

Hermiston HERALD OPINION & READER'S FORUM

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A4

OUR VIEW

Active classes inspire students for a world that needs them

Not a week goes by that we are not impressed by our local students and educators. Last week was no exception. We visited Hermiston High School, and, yet again, we met teenagers and teachers who wowed us.

This time, we dropped into a class where students were studying to be medical assistants. An internship class, it gave students opportunities to study. Also, it sent these young people out to actual workplaces, where they could apply what they learn.

We met a classroom of youngsters who were taking their first steps into the world of work. Four of them had even

taken an exam to be licensed phlebotomists, which they planned to become while pursuing careers in medicine.

We look on with excitement. These students are preparing themselves for a world that is in desperate need. Their newly learned skills will serve us well.

In addition, we express our gratitude to the educators who make their studies possible. While visiting the internship class, we met up with a teacher who seemed very invested in her students. She was so devoted to her work that she allowed herself to be a practice dummy for her students. She put out her arm, and she let her students prick

her with needles and draw her blood. This was their practice.

She joked about the bruises caused by such practice, but she did not seem to mind much. She certainly did not mind enough to stop her students from doing this.

Besides this one teacher, there likely are other people who made this work possible — administrators and so on, who created and allowed this class.

Similar work is being done with other programs at Hermiston High and other area schools, where students are engaged and active in their education. We hope it continues.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald
Hermiston High School senior Marcos Preciado, 17, disposes of a vial of blood Friday, Jan. 28, 2022

THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

Rooting for the underdog

This year, I want to see a white-headed woodpecker.

This medium-sized woodpecker is a handsome bird, with a fully black body and striking white head, and the males sport a red nape patch. They have been recorded in Umatilla County, but it is one of those species that is rare enough that local birders get excited when a sighting is reported. The Pendleton Bird Club keeps a running list of birds reported by their members each year, and in 2021 there were 268 species recorded in the county. But no white-headed woodpeckers.

Why? It's been reported in the past, and it uses ponderosa pine forests which are abundant on the Umatilla National Forest. So why is it so hard to see one?

As with a lot of wildlife questions, it comes down to habitat. The preferred habitat is not just pine forests, but a certain type of ponderosa pine forest that is in short supply due to current management practices.

These birds build nest cavities close to the ground in large dead trees (average 26 inches in diameter) and feed heavily on ponderosa pine seed — meaning they require stands of large mature or old growth ponderosa pine. These are economically valuable trees, and past logging has made them rare on private timberland and not very abundant on the National Forest. That's one of the reasons that there has been a general prohibition on logging large ponderosa pine on National Forests in the Blues since the 1990s. These old growth forests are much less common than they were before European settlement, with all sorts of effects on wildlife species that use this habitat.



Bill Aney

More than just large pine trees, the white-headed woodpecker prefers open stands. Forest inventory records from the early 1900s commonly described pine stands so open that one could easily drive a horse and buggy through the forest. Try that nowadays and you'd soon get bogged down in dense growth or high-centered on logs. Our century-long war on wildfire coupled with timber management practices has left an unnaturally dense understory.

Why do these woodpeckers prefer open habitat? One theory is that areas with undergrowth provide cover for squirrels that prey on woodpecker nests. An open forest floor makes squirrels more vulnerable to their own predators (hawks, owls, cats, coyotes) and so less able to search and destroy white-headed woodpecker nests. See, it's complicated.

Complicated ecosystem management

principles can sometimes be boiled down to a few guidelines — like rooting for the underdog, following nature's lead, and keeping all the pieces. To root for the underdog in this case means paying special attention to species that are rare or declining in numbers, like the white-headed woodpecker.

Following nature's lead means understanding how natural processes, like fire, create habitat. It is easy to visualize how frequent low intensity fire can create and maintain open stands of large diameter ponderosa pine. Happily, this is the type of habitat that management can help create by heavily thinning out smaller diameter trees, leaving the big old trees and applying fire.

So this spring I have another reason to head into the Blues, as if hunting turkeys, searching for morels, or getting in an early season camping trip weren't reason enough for getting out of town. I'll have to fine tune my search image for the right habitat of open stands of large pine, but I can already think of a few places that fit that description. Maybe, just maybe, fortune will smile on me and I'll spot a white-headed woodpecker.

Wish me luck.

Bill Aney is a forester and wildlife biologist living in Pendleton and loving the Blue Mountains.

OTHER VIEWS

All Oregonians deserve to vote

Imagine living in a society where only those with certain birthrights make decisions for the rest of us. Your taxes, criminal justice policy, land use actions, decisions about your children's education — you would have no formal power over such decisions.

Seems wrong, right? But that's the very system we are allowing to perpetuate under Oregon's citizen-only voting structure. All Oregonians should work together toward Oregonian suffrage — a system in which adults who live in Oregon can vote in Oregon elections, including voters who are not U.S. citizens.

