Wandering Oregon wolf's tracks to be retraced

By Jeff Barnard, AP

GRANTS PASS, Ore. – Wildlife advocates are preparing to retrace the 1,200-mile path of a wandering wolf whose trek in 2011 across Oregon and California attracted worldwide attention, hoping their upcoming journey will help build greater acceptance of wolves as they reclaim lost territories across the West.

The wolf, dubbed OR-7 and wearing a GPS-equipped collar, became a celebrity at 2 years old after leaving a pack in northeastern Oregon in September 2011, just days after the state issued a kill order for his father and a sibling for preying on livestock.

"It is only through walking it that anyone can truly understand that journey," said Jay Simpson, who plans daily blog posts of panoramic photos and interviews with people the Wolf OR-7 Expedition contacts along the way. "It's not a thing you can understand on Google Earth."

Using traditional storytelling, real-time multimedia blogging, time-lapse photography and a documentary film, they hope to offer new insights into what the spread of wolves across the West means for the people who live here, inspire new attitudes that ease conflicts in ranch country and recognize conservationists working to protect wolves.

On his route, OR-7 passed through where the last Oregon wolf was killed by a bounty hunter in 1946, and where the last known California wolf was killed in 1924.

OR-7's trek is standard procedure for young wolves trying to establish new territories. That's how wolves came to Oregon in

the late 1990s from Idaho, where they were re-established as part of a federal endangered species program.

“OR-7 is really a pioneer,” said David Moskowitz, a wildlife biologist, tracker and photographer. “He is offering a first glimpse of the new story unfolding about what it is going to be like for wolves returning” to a changed landscape.

Unlike five Oregon wolves that migrated east to Idaho, OR-7 has not been shot, noted Amaroq Weiss of the conservation group Center for Biological Diversity. Idaho has allowed wolf hunting since Endangered Species Act protection was lifted in 2011.

The expedition was the brainchild of Portland storyteller Rachael Pecore-Valdez. She was in Berlin, where her husband was studying renewable energy, when she talked to a South African friend, Galeo Saintz, about a trek he had done to raise awareness for endangered rhinos. She decided to do something similar for OR-7.

“For me the expedition is really about learning by talking to other people and asking questions and less about my opinions and thoughts about wolves,” Pecore-Valdez said.

Saintz is founder of the Wild Peace Alliance, which uses expedition adventure to ease conflicts between people and wildlife and celebrate successful work by conservationists.

“Wolf OR-7 inspires me, because he highlights that the ordinary is often remarkable if we just give it the right attention and appreciate what it means,” he said in an email. “He is the ultimate lone wolf on an unknown quest to make the most of his one precious life, and I just love that.”

Pecore-Valdez contacted Moskowitz, whose wildlife tracking class she had taken, and they were rolling.

Filmmaker Daniel Byers is shooting a documentary along the

way.

The core of the expedition – 300 miles of hiking and 900 miles of biking in 40 days – is sponsored by a $5,700 grant from Sculpt the Future Foundation. It was matched by Xplore, which funds projects that exhibit passion with aspects of play. The expedition launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise $21,000 for a documentary and multimedia.

They plan to start at a spot overlooking Hells Canyon in Northeastern Oregon in mid-May, and follow OR-7's general route, biking where they can, hiking where they have to, taking note of landmarks, such as where the wolf crossed Interstate 5 north of Yreka.

None of them wants to actually stumble across OR-7, who now resides in Southern Oregon, for fear of putting more stress in his life.

"These creatures are living very close to the bone," Moskowitz said. "As humans add more challenges to the landscape, it makes that proposition even more amazing."

Nev. struggling with student literacy issue

By Trevon Milliar, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The vast majority of Nevada students struggle to read, conceded several local education officials on Tuesday.

They didn't debate the data. They focused on how to change it.

Federal assessments show only 30 percent of Nevada eighth-

graders read at the level they should, slightly more than the 27 percent of fourth-graders who are proficient in reading. Trace Nevada's high school dropouts back to fourth grade and nine out of 10 of them were behind in reading skills, according to the Nevada Department of Education.

"The statistics in Nevada are unacceptable," said Nevada Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement Steven Canavero to 175 people representing a who's who of state lawmakers and public school leaders gathered to hear about the battle against illiteracy.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe DMV to be remodeled

The South Lake Tahoe DMV office is temporarily closing for renovations starting March 26 at noon.

During the long weekend of renovation crews will replace the carpet, upgrade the testing area, and install a window in the control cashier room. Other renovations will be made to bring the office to ADA compliance.

The South Lake Tahoe office will reopen April 1.

The nearest offices are in Truckee and Placerville.

Golden Bough to entertain on South Shore

Tahoe Arts Project is bringing the Celtic trio Golden Bough to St. Theresa Catholic Church on March 27 at 6:30pm.

Golden Bough captures the essence of America's best-loved folk music, with an array of acoustic instruments and pristine three-part harmony. Sing along, clap along, or just sit back and enjoy, as Golden Bough blends Celtic harp, fiddle, guitar, accordion, penny-whistle, and bodhran with vocals for a lively Celtic-American evening.

