

## LOOKOUT

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Several decades ago there were more than 50 lookouts in the region that were staffed each summer.

But over time, with surveillance by airplane more feasible, and a proliferation of roads making it easier for fire crews to access remote areas, most lookouts were closed, and many removed.

Mount Ireland remains a valuable cog in the fire-detection system in part because of its elevation — if you head west from the peak you won't hit a higher summit until you get to the Cascades.

But its location is also ideal, said McCraw, the fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Whitman District.

From Mount Ireland's summit, the lookout can see swathes of the Wallowa-Whitman as well as parts of its neighboring national forests, the Umatilla and Malheur, McCraw said. On especially clear days the views extend east into Idaho and north into Washington.

"It's a pretty critical one," McCraw said.

Mount Ireland also overlooks the municipal watershed for Sumpter, where a wildfire could threaten the city's water supply, McCraw said.

But of course a lookout is only as effective as the person who works there, scanning the hundreds of thousands of acres where a fire could start.

And for the past two years, McCraw has had to scramble to hire someone for the position, which pays about \$16.90 per hour.

In 2020, Mount Ireland's longtime lookout wasn't able to return to the lofty perch, but McCraw had a fair amount of time to find a replacement.

Typically the lookout doesn't start work at Mount Ireland until late June or early July, when most of the snow has melted and the wildfire risk begins to rise.

This spring McCraw's challenge was even more acute.

The lookout he had enlisted for the job backed out late in May.

Then someone suggested to McCraw that he explain his dilemma to associations of fire



Wallowa-Whitman National Forest/Contributed Photo

The lookout at Mount Ireland might see as many mountain goats as human visitors.

## Lookout's history dates to 1915

The people charged with managing Northeastern Oregon's federal forests early on recognized Mount Ireland's utility as a fire lookout.

Except the peak wasn't called Mount Ireland then.

According to Ray Kresiek's comprehensive book, "Fire Lookouts of Oregon and Washington," on Aug 28, 1915, just a decade after the Forest Service was created, agency employees Charles F. Groom and C.C. Davenport climbed the mountain and established a "rag" camp on the white granitic boulders that make up its summit.

At that time it was called Bald Mountain. On Jan. 25, 1917, the Oregon Geographic Board petitioned the federal government to rename Bald Mountain as Ireland Mountain. The honoree was not the island off the west coast of England, but a man — the late Henry Ireland, former supervisor of the Whitman National Forest, which includes his namesake peak, who died May 31, 1916. (The Wallowa and Whitman national forests were com-

ined in the early 1950s.) The U.S. Geographic Board approved the change, and at some point later the agency went with the current form, Mount Ireland, rather than the original Ireland Mountain.

The first lookout structure, a simple cabin with a flat roof to facilitate the lookout's work, was built in 1916. A cupola was added to the cabin in 1928, according to contemporary newspaper reports.

The original cabin was removed in 1957 and replaced by the current lookout — a much different structure made of steel with the expansive glass windows typical of lookouts.

Unlike many lookouts, which are perched atop a tower to get above nearby trees, Mount Ireland needs no such artificial means. Besides being the tallest point in the vicinity, the mountain's summit is bare stone, the only trees being whitebark pines stunted by the nearly arctic climate and frequent strong winds.

— Jayson Jacoby

lookout enthusiasts, of which there are several.

The Oregon Fire Lookouts posted about the situation on its Facebook page on June 4.

McCraw said he has had a "very good response" from the post, and several candidates have been in touch.

McCraw said on Wednesday, June 9 that he will be able to fill the vacancy in time to have Mount Ireland staffed.

The person he hires will have an interesting summer, to be sure. Mount Ireland is pretty remote even by lookout

standards.

You can't drive to the peak.

The roughly 3 1/2-mile hiking trail offsets its modest distance with a significant elevation gain of 2,300 feet — roughly equivalent to climbing the Astoria Column about 18 times.

(Except without stairs.)

The nearest settlement is Granite, about eight miles from the trailhead. Sumpter is about 15 miles.

McCraw said the Forest Service each year hires a helicopter crew to haul in water,

propane and other supplies to the lookout. A technician checks the radio equipment on the peak, which includes an antenna and a repeater.

The Mount Ireland lookout usually works until mid to late September, depending on the weather.

Snowstorms are possible in any month at that elevation, but McCraw said in some years dry weather persists into October so the lookout stays on duty through deer season.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Dekker Smith earns doctorate

SAN ANGELO, Texas — Dekker Smith of Baker City earned a doctor of physical therapy degree May 15 from Angelo State University.

