

Wolf biologist questions self-defense wolf killing

By Eric Mortenson
EO Media Group

A retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist with 30 years experience said it is unlikely a wolf shot by an Oregon elk hunter was attacking the man.

Carter Niemeyer, who lives in Boise and oversaw or consulted on wolf recovery work throughout the West, also said descriptions of the bullet trajectory — in one shoulder and out the other — raise doubt about the hunter's account that the wolf was running at him when he fired.

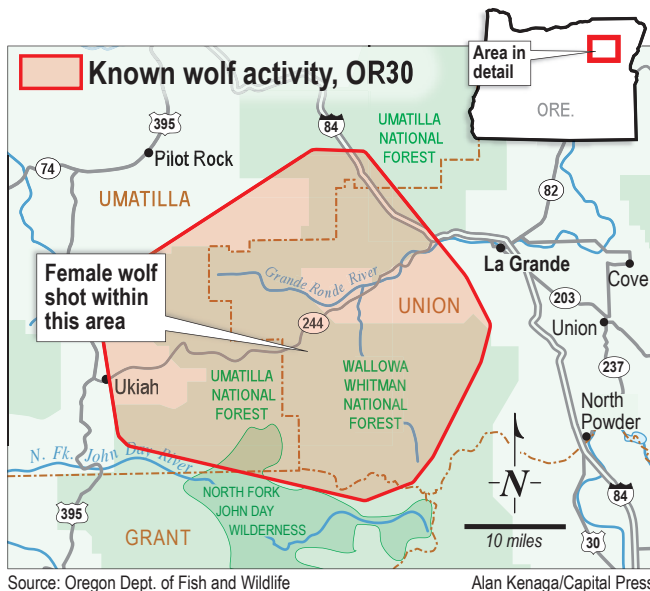
"That's a broadside shot, not a running-at-you shot," Niemeyer said. "If the bullet path is through one side and out the other, it indicates to me an animal could have been standing, not moving, and the shot was well placed."

A bullet that hit the wolf as it was running forward most likely would have exited out the hips or rear end, Niemeyer said. He acknowledged the bullet or fragments could have deflected off bone, but said a forensic exam would have to explain that. Michelle Dennehy, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spokesman, said the agency did not request a necropsy because the cause of death — gunshot — was known.

Niemeyer said the hunter's account of taking a "snap shot into a ball of fur" is unlikely.

"I have to tell you I doubt the story," he said.

Niemeyer, 70, said he's hunted predators for 52 years as a government hunter and a taxidermist, and has dealt with fellow sportsmen and



shooters for decades.

"I've heard every story," he said. "This story is very suspect to me."

The elk hunter, Brian Scott, 38, of Clackamas told Oregon State Police that the wolf ran straight at him. Scott told police he screamed, took quick aim and fired his 30.06 rifle once. Scott said he saw nothing but fur in the rifle's scope as the wolf ran at him, according to published reports.

In an interview with outdoor writer Bill Monroe of The Oregonian/OregonLive, Scott said he was terrified.

"People envision this jerk hunter out to kill anything, but that's not me," he told Monroe. "It frustrates me they don't understand. I'm a meat hunter. I was looking for a spike elk. This wasn't exciting. It ruined my hunt."

Scott told Monroe he didn't think he had time to fire a warning shot. He could not explain the bullet's path,

which entered the wolf's right shoulder and exited the left, other than perhaps the wolf turned at the last instant or the bullet deflected.

Niemeyer, the retired wildlife biologist, said wolves will "turn around and take off" when they realize they're near a human. Niemeyer said he had "many, many close encounters with wolves" while doing trapping, collaring and other field work for USFWS in Idaho, Oregon and elsewhere. He said wolves sometimes ran at him and approached within 6 to 8 feet before veering away.

Wolves are potentially dangerous, he said, "but all my experience tells me it would be fearful of a human."

People in such situations should stand up if they are concealed, show themselves, and yell or throw things, Niemeyer said. Hunters could fire a shot into the ground or into a tree and "scare the hell

out of them," he said.

"That would have been the first logical thing to do," he said. "The gunshot and a yell from a human would turn every wolf I've ever known inside out trying to get away."

He also suggested people venturing into the woods should carry bear repellent spray, which certainly would also deter wolves, cougars or coyotes.

"If everyone shoots everything they're afraid of, wow, that's not a good thing," he said.

Niemeyer acknowledged his reaction is based on years of experience with wolves.

"People say, 'That's easy for you to say, Carter, you worked with wolves for 30 years and you're familiar with their behavior,'" he said.

The shooting happened Oct. 27 in ODFW's Starkey Wildlife Management Unit west of La Grande, in Northeast Oregon.

Scott, the hunter, told police he was hunting and had intermittently seen what he thought might be coyotes. At one point, two of them circled off to the side while a third ran at him. Scott said he shot that one and the others ran away.

Scott went back to his hunting camp and told companions what had happened. They returned to the shooting scene and concluded the dead animal was a wolf. The hunter then notified state police and ODFW, which investigated.

Police later found a shell casing 27 yards from the wolf carcass. The Union County district attorney's office reviewed the case and chose not to file charges.

