



The Baker County Press

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Storms bring powder galore

**SUBMITTED BY
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Winter has only been here for ten days, yet it seems like ages since winter-like conditions began in late November.

That's because this winter has been fairly atypical compared to those of recent years past.

Baker County, and other neighboring counties, have seen moderate snow in the last month.

"What seems different

is that we've been below freezing at most elevations for quite a long time, which has left a pretty light and preserved snowpack without many layers. It went from warm to winter very quickly in November," says Brian Sather also of La Grande Ride, Inc.—a leader in recreation information.

The Pacific Northwest has been getting hit with consistent shortwave troughs, or surface low weather systems. These impulses of energy and moisture are responsible for the consistent series of

snowstorms.

The cold temperatures can be attributed to a persistent cold, Canadian air mass dipping down over the region.

Most storms had a west to northwesterly flow aloft, instead of a southwest or southerly flow.

This type of flow aloft has been bringing constant snow to the Blue Mountains, while the Willamette Mountains have seen comparably less snowfall.

Blowing and drifting snow has been reeking havoc on local roads and their travelers, with "the

daily closure" of Interstate 84 and countless motor vehicle accidents.

Local road crews have been doing their best to remove snow.

On the up side, the snow has set forth a great start to the snowmobile and ski season.

Snow has been falling across all the local mountain ranges, but the Blues have become the predominant, premier recreation spot as of now.

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Photo by Brian Sather.

Hurd, after setting off a soft slab storm avalanche.

A village in miniature



Samantha O'Conner/ The Baker County Press

One of Wilma Edwards' many displays showing 751 pieces total, for viewing over the holidays.

BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
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Every Christmas, Wilma Edwards invites friends and family to see her collection of miniature Christmas houses and towns.

Edwards dedicates a month to setting up the seven hundred and fifty-one piece towns for friends and family to enjoy.

Edwards began assembling the display on November 1 and finished the towns at the end of the month. She often leaves them on display until around the beginning of March.

This year is the twenty-first year Edwards has set up the displays in her house. She started her collection with the first five pieces her mother gave her and her collection has grown over the years. Her collection includes houses, trees, animals, and miniature people. She now has two hundred houses; some play music and many light up.

"I have several friends who bring them to me," Edwards explained. "They find them at yard sales and stuff. Some family sends them quite often and once in a while I buy a new one but not very often. Ace used to have them and they weren't that expensive and so I bought quite a few at first."

Edwards began her annual display when a friend commented that she should have more people over to see the miniature houses and displays.

Edwards and her husband Dave have lived in Baker for 45 years, having moved here in 1971. Edwards was born in Pomeroy, Washington, and met her husband in college. They moved to Klamath Falls in 1956, then to Lakeview Oregon, then Bend, and finally Baker City.

As well as collecting houses for her miniature towns, she works on wall hangings, sewing them and giving them to her family.

Edwards explained that she enjoys crafts and she also makes ornaments.

41 elk perish in icy waters



Photo by Audrey Beam.

Broken ice remains a testament to the deaths of 41 elk Tuesday morning.

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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On Wednesday morning, roughly 150 elk safely crossed the ice near the Powder River arm of Brownlee Reservoir near Richland—but such was not the fate of the 41 elk that attempted to cross just the morning before.

On Tuesday at roughly 9:30 a.m., Nick Myatt, Grande Ronde Watershed Manager for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), said a call came in from a Richland resident to report that she had witnessed a large number of elk having broken through thin ice, falling into the frigid waters. The hope at the time was that at least some of the animals might be salvaged for their meat, or even saved.

Word quickly came back from ODFW District Biologist Brian Ratliff and fellow employee Phillip Perrine, said Myatt, that "the majority of the elk were already deceased" when the pair arrived on site.

From there, Myatt's fears were validated—the situation would simply have to play itself out as nature intended. And sometimes nature can be cruel.

Ratliff confirmed that when he arrived on scene, all but a handful of the elk had already drowned. Four elk remained alive, struggling to swim and survive. One lone calf had made it out, standing by itself on the ice and left to an uncertain fate.

"The closest elk were 300 yards out into the water," said Ratliff. "The condition of the ice was incredibly unstable."

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Burglary reported in Richland

On the 21st, around 8:53 a.m., deputies responded to a burglary complaint at 42539 Old Foothill Road in Richland.

