

Delisting gray wolf long overdue

Let's take stock of the progress of the gray wolf's recovery in the Lower 48 states, shall we?

As it currently stands, upwards of 6,000 gray wolves have taken up residence in states ranging from California, Oregon and Washington state on the West Coast across the northern continental U.S. to Michigan. That's in addition to about 55,000 wolves that live across the border in Canada.

In every state, the population estimates are just that: Wildlife managers offer only a minimum population estimate because they don't really know where all of the wolves are. They are popping up all over the place.

In Oregon and Washington, they are now in the Cascade Range and heading farther west and south.

OR-7, the wolf that took off from northeastern Oregon and headed down to California before returning to southern Oregon, found a female mate that wildlife managers didn't even know about and formed a new pack.

Many of those wolves are descendants of 66 from Canada that were reintroduced in Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho in the 1990s. Others followed their noses into the U.S. from Canada.

The wolves have caused massive problems for ranchers, who have lost sheep, cattle and working dogs to

the predators while wildlife managers were forced to stand by. Because the wolves are protected, only after livestock was repeatedly attacked were managers able to do anything other than tell ranchers about non-lethal tactics such as fencing with flags on it and hiring range riders.

If anyone has needed protection, it's been ranchers.

One thing is clear: The wolf population is thriving in the U.S. — and it will continue to thrive.

Under the federal Endangered Species Act, wolves are treated as though they are frail little creatures that cannot survive without protection.

In point of fact, the wolves are multiplying and spreading across the countryside in all directions. At this point, they need no protection from anyone.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has now proposed taking the gray wolf off the endangered species list.

All we can say is it's about time. Wolves should be managed the way any other game animal is managed.

The reintroduction of gray wolves can be described as many things, but it has accomplished its goals. Wolves are back. They are thriving. They need no special protections.

Those are the facts. It's long past time to take them off the endangered species list.



GUEST COMMENT

Memorial Day reminds us of ideals

Every year, I'm struck by the powerful — and often, opposing — emotions that Memorial Day stirs.

We celebrate our freedoms, and yet, we mourn the cost that they required. We look ahead to a bright future, while we remember the trials and challenges of the past. We honor those who served, but we grieve their loss.

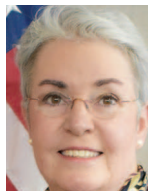
Celebration, and sadness. Gratitude, and remorse. Hope, and helplessness. Memorial Day is unique in evoking such a broad spectrum of feeling, because it is this holiday that speaks most keenly to our highest ideals, as well as the steep price we are willing to pay for them.

Sadly, it is also a day that, for many, has lost its significance. President George W. Bush would often tell the story of asking schoolchildren what the meaning of Memorial Day is, only to have them respond, "That's the day the pool opens!"

For many Oregonians, Memorial Day is primarily the unofficial start of the summer recreation season, a chance to enjoy our amazing forests and beaches, rivers and lakes and mountain trails.

We should enjoy all that our state has to offer, but we should also keep in mind the words of another president, John F. Kennedy: "A nation reveals itself not only by the citizens it produces but also by the citizens it honors, the citizens it remembers."

We must remember the fallen because the courage, the strength, the selflessness and the sacrifice of each one of these brave warriors is the ideal to which we all



Kelly Fitzpatrick

should aspire.

On this Memorial Day, I think of Bob Maxwell, a great American and Oregonian whom we lost earlier this month. Bob was a World War II combat

soldier, and until his death, the only Medal of Honor recipient still living in our state. While he did not die fighting for our country, he fearlessly faced death in a way few Americans ever have.

He earned that medal — the U.S. military's highest decoration for valor — for the courage he showed during a battle in September 1944, when a live German hand grenade was tossed in the midst of his squad. Without a second thought, he hurled himself upon it, shielding his comrades from the blast with nothing but a blanket and his unprotected body.

Maxwell cheated death that day, though he carried shrapnel in his body for the rest of his life. It was a life he dedicated in humble service to the veteran community, and to the memories of his brothers in arms, who never got the chance to come home.

We must never forget the true cost of war. It is a price paid not in dollars and cents, but with the blood of our heroes. They were nothing less than the best America had to offer, those who answered the call when their nation needed them, who paid the ultimate price to protect us and our way of life.

The stories of their sacrifice are forever woven into the fabric of our nation and its history. They

gave their lives on the foreign soils of Europe, the black sands of the South Pacific, the frozen reaches of Korea, in the sweltering jungles of Vietnam, the scorching deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq and in many other places across the globe.

