

COLESTIN VALLEY BUZZ

May/June 2006

Gophers and Cougars and Bears, Oh My!

Greetings Neighbors! That title is an appropriate heading for this issue of the Buzz. Spring is afoot and apparently lots of critters are out and about. Take extra care to look out for yourselves and your kids, pets, and livestock. Here's hoping that wild and domestic animals can coexist peacefully in the upcoming weeks. ☺

Thank you to everyone for the outpouring of financial support following my announcements of shortfalls and upcoming changes in the Buzz circulation. Folks seem very understanding about my decision to no longer send the Buzz to neighbors who have never subscribed. The only people affected by this change are those whose mailing labels read 7/00. If you feel that there is an error please don't hesitate to contact me. I make many mistakes. Also, neighbors who have never subscribed for whatever reason, but who wish to remain on the list, need only to let me know their wishes.

Gophers Galore ! !

This is gopher season. If you catch gophers during the spring before they breed (likewise in the fall), your garden will look much better. While moles are beneficial (eating only insects and grubs) gophers will eat just about every type of plant, roots, tops and all, including young tree seedlings up to 8' tall! If any of you have gently held a plant by its top, only to have it come up in your hand because the roots are gone, you already know this. As a rule, gopher tunnels are spread out perpendicular to the fall line on a hill, and the main mounds are often a crescent shape. Mole hills are more like little volcanoes.

The best trapping time is early in the morning, as it is easier to find feeding holes at that time. If you start

before the grass gets tall, it is easier yet. Always flag where you put your traps, if you don't want to spend unnecessary time trying to find them again. Poisons do not require as much labor, but neighborhood pets and other wildlife are at risk with poisons, and if you don't know what you are doing with poison application, birds and even human children can suffer.

I still have used Cinch-type traps for sale if anyone wants some. Used traps are as good as new ones but cost from 1/3 to 1/2 as much. If you are interested call Nancy Ames Cole at 488-2377.

Cougar Alert

In the past month, there have been four sightings of cougar in the Whiskey Creek Road area. On three occasions, a pair of cougar were seen. An observant resident first discovered a deer buried near a tree. The pair of cougar were later seen coming to the stashed carcass. When returning home at night from a wildland fire in early May, volunteer firefighters saw a pair of cougars where the Colestin road meets Whiskey Creek Road. Most recently, a solitary cougar was seen passing through in a neighbor's yard during the afternoon. The Buzz urges everyone to be alert and observe commonsense safety practices. Info on living safely with cougars is available on the Fire Department website www.crfd.org for more info.

Signs Update

The CRFD volunteers responsible for placing the remaining home address number signs in the southern part of valley (Hilt Fire District area) want residents to know that they are on the job and hope to complete the project soon. Thank you for your support and patience. Questions or comments can be directed to Lisa Buttrey 821-5479.

Hungry Bear

Here in the upper Coleson, I have been visited nightly for nearly two weeks by a small blond-colored bear. The first visits were the most destructive as garden soil amendments, bird feeders, and garbage were strewn all about and the locked garbage shed (with slatted walls) ripped and bitten to allow entry. Systematic efforts to reduce attractants has only recently begun to show some promise of moving the bear to greener pastures. Reports from neighbors in the area of Fire Station 1 of discovering bird feeders and garbage molested seem to suggest that the events are all related to this single individual.

I spoke with Rosemary at Fish and Wildlife. She says, "bears are 100% about food". Since bears are hungry at this time of year when they emerge from their dens, if they find something edible you can be sure a bear will go for it. I asked for suggestions about what

to do to stop this troublesome behavior before the bear makes itself a persistent nuisance; a situation which usually ends badly for the bear. The approach is very sensible:

1. Remove anything attractive.
2. Use aversive conditioning to change bear behavior. It provides negative feedback to problem bears. The unpleasant experience discourages bears from repeating undesirable behaviors.

What follows is a good summary of safety practices from

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/bblivingwith.asp> *Homes and Cabins* with a few extras mentioned by Rosemary. It's somewhat lengthy, and perhaps much of it is already common knowledge, but a little reminder never hurts.

Trash and bird feeders are the most common attractants responsible for luring bears to human dwellings. Pet food, charcoal grills, fruit trees and gardens may also attract bears. Once a bear finds food around your home it will likely return.