Witnesses described seeing a male subject wearing dark clothing with

a sleeveless shirt enter an outbuilding at the residence.

A vehicle description was also provided to the deputies.

Around 10:53 a.m., deputies located the reported

suspect vehicle and the suspect, identified as Dock Miles, age 39, near the victim's residence.

Upon investigation, Miles was taken into custody and charged with Burglary in the Second

Degree, Criminal Mischief in the Third Degree, Theft in the First Degree and a Parole Detainer. Miles was transported and lodged in the Baker County Jail. The investigation is continuing.

	Friday Partly sunny with a chance for snow showers. Little to no snow accumulations are expected. Highs in the mid 20s. Lows in the single digits.
	Saturday Mostly sunny and cold. Highs in the upper teens. Saturday Night: Mostly cloudy with a chance for snow showers. Little to no accumulation expected. Lows in the low single digits.
	Sunday Mostly cloudy skies with a chance for snow. Highs near 20. Light accumulations expected. Chance of precipitation is 60%. Lows near 10.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.



Official weather provider for The Baker County Press.

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2016: A Year in Review / Local

May

Healthy kids day held

Despite the windy and cool weather, plenty of attendance was noted during a Baker County YMCA-sponsored Healthy Kids Day event, held Saturday, April 30, 2016, from 9 a.m., to 1 p.m., at Geiser Pollman Park, in Baker City.

County, Sunridge discuss TLT penalties

The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its first, regular session of the month, on Wednesday, May 4, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers, of the Baker County Courthouse with a Memo of Understanding involving the Sunridge Inn's payment of Transient Lodging Tax penalties key on the agenda.

Three interview for City Manager

After some of the final candidates for the City Manager position, soon to be vacated by retiring Mike Kee, either dropped out of the running or accepted other positions, three remaining candi-

dates interviewed in front of City Council early in the week.

911 calls not recorded

The Baker County Board of Commissioners held an emergency, regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 10 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, in order to address the critical issue of Baker County 911 Consolidated Dispatch Center's failed Stancil Recorder.

GBVRFDP holds open house

The Greater Bowen Valley Rural Fire Prevention District hosted an open house on Saturday, May 7th. Besides grilled burgers and dogs, drinks, and sides, the event featured information on fire alarm installation and fire safety, and offered giveaways for kids and adults.

Water rates go up

It wasn't the 17.5%, 19% or even the 25% water rate increase that had been tossed around over the past month, but in the end,

City Council still voted to increase Baker City water rates by 11.2% total. The increase means a 10% jump in base and usage rates, with an additional 1.2% increase to adjust for inflation.

Commissioner race a nail-biter

With only 38 votes separating Republican candidates Bruce Nichols and Kody Justus in Tuesday's County Commissioners primary election, the results of that race most likely will not be official for 14 days, according to County Clerk Cindy Carpenter. Unofficially, it appears Nichols has taken the race.

Unity man burned

On Monday afternoon, Fred Amans, 67, of Unity, was Life Flighted to Boise after sustaining third degree burns in a work-related accident.

Amans performs maintenance for the Burnt River Motel and Market, including a small rental cabin on the property in which the explosion that burned him

occurred.

New 911 system installed

The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a regular session on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, highlighted by an important 911 Consolidated Dispatch Center recorder installation update.

Local teens save truck driver's life

When they completed a CPR class to supplement their babysitting skills at the end of January, little did Sydney Slobig, a sophomore from Baker City, and Sydney Palmer, a junior from Haines, know they'd soon be using their newfound knowledge to save a man's life.

Veteran travels to D.C.

"It's just something that I like to do... It just gives the kids an insight of what it was like, back in 1941 ..." said local World War II Marine Corps veteran Robert Bennett.

June

30J bus driver retires

For 25 years, Unity's Patty Trost carried what she calls her "precious cargo" across the southern part of Baker County. But with the end of this school year at Burnt River's School District 30J, Trost retired.

Wyden holds town hall

On Tuesday, May 31, 2016, 9 a.m., Senator Ron Wyden hosted a Baker County Town Hall meeting in the Baker High School (BHS) auditorium.

Man arrested for motorcycle, car, gun theft

On May 31, around 8 a.m., Deputy Tracy Howard stopped Anthony Dettman, 29, of Nebraska, on Campbell Street in Baker City for riding a motorcycle without a helmet.

