

5 wolves found dead in Union County in February

SALEM (AP) — Five wolves were found dead in Northeast Oregon in February, according to law authorities.

On Feb. 9, a collar on a wolf indicated a mortality signal in the Mt. Harris area in Union County, Oregon State Police Capt. Timothy R. Fox said in an email on Friday, March 19, when asked about it by The Associated Press.

Arriving officers found a total of five wolves dead, Fox said. The cause of death is unknown, he said. All five carcasses were taken to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife forensic lab to determine the cause of death, the email said.

The incident is under investigation, according to Oregon Fish and Wildlife spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy.

“This is very unsettling news for a species that is only just beginning to recover in Oregon,” Kathleen Gobush, Northwest program director at Defenders of Wildlife said in a news release. “Predators, particularly wolves, are often the target of



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo, File

A wolf in Oregon photographed with a tracking collar.

ruthless persecution, and the killing of one wolf, not to mention five, appears to follow a growing pattern of grave concern. Defenders of Wildlife will continue to work to make Oregon safe for people and wolves.”

No further information was released.

Victims' relatives speak at Montwheeler's sentencing

By Pat Caldwell

Malheur Enterprise

VALE — Anthony Montwheeler sat in clean street clothes with a fresh haircut and stared straight ahead Friday morning, March 19 as more than a dozen people delivered statements at his sentencing at the Malheur County Courthouse.

The session was the final chapter on a four-year-long legal case that began in the early morning hours of a cold, overcast January day 2017.

The former Nampa, Idaho, man pleaded guilty Feb. 26 to second-degree murder, first-degree manslaughter and third-degree assault.

Montwheeler stabbed to death his ex-wife, Annita Harmon, killed Vale resident David Bates and injured his wife Jessica in a head-on crash as he fled police.

Under terms of the plea deal reached earlier this year, Montwheeler will serve a life sentence for killing Harmon but be eligible for parole in 25 years — when he is 78. But he would have to serve another 10 years of the 20-year sentence he has agreed to for Bates' death. He would also get a three-year sentence for injuring Jessica Bates, to be served as part of the overall sentence.

While there was an undercurrent of anger from the relatives of David Bates and Harmon a major theme from many of the speakers was one of forgiveness.

“All I can do is pray for your tormented soul,” said Lucas Faverau, Annita Harmon's son.

Stacey Harmon-Roeber, Annita Harmon's older sister, told Montwheeler “I have no words of anger toward Tony.”

“God loves Tony as much as he loves

Montwheeler a former Baker City resident

Anthony Montwheeler, who will serve a life sentence for murder, was involved in a hostage situation and standoff with police in Baker City in April 1996.

Montwheeler pleaded guilty except for insanity in the case. He was convicted on Sept. 3, 1997, in Baker County Circuit Court on two counts of first-degree kidnapping with intent to terrorize, three counts of unlawful use of a firearm, and three counts of unlawful use of a weapon with a firearm.

On Sept. 23, 1997, Montwheeler was placed under the jurisdiction of the Psychiatric Security Revenue Board (PSRB) for a period of time not to exceed 70 years.

Montwheeler was released from the PSRB on Dec. 14, 2016, according to court records.

— Baker City Herald

me,” said Harmon-Roeber.

Harmon-Roeber told the court that her kid sister was “precocious, tow-headed, brown eyed girl that loved to tease us.”

“I remember how she loved horses and animals. I remember special sister time when she was little,” said Harmon-Roeber.

Harmon-Roeber said the Montwheeler's crimes terrorized her.

“I used to be fearless. Now I am a fearful red head. I have anxiety. I don't sleep

at night,” Harmon-Roeber said.

At one point Harmon-Roeber began to weep.

“I wonder what her body felt when he stabbed her. I hate I wasn't there to protect her,” Harmon-Roeber said through tears.

Jessica Bates also wept when she delivered her remarks.

“It is obvious you caused a huge amount of hurt and loss. It still feels surreal,” said Bates.

“I want you to know that I forgive you. I really do hope this will give you pause to stop and seek God,” said Bates.

Bates told the court she “never in a million years dreamed I'd be married to someone so wonderful and have five children.”

“I didn't want to lose David so early,” said Bates.

After the testimony from the families, Dave Goldthorpe, Malheur County district attorney, told the court that “there is no punishment under the laws of the state of Oregon harsh enough for Anthony Montwheeler.”

“No amount of time in prison could ever even come close to making these families whole after what he did to all of them,” said Goldthorpe.

Goldthorpe called Montwheeler “evil.”

“He is abusive. He is a horrible human being and his face should never be seen by any of these good people who have spoken to you today,” said Goldthorpe.

Montwheeler gave a brief statement at the end of the sentencing.

“I can't express the right words of sorrow. I have caused so much pain. To say I am sorry isn't nearly enough,” said Montwheeler.

Baker Rural Fire Protection District improves its insurance rating

By Jayson Jacoby

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Some rural property owners in Baker Valley could save money on their fire insurance due to the Baker Rural Fire Protection District's effort to augment its firefighting capabilities.

The District, which includes much of the unincorporated parts of Baker Valley south of Haines and north and west of Baker City, has improved its Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating from 8B to 5, said Sean Lee, chief of the volunteer district.

Some insurance companies — but not all — base their rates in part on the ISO rating, said Collin Kaseberg, president of the board of directors for the fire district.

He urges property owners in the

district to check with their insurance provider on whether the district's rating change could result in a rate cut.

Kaseberg said the ISO bases its rating on multiple factors, including the level of equipment and training of the department that provides fire protection for a property.

He said one of the ISO's main issues when it rated the Baker Rural Fire Protection District was the volume of water the district could put on a fire.