General admission seating will begin at 6pm. Tickets are $12 for adults, $5 for children and $10 for seniors and will be available at the door. To charge tickets by phone, call 530.542.3632.

Tahoe Arts Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing professional performing arts in the schools and community of South Lake Tahoe.

Golden Bough will be performing in the South Shore schools March 24-28.

Discoverer of Titanic wreckage to talk at UNR

Robert Ballard is known for his discoveries of the wrecks of the RMS Titanic, the battleship Bismarck, the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown and President John F. Kennedy's PT-109.

The famous ocean explorer is the final speaker in this year's Discover Science Lecture Series at UNR on April 3.

Ballard is a former Navy officer and a professor of oceanography at the University of Rhode Island. In his talk, through the use of high-quality images and personal accounts, Ballard will present his work in underwater archaeology, maritime archaeology and the archaeology of shipwrecks.

Ballard uses the emerging science of deep-water archaeology to share his findings from numerous expeditions where he searched for, located and documented sites of historical significance.

The lecture is at 7pm in the Redfield Auditorium in the Davidson Mathematics and Science Center at UNR. Parking is reserved for the event on the top level of the Brian J. Whalen Parking Complex. Admission is free.

For more information, call 775.784.4591.

DNA at center of Swanson murder trial

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – DNA, motive and crime scene tactics will play a prominent role in the prosecution and defense of Andrew Sanford.

Nearly two years to the day after being arrested in the 1980 murder of Richard Swanson, Sanford went on trial March 18 in El Dorado County Superior Court before Judge James Wagoner.

Swanson was a 16-year-old South Tahoe High School student

working the graveyard shift at the former Shell station at the Y when he was bound with duct tape and left to die of asphyxiation.

Until March 2010 no one had been arrested in the murder that took place Aug. 14, 1980.



The local Secret Witness program was started because of the Richard Swanson case.

The District Attorney's Office believes DNA, which was not used in cases at the time, will prove 52-year-old Sanford is the murderer. The defense believes there is no proof Sanford committed the murder because the crime scene was so contaminated and that with Sanford regularly working on his vehicle at the station proves his DNA would be at the scene.

For Swanson's parents, who now live in Sonora, they are grateful that nearly 33 years after their son's death someone is standing trial.

Swanson's father, Ronald, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It was a great relief (when an arrest was made)." Mother, Sharon, said of her son's death, "You learn to live with it, but it won't go away."

Their son, Bob, who is eight years younger than Richard, was with them in the Placerville courtroom. Mostly they were expressionless as they sat behind the assistant district attorneys.

Sanford, dressed in a gray pinstripe suit, sat next to his attorney at times taking notes, other times reading legal documents.

The trial is not expected to be over soon.

On Tuesday the eight-woman, four-man jury heard opening statements from both sides and testimony by the first five prosecution witnesses.

“Andrew Sanford – he is a thief. He stole money from the Shell station and more important he stole Mr. Swanson’s life,” Trish Kelliher, El Dorado County assistant district attorney, said in her opening statement.

“The evidence will be insufficient to demonstrate that Mr. Sanford was responsible for this criminal offense. You will ask yourself, ‘Is that all there is?’” defense attorney Erik Schlueter said in his opening remarks.

The prosecution says: Sanford lived in South Lake Tahoe at the time of the murder. He left shortly thereafter. He was convicted in 1982 for stealing a truck. At times he used a different name.

The defense says: The South Lake Tahoe Police Department used a maintenance man to collect evidence. At times gloves were not used, other times they touched multiple items. Pictures show evidence was moved.

Robert Blasier, DNA expert for the defense, said it’s impossible to detect when DNA got on an item or if was transferred there unknowingly.

Ronald Swanson was the first witness of the day. He relived

what it was like to be contacted by officers at work at Coldwell Banker, to have to go home and tell his wife their son had been killed, and then go the mortuary to identify him. As a former Ventura County sheriff's deputy and officer with the California Highway Patrol, Swanson knew the protocol of a crime scene. Even though he went to the Shell station, he said he didn't cross the yellow crime scene tape to see where his son had died.

By the time Swanson got to the mortuary the duct tape that had covered his son's mouth and nose, and bound his hands behind his back were removed. He stayed there for about a half hour.

"It was hard to leave," Swanson testified.

Then Timothy Deal, who worked at the Shell station at the time, talked about what it was like to work there and the different procedures. He swung by the station about 2 the morning of the murder to do some paperwork. Deal said everything was fine at that hour.

Rodney Jones was working a construction job back in 1980 and staying at the KOA campground in Meyers. Almost daily they filled up at the Shell station. When Kelliher asked him if he recalled telling officers that there was no one to pay that morning he had no recollection. Reading the police report didn't jar his memory either.

Kelliher kept trying to ask if Jones had a propensity to lie to cops. The judge didn't allow the line of questioning.

Frederick Hudson was spending that August in Meeks Bay with his family, but he still had to drive to Watsonville on occasion to work. Aug. 14 was on of those days. He filled up at the shell station about 5am.