Baker County gets first ever presidential convention delegate

Last weekend, several

GOP Precinct Committee People from Baker County traveled to Salem. Oregon Republicans met at the Oregon State Fairgrounds to select delegates and alternates who will represent the State of Oregon at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.

Among those elected to one of those delegate positions was Suzan Ellis Jones of Bridgeport.

Newspaper owner arrested

The owner, editor, and publisher of *The Record-Courier* newspaper, Gina Deann Perkins, age 50 of Goodrich Creek, was arrested Saturday the 4th after two incidents, one at a private residence at 50416 Anthony Lakes Highway, just outside of Haines, technically North Powder.

Standoff ends well

On June 2, 2016 at about

3:12 p.m. Baker City Police received the report of a man at 2010 Grove Street, recently released from prison, who had a firearm.

Speaker visits

Oregon State Speaker of the House, District 44 Democrat Tina Kotek, joined by District 60 Republican Representative Cliff Bentz, and Kotek's Chief of Staff, Tim Inman, hosted a Breakfast with the Speaker, to discuss local issues in a round-table format, at the Sunridge Inn Restaurant, on Friday, June 3, 2016, 7 a.m.

Former Halfway couple killed

Husband and wife, Lance and Jade Simpson, both Pine Eagle graduates formerly of Halfway, were killed last Friday afternoon when their pickup left a dirt road and plunged more than 600 feet down into a ravine, Hobble Creek Canyon, in Utah.

McNeil crowned

On June 11th, Baker City's Lori McNeil was crowned Mrs. Oregon United States 2016.

Bookmobile gets makeover

From cleaning through completion, the Baker Library District's bookmobile underwent a makeover—18 hours total—at the hands of Oregon Sign Company last weekend.

One killed outside Haines

A head-on collision on Highway 30 outside Haines took the life of one and seriously injured two others Monday evening.

Walden holds townhall

Around 45 members of the community attended a town hall, hosted by U.S. Congressman Greg Walden, at the Sunridge Inn Restaurant June 20.

town, including Jim Thurber and Jack Hoffman from the Discovery Channel's hit show "Gold Rush." Todd Hoffman was originally scheduled to appear, but was unable to return from a trip on time.

Nonpartisan issue back on ballot

The effort to make Baker County Commissioner seats nonpartisan, which was soundly rejected by voters last fall, is once again slated for the ballot in Baker County.

New Councilman

Loren Joseph has been appointed to fill a vacated term on Baker City Council.

Armstrong nugget's new display

Thursday, July 21, US Bank in Baker City unveiled their new gold display, including everything from the old scales to a new case. The company began the redesign process for the display three years ago.

Elk perish

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Ratliff explained that the depth of the water at such a distance from shore prevented them from moving in any heavy equipment to help break up the ice so the elk might swim to shore, or from finding another way to reach them that wouldn't jeopardize human lives.

The elk had broken through at four separate locations. "We had to assess the situation and just let them be," Ratliff said. "Sometimes these things are hard to understand." Ratliff said as they watched, he knew the remaining elk would, sadly, eventually succumb and simply become "part of the reservoir."

Upon closer inspection Ratliff said it appeared that the elk had crossed the same ice several times in the past, and there were signs that the 41 had bedded down along the edge of the waters nearby. It didn't appear to him that the elk had been startled, but instead had simply been walking calmly across the ice—until it began to crack.

Ratliff said it appeared as though the ice had shifted that morning, with evidence of water flowing up over the edges where it hadn't previously.

In addition to the two men from ODFW, one Oregon State Police officer responded. Ratliff said he spoke to seven different residents.

Sharon and Harold White were two residents who trudged through the 18" of snow along the banks trying to get a better look at the scene unfolding.

"I was heartbroken all day," said Sharon White.

She noted that no one had seen the lone survivor—that one elk calf—perish, and that citizens hoped it had been picked up in the herd of 150 that passed safely across the ice Wednesday morning.

Wildlife perishing either on top of, or falling through thin ice, is not uncommon in the winter months of eastern Oregon, Myatt said; however, an event of this scale is rare.

"There was an incident in Colorado just last year when 20 elk fell through," Myatt said.

Powder

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The snow isn't quite as deep as usual up high in the mountains but it is off to a good start especially in the northern Blue Mountains," stated Sather.

