

Two wolves confirmed in West Murderers Creek, ODFW counts at least six in the area

BY STEVEN MITCHELL

Blue Mountain Eagle

MURDERERS CREEK — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has identified a new area of known wolf activity in the West Murderers Creek Wildlife Unit.

While the state agency has not completed its official annual wolf count, Ryan Torland, an ODFW district wildlife biologist, said in a Tuesday, March 1, interview that it is believed that there is a combined total of six wolves in the East and West Units of Murderers Creek.

Torland said the agency is still gathering information, but he is “fairly certain” that is the minimum number of wolves in the area.

He said there are at least two in West Murderers Creek and probably four in East Murderers Creek. The current wolf activity is concentrated south of Canyon City on either side of Highway 395, which separates the two wildlife units.

While there have not been any confirmed depredations in the area recently, a wolf did bite a calf in Grant County in 2018.

An investigator from ODFW was unable to determine whether a pair of wolves seen feeding on a dead cow



A wolf photographed by a remote camera in Baker County in 2021. State wildlife officials have identified a group of wolves in Grant County.

in a pasture near Izee on Feb. 3 caused that cow's death, according to the agency's investigative summary.

Torland said the notification is primarily to let livestock producers know that there is evidence of recent wolf activity via confirmed pictures and tracks taken from various sites in the two wildlife units.

The confirmation of two additional wolves in the area

comes on the heels of a federal judge's decision to renew endangered species protections for some gray wolves.

The ruling does not cover wolves in Eastern Oregon, where most of the state's wolves live. Therefore, state wildlife officials will continue to manage wolves east of highways 395, 78 and 95.

What that means for ranchers west of 395, where the two

additional wolves are located, is that ranchers can no longer take lethal action in defense of livestock, Torland said.

Torland encouraged livestock producers to sign up to receive email updates regarding areas of known wolf activity, livestock depredations, and any other wolf-related happenings, by going to: dfw.state.or.us/wolves/wolf_livestock_updates.asp

Contributed Photo

Suspect

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Gonyer, who lived on Stices Gulch Road about 12 miles south of Baker City, was initially arrested on Dec. 28, 2019, in Ada County, Idaho, where he was receiving medical care. He was extradited to Baker County in early January 2020 and was held at the Baker County Jail until December 2020, when Judge Thomas B. Powers granted a motion from Yervasi to grant Gonyer a conditional release so he could get medical treatment at the Boise VA Hospital and other facilities.

Gonyer lived in a motel in Baker City during 2021, but he was required to wear an ankle monitor that allows police to monitor his movements.

Gonyer is still required to wear that ankle monitor, Baxter said.

Gonyer originally was indicted on several crimes related to the sexual assault of a girl younger than 14 who was known to him:

- Five counts of first-degree sexual abuse, a Class B felony.
- Two counts of second-degree sexual abuse, a Class C felony.
- Six counts of third-degree sexual abuse, a Class A misdemeanor.
- Two counts of second-degree unlawful sexual penetration, a Class B felony.
- Two counts of contributing to the sexual abuse of a minor, a Class A misdemeanor.
- One count of first-degree rape, a Class A felony.
- One count of second-degree rape, a Class B felony.
- One count of third-degree rape, a Class C felony.
- One count of luring a minor, a Class C felony.
- One count of using a child

in a display of sexually explicit conduct, a Class A felony.

• Six counts of felon in possession of a firearm, a Class C felony.

In February 2021 several other charges were added, including four counts of first-degree encouraging child sexual abuse and four counts of second-degree encouraging child sexual abuse. Those charges are related to child pornography discovered on Gonyer's computer during the course of the investigation, Baxter said.

The pornography doesn't involve the child who is Gonyer's alleged victim in the other incidents, which police said happened between May 1, 2019, and Dec. 20, 2019.

Gonyer is accused of 15 separate crimes that carry mandatory minimum sentences upon conviction in Oregon. A first-degree sexual abuse conviction, of which Gonyer faces

Street Plan

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Michelle Owen, the city's public works director, said that when the final design is made the amount of acreage that Ingram could lose would be available.

Ken Patterson, ODOT's area manager for Eastern Oregon, said the agency hopes by mid spring or early summer to have enough details to lay out sidewalks and intersections.

At that point, they will speak with property owners and show them exactly what the plans are.

Mayor Kerry McQuisten expressed concerns about the City Council signing off on the North Baker plan and then figuring out the details, including effects on private property owners, later.

