

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Request to ban fireworks at Lake is misunderstood

It is interesting that a request made to disallow fireworks at Vernonia Lake during Jamboree has become, in some people's minds, an effort to eliminate all fireworks in Vernonia. Others, including The INDEPENDENT's outdoor columnist Dale Webb, think it is unimportant because there are no endangered species at the lake at night.

That particular notion always makes me want to ask: "Do you want to wait until more species are endangered?" So far as before and after observations are concerned, the wood duck babies that hatched shortly before Jamboree have not been seen since then and no, they weren't old enough to fly. The green herons were also gone the next day.

All that was asked of the Vernonia City Council, was that they ban fireworks at Vernonia Lake. That is a very small consideration on behalf of the wildlife that share that small body of water with us.

Children are worth a little extra caution by drivers

School will soon be underway, bringing many more children along Bridge Street in Vernonia and Main Street in Banks.

Because children act like children, they will sometimes dart out between cars when they shouldn't. They may also run into a cross walk without looking, or do something else equally dangerous – especially when they are busy talking with friends.

Parents will be dropping many of the students off at their schools, too, resulting in temporarily congested school zones. Please be patient and plan on taking a little more time to drive through school zones.

CORRECTIONS

The photo on page 10 of The INDEPENDENT issue of August 18, 2005, was incorrectly identified. The photo was of Dustin Talbot. A photo on page 11 that was identified as Jess Lucas was also incorrect. We do not have the name of the young fisherman. We regret the errors.

SCHOOL



STARTS

SLOW DOWN

Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



Well, it is time to tackle a couple of contentious issues. First let's take a look at the fireworks debate going around town. We have been having fireworks here in Vernonia for as long as I can remember. I'm not sure if the fact of having fireworks is the issue or the location, I believe it has more to do with the latter. Vernonia Lake is a wildlife area, ducks, shore birds and all the things that come with water. I can understand the concern about the local wildlife, yes the fireworks probably does disturb them, some more than others. But, there are no endangered species present at the lake at night when the fireworks display is launched. Most of the ducks at the lake are either domesticated or very accustomed to human activity. So fireworks while probably not preferred by the wildlife at the lake, is just another extension of human disturbance. I keep hearing that the alternative location for the fireworks is at the school and shot over the sewer lagoons. Well that is not an option during the Jamboree, because the softball players are camped in the area needed to shoot the fireworks. Regardless, whether or not the area is available we need to take a closer look at the school location. Is there not wildlife using the sewage ponds? The answer is yes there is, just about the same mix of wildlife that

is at the lake, but there is a difference. The wildlife that is using the sewer lagoons is far less tolerant of human disturbance; they have selected this location because there is less human presence. So shooting fireworks at this location may actually be more disturbing than the Vernonia Lake location. The question we must ask ourselves is do we want to have fireworks and disturb the wildlife and domestic animals? If the answer is yes, then we should examine the locations fairly, we might be surprised by the answers to our questions. In my opinion, the lake location is no more harmful than the school location. It would be fair to survey the wildlife prior to and after the fireworks to determine the disturbance to the wildlife so we are more informed of the results of our actions.

The second issue that is getting a lot of press lately is the new proposal by ODF&W to reduce the cougar population in the state of Oregon. We need to understand that there are two camps in Oregon when it comes to the cougar situation. There are those that want the cougar population to self-balance itself while filling the role of an apex predator. The other camp understands that if the cougar population is allowed to self-regulate itself, their opportunity to hunt other species will be greatly diminished since they are the prey species for the cougars. The proposal by ODF&W is to use what some would consider a loophole to contract with hunters to reduce the cougar population. These hunters will not be sportsmen; they will be contract hunters or pro-

Please see page