The Oregon Constitution arguably bars non-U.S. citizens from voting. This disenfranchises many of us. And it wasn't always this way. In fact, it's inconsistent with some of the most positive aspects of our often-troubled heritage as a state. In 1848, Congress passed an organic act for the Oregon Territory that allowed noncitizens to vote. It wasn't until the early 20th century, on a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, that Oregon undid noncitizen suffrage and sought to limit voting rights to only U.S. citizens.

In other words, we can change. And we should. All it takes is a constitutional amend-

ment. We should change our state constitution because it's right for our democracy and right for our community. Disenfranchising people based on citizenship is wrong under any theory of tax fairness, representative democracy or equality.

We're behind. Communities across the country have committed to extending the franchise beyond U.S. citizens. Cities in Maryland, Vermont, California and New York have changed their city charters to allow noncitizen residents to vote in local elections.

Despite disputes over these initiatives elsewhere, universal suffrage in Oregon shouldn't be partisan. While Hispanic voters have tended to support the Democratic Party historically, in the last presidential election, areas with high populations of Hispanic and Asian-American voters turned out in higher numbers and shifted to the right. A recent Wall Street Journal poll shows Hispanic voters evenly split between the parties. Reducing the question to prejudiced hypotheses about how people of a particular ethnicity might vote cheapens our republican form of government. Guaranteeing the right to vote isn't a Democratic or Republican value, but an American one.

We need to truly welcome people who choose to move to Bend and Oregon, enfran-

chise them and ensure they possess the same power to make decisions about our community and our future as every other voter.

It shouldn't matter where they were born or their citizenship status. It shouldn't matter whether you moved here from California or France. Representative democracy is part of ensuring our community evolves and remains an exceptional place to live.

Part of encouraging immigrants to live in Bend and Oregon means ensuring that when they get here they're part of the democratic process. And many "immigrants" have lived here longer than the 80,000 or so U.S. citizens who have moved to Bend since 1990.

If our republic is truly the land of the free and we are serious about upholding equal justice as a foundational value of our government, let's show it.

Hold our representatives to the promises they make about the public being involved in governmental decisions. Demand that when they say Oregon should be welcoming and equitable for all, they mean that for everyone, including all the people paying taxes, starting businesses and working for the future of our state and city.

Anthony Broadman is a Bend city councilor. The opinions expressed are his own.



Anthony Broadman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Volunteers help make holidays special for children

Despite a global pandemic, residents of Umatilla and Morrow counties shared the true meaning of Christmas with children in need this past holiday season.

Generosity throughout our area resulted in 3,499 shoebox gifts collected at curbside drop-off locations for the Samaritan's Purse project Operation Christmas Child. Across the U.S., the project collected 9,127,591 such gifts in 2021. Combined with those collected from partnering countries in 2021, the ministry is now sending more than 10 million shoebox gifts to children worldwide.

Through shoeboxes — packed with fun toys, school supplies and hygiene items — volunteers from Umatilla and Morrow counties brought joy to children in need around the world. Each gift-filled shoebox is a tangible expression of God's love, and it is often the first gift these children have ever received. Through the continued generosity of donors since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 188 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 160 countries and territories.

Across our nation, shoebox packers shop for shoebox gift deals year round, and many serve at a deeper level. Information about ways Eastern Oregon participants can get involved year round can also be found at samaritanpurse.org/occ.

These simple gifts, packed with love, send a message to children worldwide that they are loved and not forgotten.

I would like to thank Tammy Malgesini and the East Oregonian for helping us get the word out about this great project last fall, and of course each individual and family that donated.

Barb Wattenburger
Hermiston

Back our blue

There has to be millions of people in America like me whose hearts are broken for our police. You can't turn on the news today without hearing of the murder of another policeman.

However, when it comes to a show of love for law enforcement, our big cities seem to have rigor mortis. In my opinion that leaves it up to little town America to show them how to make a very loud noise. Nobody in the world can create a blood-curdling scream like us "unsophisticated" in "fly over" town, USA. I think we can show the big city how it is done.

Yesterday I talked to Charles Byram, chief of the Pendleton Police Department, about some kind of demonstration, and he said he was for it as long as we had the proper authorizations and it was lawful and respectable. Pendleton has the ability to be the first "fly over" town to light a conflagration of little towns all over America to laud our self-sacrificing policemen.

Sure, there are bad policemen, but every demographic has its degenerates. We need to stand up for law enforcement in a very loud way. I am not sure how to do that, but someone out there must have the expertise and network capabilities to create a scenario that will forcefully grab nationwide attention that will become viral in every single hick town in America.

We are Americans, and nobody can draw attention like we can. Let's start a burgeoning scream all over this country for our policemen.

Sharolyn Gemmill
Pendleton

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