According to the ISO's website, to qualify for a rating lower than 8B, a district must be able to supply at least 250 gallons per minute for a two-hour duration, and the water must be available within five minutes of the arrival of the first engine.

To meet that standard, Kaseberg said the Baker Rural district recently bought two used pumper tender trucks, one capable of hauling 3,000 gallons of water, the other 2,500 gallons.

Those tenders can either serve as a tender, supplying water to other firefighting apparatus, or act as pumper trucks, as each is equipped with a pump, Kaseberg said.

The dual-purpose nature of the trucks is vital in a rural district since it, unlike, say, Baker City, doesn't have a system of fire hydrants to provide a constant supply of water.

Kaseberg said the district's volunteer firefighters had weekly drills for about two months to prepare for the ISO review that led to the rating change.

RODEO

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Cutler said Miners Jubilee and the rodeo events are mutually supportive, each drawing audiences for the other.

As for Miners Jubilee, which also was canceled in 2020, Cutler said she has begun planning the event and she is optimistic given recent trends of declining COVID-19 infections and increasing number of vaccinations.

“We have to plan now,” Cutler said. “We can't wait until May or June.”

Cutler said the key to having the Jubilee is the state lifting its current limitations on the number of people attending outdoor events.

The limit is 300 people for counties at the lowest of the four risk levels, which Baker County likely will return to on Friday, March 26. At the county's current risk level of moderate, the limit is 150 people.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Annual cleanup at Mount Hope Cemetery scheduled for April 12-26

Baker City's maintenance contractor, Grass Masters, will be doing the spring cleanup at Mount Hope Cemetery, including removing deteriorated decorations and flowers, from April 12-26.

The city is asking people to remove those items before April 12. They can be replaced starting April 27. Items that are left and that the contractor has to move will be stored, except perishable items, until Nov. 1, 2021.

A copy of the cemetery rules is available at www.bakercity.com, and more information is available by calling 541-524-2047.

Free online training for landlords, housing providers scheduled April 6

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO) and the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District are co-hosting a free online training for landlords and housing providers.

The training will cover current fair housing laws, COVID-19 and best practices in rental housing and the Oregon eviction moratorium.

The training will be April 6 from 10 a.m. to noon via Zoom. Registration is required. For more information or to receive information about registration, contact Lisa Dawson at lisadawson@neoedd.org or Glenda Moyer at gmoyer@fhco.org.

State Sen. Lynn Findley, Rep. Mark Owens plan virtual town hall March 24

Baker County's two state legislators, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, will participate in a virtual town hall with another representative, Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, on Wednesday, March 24 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. More information, including ways to participate in the on-line town hall, is available at Findley's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/senlynnfindley.

JAILED

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A woman told police that she was driving, with her two minor children in the car, when another vehicle crashed into her car and then drove away. The driver and one of her children sustained minor injuries, and her car had to be towed.

Police identified Arenas as a suspect “with community help along with anonymous reports,” according to the press release.

About 7:45 p.m. on

Saturday, police found a silver 2008 Chevrolet Impala that is connected to Arenas and that had crash damage consistent with the collision earlier that day.

Police interviewed Arenas at his home about 8 p.m. Saturday. Officers recognized him as a man who had walked past the accident scene during the investigation, according to the press release.

According to the press release, Arenas admitted to being the other driver, and police arrested him at 8:08 p.m.

HEART TO HEART

Mounted Posse grateful to continued support for Youth Trail Ride

Since 1964 the Baker County Mounted Posse has conducted a kids trail ride for the youth of Baker County. Unfortunately we were unable to enjoy this adventure in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we weren't able to have our trail ride and campout, our local and distant supporters were still behind us to support the youth of Baker County!

Many of these supporters have donated the greatly appreciated donations of goods, services and monies year after year for our continued activities. We, the Posse and participants, would like to take this opportunity to graciously thank everyone involved in our continued efforts to give the youth of Baker County the opportunity to enjoy the horsemanship, games, wilderness education and all around fun and games that the trail ride offers. Following is a list of new and continued donors for the Baker County Mounted Posse Youth Trail Ride:

Janet Midkiff (in memory of Dave); Diana Corrigan (in memory of Jim); Blatchford Farms Inc.; Black's Distributing Inc.; Elkhorn Auxiliary 3456 F.O.E.; F.O.E. 3456 Eagles Aerie; Jeffery and Colleen Collier; Cheryl Webb (in memory of Dennis Hanby); Marian Radabaugh; Todd Neakly; Robbins Farm Equipment; S&S Auto Center; Baker City Electric; O'Neal's Auto Repair; 5 Star Towing; Maxine Cole; Baker Botanicals; Burger Bob's Drive-In; Cheri Smith; Cooks Radiator; Martin Financial; Betty's Books; The Main Event; Peterson's Chocolates; J. Tabor Jewelry; Elkhorn Embroidery; Off the Rack; Oregon Trail Restaurant; The Bearded Dog; Cody's General Store; Premiere Auto Body; Haines Steakhouse; El Er-radero restaurant; Precision Import Auto Repair; Gaslin Accounting; Trader Ray's; Baker Vision Clinic; Thatcher's Ace Hardware; Dan Van Thiel; The Hen House LLC; Silven, Schmeits and Vaughan; Marvin Wood Products.

Many of these donors have supported the Trail Ride for many years. We, the Posse, appreciate all of you that have supported us through donations, as well as our fundraising efforts such as chuckwagon sales, gun shows, etc. All of our members and volunteers without which we would not be able to have our trail ride for the youth of Baker County.

Keith Radabaugh
Baker City

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