The United States lost more than 400,000 of its sons and daughters in World War II — 2,826 from Oregon. In Korea, 54,246 American service members gave their lives (287 Oregonians), and in Vietnam, 58,209 (791 from our state).

In Iraq and Afghanistan, we lost 6,713 American service members — 142 Oregonians. Each one of their names is etched on slabs of granite that form the heart of the Afghan/Iraqi Freedom Memorial, located just a few steps from the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs office building. Each one of their names is read aloud each year at our Memorial Day ceremony, as we seek to honor and remember their sacrifice.

Each one represents the loss of a bright and shining light in the lives of their families, a pain that they feel each and every day — not just on Memorial Day. We remember and honor their sacrifice as well. They, too, paid a great price for the freedoms we now enjoy.

On behalf of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, I urge all Oregonians to take a moment this Memorial Day, to remember our fallen heroes who gave their lives in service to our nation, and say, "Thank you."

Kelly Fitzpatrick is a U.S. Army veteran and the director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.



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• Oregon Legislative Information — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

Not everyone hates snakes

To the Editor:

I read the article, "Spring is rattlesnake hunting time" in the Eagle (May 8). I am troubled by the thought of Bob Steinbruck finding 500 snakes in the past year. I want to know: Is he implying that he killed all those snakes? He describes the different ways of killing snakes. His treatment of rattlesnakes is the very mindset that has led to man-caused species extinctions. I grew up here in Grant County killing every rattlesnake I saw; however, after being bitten by one, I became intensely interested in them and photographed them from here to Latin America. I do not expect everyone to have the deep interest in rattlesnakes that I have, but at the very least, no one should be ignorant about their valid role in nature.

Steinbruck did not have some facts straight. It was stated that snakes shed their skins once a year including the rattle. Both points are wrong. Snakes can shed as many as four times a year depending upon the length of the season, and the age and growth rate of the specimen. The rattles do not shed, but with each shedding the snake gains a new segment of rattle. He goes on to say that the western diamondback rattlesnake is found in Arizona and Texas. That is so, but it is found in at least five more states. He says the timber rattlesnake is only found east of the Mississippi. They occur farther west of the Mississippi, for the only

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ones I have ever found and photographed were in east Texas.

I have to say that I probably haven't found 500 rattlesnakes in my life, so I admire Steinbruck's ability to find them. I agree that it makes sense to control rattlesnakes in your home environment. But in their natural home environment be alert, and if you fear rattlesnakes, don't go where they live and don't live where they belong. All living things interact to create a balance in nature — with the possible exception of man. All snakes, including rattlers, are a part of that balance.

Terry Steele
Ritter

Grant County officers go above and beyond

To the Editor:

You know that terrible sinking in your stomach when you lose your wallet? I had driven from Sisters to an Episcopal clergy gathering in Cove on May 6. Unpacking the car, where was my backpack? My iPad? My wallet? I remembered that beautiful little park with restrooms in Dayville. That's where it must be. If it still was. No point driving back to look. That was three hours ago.

But — it was Dayville. Central Oregon. Maybe we aren't all strangers who do not care. Or even if strangers, we can care about each other anyway. I'd turn in a lost wallet. Wouldn't you?

I called Grant County Sheriff's Office. "I think I left my backpack in the restroom." And the answer, "We have a backpack."

Oregon State Police Sgt. Tom Hutchison later confirmed it was mine. I had spent a couple hours before reaching him refiguring my side trip to Yakima to divert through Dayville and how much I needed to borrow to fill my tank. But no, he had spent that time figuring out how to deliver it.

In the end, he took it to Baker City. From there Trooper McCray took it to Ascension Camp in Cove. The clergy interrupted our meeting to thank Trooper McCray and all his colleagues for their service.

I take this opportunity to commend Sgt. Hutchison, Trooper McCray, the Pecks who found the backpack and all of us who still remember that we are connected to one another.

The Rev. Willa M. Goodfellow
Sisters

Thoughts of the upcoming primary

To the Editor:

I don't know why, but as I read the great piece in the paper about the savagery of a wolf pack coming after some lone critter, the thought of the upcoming primary kept coming to mind.

Richie Colbeth
John Day



Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

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1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including online access)

Grant County\$45
 Everywhere else in U.S.....\$57

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER

send address changes to:
 Blue Mountain Eagle
 195 N. Canyon Blvd.
 John Day, OR 97845-1187
 USPS 226-340

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