To minimize bear problems on your property:

- Reduce garbage odors. Rinse food cans and wrappers before disposal.
- Compost vegetable scraps properly away from house.
- Keep meat scraps in the freezer until garbage pickup day.
- Wash garbage cans regularly and use lime to cut odors. Rosemary suggests always using bin liners and washing garbage bins with ammonia. Also, add a cup of ammonia every time you add new garbage. The goal is to reduce food odors and to offer a nasty surprise when the bear overturns a bin and is suddenly presented with a snoot full of ammonia fumes. Keep garbage cans in a bear-proof container or in an enclosed building until trash pickup.
- Remove bird feeders in the spring. If you persist in feeding during summer, remove seed, suet and hummingbird feeders at night.
- Keep pet food inside.
- Keep barbecue grills and picnic tables clean.
- Use an energized fence to keep bears out of beehives, sweet corn, fruit trees and berry patches. Rosemary suggests that this is a good aversive conditioning tool, as you can hang strips of foils with a taste of peanut butter on them around the problem area. The bear gets a nasty jolt and hopefully learns not to try that again.
- Barking dogs, bright lights and noisemakers will sometimes discourage bears from coming into an area.
- Don't burn scented candles near windows. Rosemary says "it's just like candy to bears".

If a bear comes into your yard:

- DON'T PANIC! DON'T SHOOT! DON'T APPROACH IT!
- Back away slowly.
- Go inside and wait for the bear to leave.
- Most bears fear people and will leave when they see you. If a bear woofs, snaps its jaws, slaps the ground or brush, or bluff charges: **YOU ARE TOO CLOSE!**
- Learn to tolerate bears. Many bears are killed or injured when not causing problems.

If a bear refuses to leave:

- Be sure you have allowed the bear an escape route.
- Make loud noises to scare it away. Rosemary suggests clanging pots, shooting a rifle into the ground as a noise maker if you are skilled to do so, firecrackers (taking great care not to start a fire and never during fire season).

If a bear is treed:

- LEAVE IT ALONE! The bear will usually go away when it feels safe.
- Have people leave the area.
- Remove your dog from the area.

AGRICULTURE – Landowners sometimes experience bear problems with beehives, standing crops, orchards, and livestock.

To control problems:

- Corral animals close to buildings at night.
- Promptly bury dead animals or take them to a rendering plant.
- Eliminate on-farm garbage dumps.
- Monitor crops to detect problems early.
- Consider electric fencing as a preventive measure, esp. for orchards and beehives.

Trash Walkin'

In our third annual event on Saturday May 13th, 8 neighbors and a slew of folks associated with Mt. Ashland picked up the accumulated garbage from Exit 6 all the way up the Ski Rd. The trash pick-up was originally spear-headed by several Ski Road residents who were angered by the growing garbage problem and raised enough heck to get this program up and running. I am very grateful personally for their efforts as I used to do a lot of trash walkin' myself and it was a BIG job every year! Working together is fun, fast and effective. Of course, it would be grand if the public wouldn't litter, but since that seems a pipe dream, this is the next best thing. If driving past garbage gets ya down, join us next year. It'll take about 2 hours of your time. For my money, that's not a bad trade-off to restore our roadways to an appealing uncluttered state.

FREE TRAINING TO USE MAPS AND COMPASSES FOR FIRE SPOTTING (AND OTHER THINGS AS WELL)

by John Ames

Anyone who is interested is invited to join fire district volunteers in a brief informal training session in the use of a compass, map and your eyes (with or without binoculars) to establish and report locations of wildland fires in the Colestin Valley.

The training session should last about 2 hours. We will be using a mirror-sighting compass that can be accurate to one or two degrees. You do not need your own compass and map of the area, but using your own compass in training would certainly speed your ability to spot fires (or other activities) accurately.

Hunters and students of orienteering might find this class interesting, but our main goal is to have enough volunteers to generate fast and accurate information about fires after lightning storms.

The Colestin Rural Fire District volunteer firefighters try to reach and extinguish wildland fires as soon as possible while the fires are small, before they exceed our capability. This can be difficult in the case of lightning fires because they usually occur well away from roads and known addresses. We depend on volunteer fire spotters to tell us where they are.

A single fire spotter can tell us the direction to the fire from the spotter's lookout location, but often the distance, and therefore the actual location, is difficult to judge, especially at night. We solve this problem by placing multiple spotters around the high points of the valley, and attempt to get directions to the fire from at least two lookouts. We then plot these directions on a special map at the dispatch center, with the intersection of the directions giving us an accurate location of the fire.

