris Collins
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DECEMBER 14 — An outbreak of chickenpox, which had once been considered a rite of passage for most small children, was seen as an unusual occurrence in Baker's two in-town elementary schools earlier this month when three

children came down with the illness.

Cindy Johansen's three children, who all are grown now, brought chickenpox to her home in their childhoods. But the South Baker Intermediate School secretary says the disease is so rare since the advent of the chickenpox (also known as varicella)

vaccine, that she's only seen about five cases in her 23 years as a secretary for the District — and two of them were this year's.

Beginning in September 2000, vaccination against chickenpox was required of susceptible children in schools, according to the Oregon Public Health Division.

Local students get police escort for shopping spree

By Casey Crowley
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DECEMBER 24 — Fifteen students from Baker elementary schools went on a Christmas shopping spree for their families Friday morning at Bi-Mart thanks to the generosity of the community.

And they even had a police escort as they roamed the aisles.

The Baker City Police Department had its first Shop with a Cop event. Of-

ficers from the department, the Baker City Fire Department and the Baker County Sheriff's Office volunteered to help the young shoppers, who were nominated by their teachers.

Each student was given \$80 to buy Christmas gifts for members of their family and was randomly paired with an officer.

Karson Karolski, a fifth-grader, participated in the event with Baker City reserve officer Justin Phlaum.