## Halfway man, 19, dies in car crash

### EO Media Group

A 19-year-old Halfway man died Wednesday night, June 9 after crashing his Kia Spectra on Highway 27 about four miles south of Prineville, according to Oregon State Police.

Clayton Gray was driving north on state Highway 27 when he crossed the southbound lane, left the road and rolled his car, according to state police.

Gray was pronounced dead at the scene.

Gray's younger sibling, who was not identified, was a passenger in the car and transported by AirLink Critical Care Transport to a nearby hospital with serious injuries.

The sibling is a student at Crook County High School, according to the Crook County School District.

"Our hearts are broken for the family and we are ready to provide whatever support is needed," Michelle Jonas, Crook County High School principal, said in a statement Thursday, June 10. "We're a small, close-knit community so tragedies like this affect all of us deeply. We're praying the student makes a full recovery."

## ARREST

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She is charged with two counts of assaulting a public safety officer and one count of attempted assault of a public safety officer, two counts of reckless endangering, resisting arrest and fourth-degree assault (domestic).

The incident started about 4:25 p.m. when officers responded to a domestic assault call at 880 Elm St. No. 10, according to a press release from Police Chief Ray Duman.

Officers talked to Mark Brinton, Valerie Brinton's husband, who had a bleeding cut on his head about the size of a quarter, according to a report written by Officer Mark Powell.

Mark Brinton's head and clothing were soaked in motor oil, according to the report, which also notes that Mark Brinton is blind.

Mark Brinton told police his wife hit him several

times with her hand and poured the oil on him.

When officers found Valerie Brinton in a travel trailer, she refused to come out. She then threw a piece of glass and "another object" at officers outside, according to Powell's report.

Officers pulled Brinton from the trailer through the window, during which she kicked Detective Shannon Regan in the face.

Officers handcuffed Brinton. They did not deploy a Taser during the arrest, Duman said.

Before she was driven to the Baker County Jail, Brinton attempted to kick Detective Chris Sells in the groin, according to Powell's report.

At the jail, Brinton continued to fight and resist, Powell wrote in his report, including grabbing and pinching deputy Brandon Mastrude.

None of the police officers needed medical treatment, Duman said.

## BENTZ

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But besides the partisan implications, Bentz said it also was his constitutional duty to support an investigation of what happened on Jan. 6.

"On the list, certainly not necessarily at the top, is the fact that each of us took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution," he said. "And if you have people wandering through the Capitol screaming 'Hang (former Vice President) Mike Pence' — which they were, you can look at it and see it — it's the kind of thing that we in Congress should be doing our best to prevent in the future."

The rioters breached the Capitol under the assumption, without evidence, that massive voter fraud had been perpetrated in key states to

steal the victory from former President Donald Trump.

Although Congress ultimately voted to certify the vote, Bentz was among a group of lawmakers who voted against the certification of votes in Pennsylvania.

Bentz said his vote for

the Jan. 6 commission and against the certification were consistent because both followed the Constitution. Bentz said Pennsylvania didn't follow the Constitution when it bypassed its state legislature to extend absentee deadlines.

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## Annual Youth Trail Ride started in 1964 is sponsored by the Baker County Mounted Posse

This is an outdoor camp with horseback riding and outdoor adventure for youths ages 12-15 years old.

**Cost is \$2.00**

(that's right only \$2.00 dollars)

**June 26-27, 2021**

For more information, questions or an application please call Jodie Radabaugh at 541-524-9358 or 541-403-4933. All state and county regulations will be followed.



**2021**

## EASTERN OREGON PHOTO CONTEST

### Official Rules:

Photo Contest open now and closes at 11:59 pm Sunday, June 20, 2021.

Staff will choose the top 10. The public can vote online for People's Choice from 12:01 am Monday, June 21 through 11:59 pm Thursday, June 30.

Digital or scanned photos only, uploaded to the online platform. No physical copies.

Only photographers from Oregon may participate.

The contest subject matter is wide open but we're looking for images that capture life in Eastern Oregon.

Entrants may crop, tone, adjust saturation and make minor enhancements, but may not add or remove objects within the frame, or doctor images such that the final product doesn't represent what's actually before the camera.

The winners will appear in the July 8th edition of Go Magazine; the top 25 will appear online.

Gift cards to a restaurant of your choice will be awarded for first, second and third place.

Submit all photos online at:

[bakercityherald.com/photocontest](http://bakercityherald.com/photocontest)