We will be training fire spotters in the next few weeks. The first session will be at 2 PM on the afternoon of Saturday, June 17 at the Siskiyou Summit lookout, located 4.3 miles north of Interstate 5 Oregon Exit 1 or 1.7 miles south of Exit 6 on old highway 99. This is a wide turnout across from 12050 Old Highway 99. We can also repeat the training on June 24, and July 8 and 22, all Saturdays, if there is interest by people who can not make the first date. If none of these times work for you, call and we can work out a time. We want to accommodate as many people as possible. The training will consist of an hour or two becoming familiar with the use of an accurate sighting compass, plus a few exercises for those interested in volunteering to be on the lookout for fires.

Anyone interested in this training please contact Nancy Ames Cole at 488-2377 or John Ames at 488-5016 with the dates you prefer. Everyone in the Colestin area is encouraged to participate. You do not need to be a firefighter to perform this valuable service.

There is a really great book on offer from OFRI for landowners who want to be able to identify local threatened and endangered plant and animal species, and it's FREE!!! There are color photos as well as identifying information and maps of territory or habitat in Oregon.

[Identifying Priority Plants and Animals and Their Habitats: A guidebook for forest landowners.](#)

For copies, contact Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI)
317 SW Sixth Street, Suite 400
Portland, Oregon 97204
1-800-719-9195
www.oregonforests.org
E-mail: info@ofri.org

For those not familiar with OFRI, it is a state-sponsored research and educational facility created to educate and connect forest landowners throughout the state.

LIVESTOCK GUARD DOGS

by Nancy Ames Cole, L'Orage Great Pyrenees

Some of you have been concerned about cougars, coyotes and bears sharing space with your family, pets and livestock. The traditional solution for this problem is to obtain, train and socialize any of several breeds of livestock guard dog (LGDs). These dogs are unlike others, and are best trained without the help of your other dogs. Unfortunately, not all breeders are skilled or truthful, so if you wish to look into this cougar-bear-burglar prevention method, go to www.LGD.org and survey the various breeds. You might consider a rescue dog. Each of these breed clubs have rescue organizations, which normally screen dogs for suitability before placement. These dogs are also less expensive than buying from a breeder, as the donation you are expected to give covers only part of the medical, temperament and background screening that the breed club has done before placing the dog.

Before you decide to obtain a livestock guard dog, however, you should know these things:

1. LGDs are large, independent dogs. If you are frightened of large dogs and of training them, this is not a solution for you. While they may frighten away strangers and predators, if you cannot train them and they don't respect you, it will create more problems than you (or the dog) will want. Likewise you cannot send your LGD off to a professional trainer for guard dog training -- the results are awful, as guarding is bred into these dogs. To them it is not a game, and they will lose respect for humans who try to make it one. Kohler-style training, especially, is a really bad plan for LGDs.
2. LGDs tend to roam, so dog-proof fencing is a must. It is not appropriate to chain any of these breeds, as the frustration level does bad things to their temperament. Invisible fences seldom work with LGDs. Keeping the dog at home keeps you and the dog safe, and prevents your dog from guarding something that, in fact, is not hers to guard. I remember one story about a Great Pyrenees refusing to let some campers out of their tent on a USFS campground -- it was within one mile of her house, which she regarded as her territory.
3. LGDs are comparatively short-lived, as with all giant breeds, so do not expect a dog to work for you more than 8 to 10 years before going onto the porch for retirement.
4. Spaying and neutering LGDs is essential for working dogs. Romance with coyotes and feral dogs is not conducive to good livestock guard performance, and can also produce puppies with notable livestock killing skills.
4. LGDs range from very primitive breeds to those interactive with civilization for thousands of years. Study the track records of breeds and breeders before buying, as the temperament on these dogs is very important. You do not want an unsound, 100+ pound dog with a bad attitude.
5. Under no circumstances should you buy from a pet shop. These dogs have not been properly bred, temperament tested or socialized for the work they are supposed to do, and the genetics and health of pet shop dogs is problematic. Besides, why support the puppy mills that sell to pet shops?
6. Reliable breeders usually belong to a breed club with a code of ethics, which includes being willing to give you health and temperament guarantees, advice and solutions throughout the life of the dog, and usually willingness to take the dog back or even pet sit if you have a lifestyle change. A five-generation pedigree should be available with records of hip and other tests for the breeding line. Rescue clubs are also helpful to new owners.
7. A good web site about training and behavior of LGDs is a library found at <http://www.sonic.net/~cdlcruz/GPCC/library.htm>. This is a Great Pyrenees site but has information pertinent to all livestock guard dogs.
8. Remember, livestock guard dogs have very little prey drive, which is why they can live nicely with sheep, goats and household pets. If you are careful to extinguish what is left of their prey drive in the first months of their life,

