

ODF ends fire season

Blue Mountain Eagle

Recent cool temperatures and precipitation have brought an end to the 2019 fire season for Oregon Department of Forestry's Central Oregon District.

Fire season was officially terminated Sept. 26, according to a press release. Wildland fuels across the district do not pose a significant risk of rapid fire growth, but weather and fuel conditions during the

fall can change quickly. The public is reminded to follow all local burning restrictions to reduce the risk of escaped debris burns.

Landowners who plan to burn industrial logging slash, fuel reduction or defensible space materials or other debris from forest activities should contact their local ODF Office to obtain a burn permit. Contact local fire departments for information regarding yard debris and burn barrels.

Fires should never be left unattended. A shovel and water source on site are recommended when burning, even small piles. Landowners may be liable for fires that escape.

Firefighters within the Central Oregon District responded to 126 fires across the 2.3 million protected acres, burning just over 230 acres year-to-date. The 10-year average for acres burned within the district is over 8,000 acres annu-

ally. The small number of acres burned in 2019 can be attributed to the quick, coordinated response of firefighting resources, wet thunderstorms and a more moderate fire season across the region allowing more resources to be available for initial attack and extended attack for suppression efforts. Human ignitions accounted for 49 fires, with 77 fires attributed to lightning.

For more information, visit odfcentraloregon.com.



Contributed photo

Handgun hunting is challenging but a useful skill.

SHOOTING THE BREEZE Handgun hunting

Handgun hunting is a purely American sport at its roots. Largely this is because handgun ownership is not permitted in most other places in the world. While it may seem daunting to limit oneself to such close distances, stalking within handgun range of your game can be a very rewarding exercise.

Mastering the art of marksmanship with a handgun is no small feat. The late Jack O'Connor, although arguably one of the most skilled of riflemen, was a self-admittedly poor pistol shot. Inversely, most good pistoleros are also excellent riflemen. So what's the deal?

In short, it's been my experience that a pistol betrays the mistakes you make as a rifle shooter — in many cases, it even magnifies them. Things you can get away with on a long gun are huge no-no's with a handgun. Consistent grip, sight picture and trigger squeeze are even more important if you wish to hit your targets. One should start out at close range with a .22 handgun to practice fundamentals and develop their skills. As you practice, your groups will shrink, and your effective range will increase. Once you've mastered a .22, you may desire more power. Although some prefer a .41 or .44, a great next step is the .357 Magnum.

Now before you choose a rail with which to run me out of town upon, allow me to make a case. The .357 is a classic, powerful, versatile load useful for both hunting and self-defense. Handguns thusly chambered can also use the more even tempered



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range from 110 to 180 grains. And for use against those pesky buzzing reptiles CCI manufactures a lethal shotshell load, turning your .357 into a close range, small-bore shotgun.

I'm sure all of my readers are wise enough to wear proper hearing protection whenever they shoot, but it is even more prudent to do so with a .357. If there is one fly in the ointment concerning a .357, it is that exceedingly concussive muzzle blast. Tinnitus is no joke, I can truly tell you.

Over the years I've taken small game like squirrels and rabbits, raccoons and skunks and a handful of badgers with various handguns. Just recently I took my first coyote with a 25-yard off-hand shot with my Ruger .357 as you can see in the accompanying graphic. These experiences have my wheels turning about possibly trying for bigger game with a pistol.

If you're up for a challenge or wishing to hone your skills as a pistolero, give handgun hunting a try. It's a useful skill in any case, and it may just help you fill the freezer someday!

Have you ever hunted with a handgun? Any tips to share? Write us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a deep love for handloading, hunting and shooting.

Culvert removal, bridge construction underway

Blue Mountain Eagle

Work is underway on a project to replace a failing culvert with a bridge on Forest Service Road 5200, the Blue Mountains Scenic Byway, 10 miles north of Granite. The result will be a safer, more reliable road for forest travelers and improved passage for native fish, according to a press release.

The current culvert carries Trail Creek, a tributary of the North Fork John Day River, underneath the highway, and is at the end of its service life. By constructing a concrete bridge to replace the culvert, the road will be kept in operating condition and opening up a more natural stream channel will make the passage easier for native fish found within the watershed.

A 500-foot bypass road is currently being built to allow the culvert to be removed while keeping one lane of the road open through the winter. Travelers should use caution in the area, be alert for construction workers and prepare for possible delays. The project is expected to continue through mid-November.

For more information, call 541-523-6391.

ODFW seeks comment on fish passage exemptions for several Silvies River tributary streams in Grant County

Blue Mountain Eagle

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife seeks public comment on a request to exempt fish passage requirements on four tributary streams to Silvies River in Grant County.

Silvies Valley Ranch has requested exemptions to providing fish passage on four streams: Paine Creek, Jack Andy Creek, Flat Creek and Jump Creek, according to a press release.

The exemption requests are being filed in connection with a Remedial Action Plan that Silvies Valley Ranch has completed with the Oregon

Department of State Lands and ODFW. The enforcement action required the ranch to develop a remedial action plan that would address fish passage in waters containing or historically containing native migratory fish, and address unpermitted wetland impacts through mitigation.

Silvies Valley Ranch and the state of Oregon have identified four streams as candidates for fish passage exemptions due to the lack of appreciable benefit if fish passage were restored.

Fish passage exemptions are being sought based on a 10-year period where artificial beaver dams were con-

structed by Silvies Valley Ranch personnel. A total of 160 dams have been constructed, which include Paine Creek (26), Jack Andy Creek (33), Flat Creek (91) and Jump Creek (10). All are presently proposed for fish passage exemptions.

These four creeks were identified as streams that historically contained native migratory fish, but currently do not support redband trout or other native migratory fish populations. Silvies Valley Ranch is pursuing 160 fish passage exemptions at these sites, and ODFW is currently working through the exemption process and plans to

have that process reviewed and discussed at the Fish Passage Task Force Meeting on Oct. 18 in Salem.

Members of the public have until Oct. 14 to submit written comments on the proposed plans. Both fish passage exemption applications and the department's benefit analyses are available at dfw.state.or.us/fish/passage.

Members of the public can send written comments to or request additional information from Gregg Smith, ODFW fish passage coordinator, 4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE, Salem, OR 97302, gregg.m.smith@state.or.us, 503-947-6217.

Woodpecker study closure area now open

Blue Mountain Eagle

Malheur National Forest officials announced this week that the field portion of the woodpecker research in

the Canyon Creek Complex fire salvage area is complete and the area is open to the public.

In 2016, the Rocky Mountain Research Station

initiated a four-year study in the Canyon Creek Complex fire salvage area. The results of the study will be utilized to help shape management practices by identifying post-fire salvage harvest prescriptions that allow benefits to the economy while minimizing impacts to wildlife.

The field work for the study was completed this last week. The area that had been closed since 2016 is open to the public once more.

For more information on the woodpecker study or questions about the Malheur National Forest, visit fs.usda.gov/malheur or call 541-575-3000.

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Author's Presentation: Karen Spears Zacharias: Thursday, October 10, 5:30 - 7:30 PM. Free public event! Learn about the true crime story Karen is currently working on & more.

Beginning Photography Class: October 9, 10, and 11, from 4:30 - 6:30 PM. All skill levels welcome!

Chalk Fun: Thursday, October 15, from 6:00 - 8:00 PM. Chalk couture class, using chalk paste and reusable silk transfer onto chalkboard surface.

Basic Drawing Class: Ongoing, Wednesdays through November 6, at 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM.

Arts After School: Ongoing, Mon-Thurs 3:30-5:45 PM, and Fri 8:00 AM-5:45 PM; follows school calendar.

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