The Portland-based conservation group Oregon Wild raised questions about the incident. Rob Klavins, Oregon Wild's field representative in Northeast Oregon, said he's seen wolves in the wild several times and backed away without trouble or harm. Even the late OR-4, the fearsome breeding male of the infamous Imnaha Pack in Wallowa County, retreated and barked when it encountered Klavins and a hiking party.

"This (hunter) may have felt fear, but since wolves returned to Oregon, no one has so much as been licked by a wolf, and that's still true today," Klavins said.

"What has changed is we now have wolves on the landscape, 10 years ago we didn't," Klavins said. "Especially in the fall (hunting season), armed people are going to be out encountering wolves."

Oregon Wild believes poachers have killed several Oregon wolves, and USFWS on Nov. 6 offered a \$5,000 reward for information about a collared wolf designated OR-25 that was found dead Oct. 29 in South Central Oregon.

Klavins said wolf shooters might now use a "self-defense" claim as a "free pass to poaching."

Missing elk hunter located

Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue personnel located a missing elk hunter early Sunday morning after an all-night search in the mountains southeast of Dale.

John Day dispatch received a cellphone call at about 8:38 p.m. on Saturday reporting a hunter who had not come out on a road as planned.

Deputy Brandon Hutchison and search and rescue volunteers responded to the Howard Creek area, off Forest Service Road 10 about 11 miles from Dale, and searched the area through a snowy night.

Leeroy Needham, 83, was located next to a warming fire at about 4 a.m.

Search and rescue personnel sheltered in place while waiting for daylight. Needham walked out and was reunited with his family and his hunting party several hours later.

Thank you, Veterans!

We honor the men and women who serve and protect the values of our nation.

Grant County Chamber of Commerce
301 W. Main St., John Day, OR 97845
541-575-0547 | gcoregonlive.com

VETERANS DAY

Honoring All Who Served

Thank you, for serving our country and protecting our freedoms.

John Day Elks Lodge #1824
140 NE Dayton St., John Day
541-575-1824

Thank You!

The Blue Mountain Healthcare Foundation would like to thank the following individuals and businesses who donated items to this year's Annual Meeting, Dinner and Auction held October 21st at the John Day Elks Lodge.

The generosity of our community is amazing and we are truly grateful for each and every one of you who supported such a great cause! Funds raised are being used for upgrades at the Blue Mountain Care Center.

- 1188 Brewing Company
- Aaron & Emily Lieuallen
- Adoni's Pine Massage
- Ansel & Judy Krutsinger
- Anthony Lakes Resort
- Better Blooms
- Blue Mountain Care Center
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- Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic
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Housing Rehabilitation Program - Get Your Name In!

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, Inc. is
TAKING NAMES FOR THE HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM.
To qualify you must:

- Own or be buying your home, with a value less than \$175,000.
- If over 60 years of age, have a net worth under \$40,000, not including your home.
- If under 60 years of age, have a net worth under \$20,000, not including your home.
- Have adequate collateral to secure the amount you will be borrowing.
- Live within Baker, Grant, Union or Wallowa counties.
- Have a yearly income that is less than the amounts shown below.

Household Size	Maximum Income By County			
	Baker	Grant	Union	Wallowa
1	\$29,900	\$29,900	\$29,900	\$30,800
2	\$34,150	\$34,150	\$34,150	\$35,200
3	\$38,400	\$38,400	\$38,400	\$39,600
4	\$42,650	\$42,650	\$42,650	\$44,000
5	\$46,100	\$46,100	\$46,100	\$47,550
6	\$49,500	\$49,500	\$49,500	\$51,050

6) Have sufficient insurance to cover the loan amount. Meet other requirements of the program.

The Housing Rehab Program will provide a zero percent interest deferred payment loan up to \$24,999. Typical repairs include plumbing, electrical, roofs, doors, windows, siding, painting, foundations, and heating systems, etc. The loan is repaid when the property is sold, upon death of the last surviving borrower, when you no longer reside at the home, or a change of ownership.

If you are interested in this program please complete the bottom of this page and return it to Community Connection, 2802 Adams Ave, La Grande, OR 97850. Fax 541-963-3187

There is no obligation and all information is strictly confidential. To learn more call (541) 963-3186 or 1-800-838-3186 or visit www.ccnco.org (click Weatherization/Housing Rehab)

Name _____ Telephone # _____

Address _____

Was your home built before 1978? Yes _____ or No _____ Amount owed on home \$ _____

Number of people living in your home _____ Property's Real Market Value _____ Date _____

Gross household income for all members \$ _____ Your Age: Over 60 _____ Under 60 _____

Please check the items below that need repair or improvements:

<input type="checkbox"/> Electrical	<input type="checkbox"/> Porches/Steps	<input type="checkbox"/> Handicap Access
<input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing	<input type="checkbox"/> Windows/Doors	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enough Bedrooms
<input type="checkbox"/> Roof	<input type="checkbox"/> Sagging Floors	<input type="checkbox"/> Septic/Sewer
<input type="checkbox"/> Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/> Heating System	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Lines & Wells
<input type="checkbox"/> Siding/Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Insulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Dry Rot Repair	<input type="checkbox"/> Hot Water Heaters	