“That is a very uncomfortable place to be because I don't want to see his (Ingram's) land taken,” McQuisten said. “I think there are other ways around that too. And what if we get down the road on this and this is way more than any of us is wanting to go? How do we stop this? What are our options at that point?”

Patterson said the plan is a high level plan. He said they are going to be working with the city and the county and this is not a one and one decision.

Dixon, who owns land in Kansas, said

the loss of any crop land means a loss of its potential revenue from there on out.

“So, I want to know how you would compensate Mr. Ingram for the long-term loss of that income,” Dixon asked Patterson.

Patterson said when ODOT appraises property, it pays the present value and any improvements needed.

“But one thing that we're not allowed to do is pay for ongoing concerns or future crops,” Patterson said.

Councilor Dean Guyer said he has heard from numerous residents who want a traffic signal at the 10th and Pocahontas intersection.

He said locals might understand that north-south traffic doesn't stop, but visitors might not.

“Something has to be done that's more appropriate, that will accommodate the individuals that are speaking up,” Guyer said.

Patterson said the project team plans to hire a contractor to install a camera at the intersection to record turns and near-misses.

“We are not ignoring the issue. We're going to be contracting to get that done,” Patterson said.

McQuisten said councilors are being asked to approve a plan that has multiple parts, including potential construction of sidewalks on sections of 10th Street, as well as on Cedar Street.

“We're all having serious issues with the details of that plan,” McQuisten said. “How could we pass this in good conscience and start reading this ordinance when we're not in agreement with a lot in there. Once we pass that, what are our chances of undoing or preventing some of these things we don't like? Not much.”

Councilor Johnny Waggoner Sr. said he won't support the project if Ingram's property could be used “without giving him a fair price for it.”

Waggoner said he's also concerned about the level of traffic at the 10th and Pocahontas intersection from the Baker Sports Complex and two churches along Hughes Lane.

“Until you get me some people up here that can answer some real questions, point blank, yes, no, or whatever, don't look for a yes for me. And I'm just going to say it,” Waggoner said.

Denzil Robbins, who owns Robbins Farm Equipment on the east side of 10th Street near the Pocahontas intersection, voiced opposition about a proposal to extend curbs, reducing parking and slowing down street cleaning and snow removal.

“I'm not opposed to this transportation plan. I think we need to do something in Baker, we need to do some improvements, but we need to make sure that what we do, we do correctly,” Robbins said.

Prison

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Brendon Michael Smith, 27, pleaded guilty on March 2 to unauthorized use of a vehicle, identity theft and second-degree burglary, all Class C felonies.

Smith's total prison sentence is 56 months. None of the convictions carries a mandatory minimum sentence, so he would potentially be eligible for early release.

Baker City Police arrested Smith on Nov. 8 while he was in the 2003 Mercedes sedan where police said he lived.

He was released from the Baker County Jail on Nov. 16, after posting 10% of the \$40,000 bail.

Police arrested Smith again, on additional charges related to an investigation, on Nov. 23 at the Baker County Courthouse where Smith was sched-

uled to enter a plea on the charges for his Nov. 8 arrest.

He remained in the Baker County Jail until Wednesday, March 9, when he was transferred to the custody of the Oregon Department of Corrections to serve his prison term.

During Smith's arrest on Nov. 8, police found multiple items that had been taken from outside homes and from unlocked vehicles, according to a press release from Baker City Police.

Police Chief Ty DUBY said the police department had received multiple calls about Smith in October, from residents who said they had seen the black Mercedes parked in their neighborhoods.

On Oct. 27 a resident on Indiana Avenue called police and reported that a man was sitting in a black Mercedes outside the caller's home.

Police found Smith in the car with multiple items that

had been stolen, according to the press release. Smith had other items that police believe were stolen, but they couldn't find the theft victims.

Smith was cited and released on Oct. 27, DUBY said.

On Nov. 5, owners of Hills Auto Parts and Repair at 800 Campbell St. reported that several vehicles, some belonging to customers and some to the business, had been entered, with items taken from inside. The value of the items is approximately \$1,950, according to an affidavit filed as part of the case by Baker City Police officer Johnathan Parsons.

Smith was identified as a suspect through video surveillance at the business, DUBY said.

On Nov. 8, police again talked to Smith after he parked in a lot on East Campbell Street, DUBY said. They found more stolen items. Police arrested Smith and this time

he was lodged in the Baker County Jail.

DUBY said Smith told police that he drives around the city, taking packages from porches and other items outside homes.

DUBY said Smith also said that he goes through parking lots at local motels, looking for unlocked vehicles and stealing items from those vehicles.