they will be very unlikely to harm or chase wildlife. My dogs walk right past ground bird nests, which is not something you can say for most terriers, hounds, retrievers, herding dogs and such. This same trait means that they will NOT chase and fetch a ball for you no matter how much you plead.

9. Finally, if you are keeping livestock or pets unprotected in the forest interface, do not expect cougars or coyotes to ignore them. You are, in effect, "chumming" for cougars. It is your responsibility to protect these animals, who cannot be blamed if they recognize your unwillingness to provide guards as an invitation. Any self-respecting cougar who sees a lamb is going to think, "I don't care if it is someone's 4-H project, I have a litter to feed." This is especially the case in Spring, when predator litters are generally born and everyone is hungry, and early Summer, when mothers are training kits and cubs to hunt.

Shepherds have kept stock and people safe with these mountain guardians for thousands of years. They are a comparatively inexpensive solution to an ancient problem, one which protects your family, pets and livestock, as well as the natural inhabitants of the neighborhood into which you have moved.

If you want more information about breeds, breeders, costs and information sources, and the LGD site does not provide the information or links that you need, feel free to call me at 488-2377. However, do check the site first as it offers so much more information than I could give you in hours of talk.

Home Renumbering Procedure Adopted by Jackson County

As you are probably aware, the addresses on Colestin Road do not follow a regular sequence. This situation has led to confusion and slowed response time for the various emergency agencies which serve our area. Fire District personnel have determined which home addresses do not conform and have worked closely with Jackson County to create a procedure which both corrects current errors and assigns future numbers correctly.

Residents who have out-of-sequence numbers will be receiving a letter from the CRFD detailing the situation and encouraging residents to consider changing their address. The CRFD recognizes that changing your mailing address is a chore but hopes that, at the least, residents might keep this request in mind in the event of sale of the property. A great time for new owners to take up a new and improved number!

Care and Feeding of the CRFD

By Carolyn Brafford

Appreciate the CRFD? Want to contribute but don't have the time, ability, or inclination to go through formal training to become a fire fighter? How about becoming an auxiliary member? As the number of homes in the Colestin increases, so does the

complexity of protecting them. There are a lot of necessary tasks to be done that don't involve fighting fires. Some only need to be done once. Others are ongoing. Examples include:

- Proposal Writing
- Office assistance
- Computer trouble-shooting skills
- General computer skills
- Fund-raising
- Washing the fire trucks
- Cleaning the fire station
- Mechanical skills
- Carpentry
- Manning phone trees
- Providing food during emergencies
- Special events

NOTE: This list is only illustrative. If you have other special skills you'd like to offer, please contact Carolyn Brafford at 488-4795.

Master Gardener Training

by Maia Black

Neighbor and Master Gardener Maia Black encourages interested residents to get involved with the Master Gardener program offered by OSU Extension Service. Classes are taught by OSU extension agents, specialists, and local experts. The classes, which usually begin in mid January, are held one day per week with a total of twelve meetings, typically from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The program offers a basic, practical course in plant science and horticulture. This year classes include:

- Rogue Valley Climate and Weather
- Greenhouse day sign-up
- Extending the Season/Greenhouses
- Basic Botany
- Vegetable Gardening/Raised Beds
- Garden Soils and Fertilizers
- Vertebrate Pest Management
- Pesticide Use and Safety
- Water Quality Impacts
- Backyard Composting/Vermiculture
- Organic Gardening
- Why Is My Tree Dying?
- Taxonomy
- Annuals and Perennials
- Home Orchards
- Principles of Pruning Lawns and Groundcovers
- Basic Landscape Design
- Basic Entomology
- Insect Identification/IPM
- Plant Diseases
- Plant Problem Diagnosis
- Urban Tree Care Native Plants
- Weed Identification and Control

WOW! There's something for everyone in this extensive list. For more info, go to <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/mg/> or call the Extension Service 772-5165.

Colestin Valley Buzz

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