

A sanctuary of stars

Blue Mountain Eagle

DAYVILLE – The stars – celestial, not movie – were out in all their finery last Saturday night at the Thomas Condon Visitor Center of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

About a dozen people – some Grant County residents and some from afar – made it to the final “star party” of the summer season at the center, located about 9 miles west of Dayville.

Julie Flesner of Portland saw a flyer about the star-gazing event on the Fossil Beds’ Facebook page. A frequent daytime visitor to the trails of the monument, she decided she had to catch the night sky program this time.

“I look at this as my sanctuary,” she said of the park, “and I love the stars.”

National Parks Service retiree John Fiedor, a Dayville resident, hosted the show. He has been offering

the star-watching programs since 2004, first as a ranger and for the past five years as a volunteer. He does four or five programs a year at the center, and also has helped with programs at other locations.

“This is one of my favorite programs,” he said. “The skies are so wonderful out here.”

Saturday’s star party was an indoor-outdoor affair, starting at about 7:30 p.m. with a 30-minute slide show and talk in the center’s auditorium. With daylight fading from the hills,

Fiedor gave an intro to the stars the group would see and added in facts about astronomy, the life and size of stars, history, and even an update on comings and goings at the International Space Station.

Then the group trooped outside to the patio, where Fiedor used a light pointer to orient the viewers to stars and constellations as the Milky Way grew brighter

across the night sky.

Some configurations were familiar, like the Big Dipper. Others, like Pegasus, took a little coaching: “See the great square – there’s the horse, but it’s upside down where we see it here.”

Participants also took turns peering into a reflecting telescope to view various stars and star clusters – even the Andromeda Galaxy, our own galaxy’s nearest neighbor.

Fiedor noted Andromeda is some 2.5 million light years away – meaning the light seen now from it dates back to the start of the modern ice ages on Earth.

“You look back in time when you look at the sky,” he said. “Telescopes are really timescopes.”

For more information on the Fossil Beds and the National Parks Service’s Night Skies programs, visit the www.nps.gov/joda and click on Explore Nature.



Contributed photo/Scotta Callister

National Parks Service retiree John Fiedor, a Dayville resident, hosted the star party at the Thomas Condon Visitor Center of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

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2. Each game is numbered. Clip the original entry blank and write, in numerical order, the advertiser's name and the team you think will win the game listed in the ad.
3. Game No. 15 will be the tiebreaker every week. Simply write in what you think the final score will be for each team. When the tiebreaker is necessary to determine a winner, the closest point spread will be the deciding factor.
4. Only one entry per person permitted — but all members of the family may enter provided they use the original entry blank. Must be 10 years old to enter. Entries must be brought to the Blue Mountain Eagle in John Day no later than 5 P.M. FRIDAY. Or you can mail your entry to: Football Editor, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845 but make sure it is postmarked no later than Friday and received by the Blue Mountain Eagle by noon Monday. Or you can fax your original entry to (541) 575-1244, Attn: Football Editor.
5. Employees of the Blue Mountain Eagle or members of their immediate families are not eligible for prize money.
6. Winners will be announced in the Wednesday paper following the games. \$50 will be awarded to the winner. In case of a tie, the prize will be split. Contest ends in 13 weeks.
7. All decisions of the Judge will be final.

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Jason Dole & Randy Horner
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Good luck next week!

Have fun & good luck!