According to court records, when he was arrested Nov. 8, Smith had the personal identification of a Baker City resident, as well as personal checks from that person's account.

DUBY said Smith has “addiction issues.” He said he believes Smith owns the Mercedes, although he doesn't have insurance on the car.

In addition to the prison term, Smith was ordered by Judge Matt Shirtcliff to pay a total of \$1,448.25 in restitution to three theft victims.

Four Baker City teens identified in library vandalism

Baker City Herald

Baker City Police identified two teenage boys, and two accomplices, as being responsible for throwing three smoke bombs into the Baker County Public Library on March 3, causing an estimated \$1,000 in damage to the carpet and a desk.

Perry Stokes, director of the Baker County Library District, said the four teens will be banned from the library from a year unless they're directly supervised by an adult.

Stokes said last week that

security camera video clearly showed multiple juveniles during the vandalism.

Three smoke bomb fireworks were tossed into or dropped in the library between about 5 p.m. and 5:45 p.m. on March 3.

Stokes referred questions about other punishments for the four teenagers to Lance Woodward, the school resource officer for the Baker City Police Department.

Woodward could not be reached before the press deadline on Friday, March 11.

Employees laid off at Hermiston plant that burned

HERMISTON (AP) — Two weeks after a fire severely damaged a plant that produced chips and salty snacks in Northeastern Oregon the company says it will lay off all of the site's employees.

The Shearer's Foods plant in Hermiston caught fire after a propane boiler exploded on Feb. 22. Six people were injured, KN-DU-TV reported.

Shearer's CEO Bill Nicktakis announced in a news release Tuesday, March 8, that the company decided to lay off the employees, The Tri-City Herald reported. The East Oregonian reported that the plant currently employs 230 people.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office said the cause of the fire appeared to be a portable natural

gas-powered boiler that exploded.

Nicktakis estimated that it would take more than a year to rebuild and resume production.

“After assessing the damage, it's clear that the destruction is too great to quickly rebuild and begin production in the near term,” Nicktakis wrote.

He said the company is exploring opportunities to relocate employees interested in working at other plants. According to the company's website, the Hermiston location was their only facility on the West Coast.

Nicktakis also said the company will provide a severance package and continuation of benefits and will work to plan events such as job fairs.

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Andrew Myers

November 14, 1977 - February 5, 2022

Andrew Myers, 44, died on February 15, 2022, in Baker City. A celebration of Andy's life will be held in the future, when it is warmer (date/place/time to be announced).

Andy was born on November 14, 1977, in Baker City to Carl Ben and Sharon Kay (Edison) Myers. He was their firstborn son. He attended schools in Baker City, Oregon. He was a son, a brother, grandson, nephew, cousin, an uncle, and really a great friend to many people.

At the age of 8, Andy had to undergo a brain tumor surgery. Following this news from doctors, as a family they went to the Oregon Coast, Redwood forests, Grand Canyon, and Zion National Park before he had surgery. The surgery was a success, but he lost much of his eyesight. He wasn't dealt the best cards, but he surely played them with a great poker face and played them like he had a full deck. Andy made sure that he never let his disabilities get in the way of good times with his family and friends.

Andy surely loved his loud music! He loved listening to 70s, 80s, and 90s music. Usually singing along with the music and at times would cause irritability amongst anyone trying to get his attention, or simply try to talk. His neighbors so flustered they would complain about his music being too loud. But that was Andy, he just loved music. He also enjoyed watching movies. One of his favorites as a youngster was, “The Cat from Outer Space” and Chevy Chase's “National Lampoon's Vacation” movies.

He lived like a rock star! He never had a license to drive so he was usually subjected to being a passenger on long drives with his Dad, Mom, Brother, Sister, and friends. He enjoyed the drives, while talking about old memories or just chit chatting about life.

Andy had a great memory and could remember things from his past that most people may have forgotten about.

He was preceded in death by his loving Mother, Sharon K. Myers and his loving Grandmother, Betty J Myers.

Andy is survived by his grandfather, Carl D. Myers; father, Carl “Ben” Myers (Shane), sister Desiree Myers-Nullusamy (Gunasekaran Nullusamy), brother Brian Myers (Monique), niece Ellie J. Nguyen, nephews, Colby T. Nguyen, Brayden A. Myers and Boyd A. Myers; and many Aunts, Uncles, and cousins, and many friends.

He will forever be loved and missed. May Andy rest in peace and our memories of him never be forgotten. We are truly heartbroken, a life lost too soon.

Those who would like to make a memorial donation in memory of Andy, may do so to help defray his service expenses through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, Oregon 97834. Online condolences may be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

