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SPORTS PULLOUT, A5-8

Auto theft shoots up in Bend area during pandemic

Police report rise of over 50% in Bend, 20% in Redmond

BY GARRETT ANDREWS

The Bulletin
Vehicle thefts rose 56.5% in Bend in 2020, according to new numbers by the Bend Police Department, and officials aren't sure why.

But police know one thing: A high number of thefts last year, 25%, involve an owner leaving the keys inside the vehicle. Many of these drivers left their vehicles unattended while they were warming up.

The number of reported stolen vehicles in Bend jumped from 124 in 2019 to 195 in 2020.

Bend Police spokesperson Lt. Juli McConkey said the department will start a three-month campaign to address this "drastic" jump in vehicle thefts through its data driven policing initiative. The department hopes to identify areas in town where crime has increased and educate neighborhood associations about the need to lock cars. The city's crime analyst, Nancy Watson, will also compile data from suspects about their motives and whether they're responsible for multiple auto thefts.

The spike could end up being the product of a handful of prolific thieves, or larger demographic shifts.

"I think people are assuming things that we just don't know yet," McConkey said. "We just aren't sure why it's taking place."

A sharp rise in auto theft from 2019 to 2020 was also seen in Deschutes County's second largest city, Redmond, which experienced a 21% increase, or an increase from 80 to 97 vehicle thefts. The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, however, saw a 10% decrease in auto thefts in that time, with a drop of 89 to 80. McConkey said that in 31.7% of the Bend cases, vehicles were left unlocked.

See **Theft** / A4

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS



A vehicle drives over a section of Tumalo Creek Wednesday.

Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Wyden bill would protect nearly 4,700 MILES of Oregon rivers and streams

BY MICHAEL KOHN

The Bulletin

A year ago U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., asked Oregonians to nominate their favorite rivers to be included in an expansion of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Thousands of nominations poured in, and Wednesday the legislation to have some of those rivers formally protected was introduced to Congress.

If passed, the River Democracy Act will add nearly 4,700 miles of rivers and streams in Oregon to the protected system, according to a release. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., is helping Wyden get the legislation

through Congress.

Wild and Scenic Rivers is a special designation that protects rivers and develops them for tourism, in the same way that a national park protects a designated area of land. The idea behind the designation was developed in the late 1960s and formally adopted in October 1968 by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The act includes sections of several rivers in Central Oregon, including the Deschutes and Fall rivers and Tumalo Creek. One of the nominations for Tumalo Creek came from a group of sixth graders at Pacific Crest Middle School.

"Oregonians made it loud

and clear, they cherish Oregon's rivers and want them protected for generations to come," said Wyden in a statement. "More protected rivers and clear management objectives mean more jobs, improved wildfire resiliency, and a guarantee for the livability of Oregon."

In addition to protection and tourism development, the corridor of land alongside each river is also treated to reduce wildfire risk — increasingly important as climate change dries out the large areas of the Western U.S. Another goal is to sustain populations of endangered fish and wildlife.

See **Rivers** / A4

Late census data causes ruckus

Legislature, secretary of state argue over who will control Oregon redistricting

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

The Legislature and Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan appear headed for a showdown over who will control redistricting of legislative and congressional maps to be used in the 2022 election.

The Senate Redistricting Committee heard testimony on Wednesday from U.S. Census Bureau officials that data legally required for the Legislature to draw maps would not be available until after it adjourns July 1.

It was supposed to arrive April 1.

"We have not been able to achieve that," said Kathleen M. Stiles, chief of the bureau's department dealing with redistricting.

Stiles said data being sent to all states was delayed because of the difficulty of counting the population amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which struck just as the count was getting underway in March.

Regional disasters and demonstrations slowed counts, including the wildfires in California and Oregon, hurricanes in the southeastern U.S., and major civil rights demonstrations during the summer.

Politics came into play, with confusing directives from the Trump administration changing the process of the count, and the transition to the new administration of President Joe Biden.

"This has been a census unlike any other," Stiles said.

The data problem is particularly acute for six states, including Oregon, which have constitutionally mandated deadlines for redistricting in 2021.

See **Redistricting** / A13

Oregon seeks to make workplace COVID-19 rules permanent — for now

BY ZANE SPARLING

Oregon Capital Bureau

Face masks and social distancing are likely to remain a fixture of the shopping and working experience for some time, according to the state's employee safety department.

Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has announced plans to make its series of COVID-19 public health emergency regulations permanent — with

some tweaks to the rulebook — at least until the pandemic fades away.

"We have not yet defeated this disease, and we clearly will not have done so by the time the temporary rule expires," said Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood. "As a result, it is critically important that we carry forward measures that we know are effective at combating the spread of this disease and re-

ducing risks in the workplace."

Oregon OSHA first adopted its temporary rules for addressing COVID-19 risk Nov. 16, and says the rules expire on May 4.

Because the law does not allow the extension of temporary workplace regulations, OSHA has prepared 105 pages of proposed permanent rulemaking. Virtual public hearings will be held before their adoption.

"Oregon OSHA intends to repeal the rule when it is no longer necessary to address that pandemic," the agency explained. "Because it is not possible to assign a specific time for that decision, Oregon OSHA will consult with ... the Oregon Health Authority and other stakeholders as circumstances change to determine when all or part of the rule can be appropriately repealed."

See **Workplace** / A4

Oregon State University plans for yet another virtual commencement

BY JACKSON HOGAN

The Bulletin

Another class of Oregon State University seniors in Bend and Corvallis won't have an in-person graduation celebration due to COVID-19.

OSU-Cascades will hold a virtual commencement ceremony on June 13, according to a university press release sent Wednesday morning. This

decision was made both for COVID-19 safety reasons, as well as an expectation that large in-person events will still be restricted by state laws at that time, said Becky Johnson, vice president of OSU-Cascades.

"We don't expect gatherings of a size of commencement to be allowed by June," Johnson told The Bulletin Wednesday.

See **University** / A4