The La Grande Ride team, which includes Sather and Hurd, continues to be diligent in leading the region in snow safety data. The most comprehensive winter recreation information is available on the website, www.LaGrandeRide.com, along with the Regional Snow Forecast, where "we have your mountain weather dialed."

So far this year, the forecasts have been spot on for where to go, and when to go, to find fresh powder.

The mountain snow may be soft and playful, yet the hidden danger of avalanches lurks—especially with all the new snow.

On December 19th, an avalanche closed Highway 204 between Tollgate and Elgin. There have been some other signs of instability including road cut avalanches we have reported.

While attempting a side hill during a regular snow and avalanche study outing, Hurd triggered a small slide beside the road. Simple tests like side-cutting on a safe small slope can be a telling indicator of instability on the bigger slopes. When red flags like this exist, you should stay away from slopes above 30 degrees.

"The snowpack is growing steadily—since the storms have been coming every three to five days—and there's been little melting of snow surfaces at higher elevations, which is unusual compared to this time last year," said Hurd. "The threat of avalanches will remain high over the next several weeks, including for the Blue Mountains in Baker and Union County."

Current forecast models are anticipating the arrival of yet another winter storm in the next three or four days. New snow will be likely for all areas of Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties.

The future of winter 2016-17 is still unknown, but if it continues at the current trend a lot of snow still has yet to fall.

Sky lanterns now illegal

As of January 1, 2017, sky lanterns (also known as aerial luminaries, Chinese lanterns, mini hot air balloons, UFO balloons, wish lanterns, etc.) are illegal to release into Oregon airspace.

A sky lantern is a paper sack suspended over a flame, usually from a small candle or other lit device. The hot air from the flame causes the balloon to rise into the air and be carried off by the wind.

"Although they are pretty, sky lanterns are uncontrolled, open-flamed devices that pose an extreme fire hazard to people, property, and the environment" said Oregon Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple. "Once released you have no control over where they may land. They could end up on someone's rooftop, in a tree, or a pile of debris and cause an unwanted fire."

A number of states, as well as countries such as Germany, Australia, and Brazil have outlawed sky lanterns.

As of January 1, 2017, releasing a sky lantern into Oregon airspace will be a Class A violation subject to a maximum penalty of \$2,000.

Cycling event celebrates 15 years

From Thursday, June 24 to Sunday, June 26, Baker City celebrated the 15-year anniversary of the Baker City Cycling Classic.

Sumpter recalls mayor

The votes are in for Sumpter's recent recall election with a high percentage of the town's 133 registered voters taking part.

Ballots were due Tuesday, June 28th. Unofficial results for the recall of mayor Leland Myers are 53 yes votes and 51 no votes.

'Gold Rush' stars go to Haines

Todd Hoffman, Jack Hoffman, Andy Spinks, Dave Turin, Jim Thurber, and several other cast and crew members from the Discovery Channel's "Gold Rush" brought their families to Haines last Sunday for the town's 4th of July celebration.

Regional Theater gets

new building

The Eastern Oregon Regional Theater, EORT, announced its soon-to-be new location in the historic Orpheum Theater on Main Street.

Best Western, Sunridge files for bankruptcy

Late last month, Townridge, Inc., dba (doing business as) Best Western Sunridge Inn, of Baker City, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, in the District of Oregon U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Portland, citing financial issues, pending litigation, and the need to restructure debts.

5J to stick to four-day week

July 11, the Baker School 5J School District board members met to discuss calendar options for the 2016-17 school year.

Ferrioli tours Huntington

Senator Ted Ferrioli, the Senate Republican Minority Leader from John Day who represents District

July

30, which includes Baker County, took an informal tour of Huntington on Wednesday, July 6.

Local woman attends RNC

The slate of 28 delegates and their alternates from Oregon to represent at the Republican National Convention (RNC), includes for the first time a Baker County resident, Suzan Ellis Jones. Jones is chair of the Baker County Republicans.

'House Hunters' films here

A film crew from the hit Home and Garden Channel (HGTV) show "House Hunters" shot footage in Baker City last week with the crew and a couple of potential buyers being seen along with a local realtor all over the downtown area.

Celebrities, politicians join parade

Last Saturday's Miners Jubilee parade was filled with guests from out of