"(The officer) said I was one of the last people to see the young man who took my credit card. You don't hear that too often," Hudson said.

Hudson gave his statement to police over the phone; never met them in person. He testified that he was never shown a picture of Swanson.

Patrick Riley was the pathologist who performed the autopsy on Swanson. He was working for Reno-based Laboratory Medicine Consultants. He relied on his written report at the time for details about what he found during the autopsy.

“There was a laceration from the middle left of the scalp extending from the top of the head to essentially to the left ear,” Riley said.

Several black specks were found in the laceration, which he said were pieces of bone from the skull.

Officers at the time had asked him if any wood fragments were found. “No” was the answer. Schlueter, in his opening statement, said a pipe was found a few days after the murder but that it was later destroyed.

The device used to whack Swanson over the head has not been recovered.

Riley testified that Swanson died after the blow to the head.

He said death would have occurred three to four minutes after Swanson’s mouth and nose were taped.

Testimony continues today at 8:30am.

Opinion: Nevada encroaching

on rights of professional photographers

By Carolyn E. Wright

As an attorney in the Lake Tahoe area who represents photographers and who also is a photographer, I am concerned about the rights of photographers.



Carolyn E. Wright

The Nevada Division of State Parks will have a public hearing at the Richard Bryan Building, 901 S. Stewart St., Carson City, 2nd floor Tahoe hearing room, on March 31 from 3-5pm for amended regulations relating to park entrance fees for photographers with commercial photography permits. The good news is there will be no fee increase associated with the amendments. The bad news is that, while reviewing the proposed changes, I learned that Nevada defines commercial photography as:

> *[P]hotography engaged in for financial gain, including, without limitation, the sale of a photographic image as a product or for use in advertising, motion pictures, television productions or portfolios and the archiving of an image by a person who uses photographic skills, equipment or resources to provide a photographic product for sale.*

It’s disappointing that Nevada defines commercial photography

by the purpose of the photography rather than by the activities that may affect the park and visitors, as is done with the National Park Service. Go online for more information.

But it gets worse. Currently, the website for the Nevada Administrative Code ("NAC") 407.050 states:

> *4. For each day or partial day that a person engages in commercial photography in a park, the Division will charge and collect the following fee according to the total number of vehicles or the total number of persons, whichever results in a higher fee:*
>
> *Number of Vehicles or Persons Fee Per Day*
>
> *2 to 5 vehicles or 6 to 25 persons…….. $200*
>
> *6 to 10 vehicles or 26 to 50 persons…… 350*
>
> *11 to 15 vehicles or 51 to 75 persons…….. 500*
>
> *16 to 20 vehicles or 76 to 100 persons…….. 800*
>
> *21 to 50 vehicles or 101 to 400 persons……. 2,100*
>
> *More than 50 vehicles or more than 400 persons……. 3,500*
>
> *. . .*
>
> *6. The Division will not charge a fee pursuant to this section for:*
>
> *(a) Commercial photography engaged in by one to five persons in a single vehicle . . . .*

So when I took this photo at Sand Harbor State Park in 2009, I didn’t need a permit because I was shooting alone.



2013 Revisions

But the NAC website is not up to date. Last year, the NAC made changes to the code that have not been posted online but are available directly from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. And the changes aren’t good:

1. The definition of commercial photography now includes portraits.

2. The fees have been divided into classes. Class A is now: 1

to 3 vehicles or 2 to 15 persons and the fee is $50 a day.

3. New provisions have been added that state:

> *7. A person may request an annual class A commercial photography permit . . . [for] a fee of $500. . . . A person to whom is issued an annual class A commercial photography permit shall:*
>
> *(a) Pay the entrance fee required pursuant to NAC 407.055 each time he or she enters a park to engage in commercial photography;*
>
> *(b) Maintain adequate insurance coverage for the entire period he or she holds such a permit and provide proof to the Division of such coverage; and*
>
> *(c) Contact in advance the office of the park that he or she intends to use to confirm the availability of the areas where the person intends to engage in commercial photography.*

Proposed Revision for 2014

So, the only substantive proposed change for 2014 relating to photographers is that the Code will be clarified so that:

> *The Division will waive the entrance fee for the park (referenced in paragraph 7 (a) above) upon payment of the fee for an Annual Class A photography permit.*

Which is, at least, a little good news.



Therefore, a photographer is supposed to pay $50/day or $500/year to take photos in Nevada State Parks, which includes Cave Rock State Park, the Spooner backcountry area, and Sand Harbor State Park in Lake Tahoe. But the photographer's activity and impact on the park and other visitors likely is no different than that of a hobbyist photographer. Taking family vacation photos usually doesn't affect the park or its visitors any more than taking portraits for seniors or engaged couples. Taking landscape or wildlife photos for later sale doesn't affect the park or its visitors than it does for sharing the photos on Facebook. Given the literal interpretation of the statute, I was not violating the law when I took my friends' engagement photos (example shown above) last October because it was my gift to them. But if I had charged them for the shoot, as I have for other clients, then I should have paid the State Park fee.

State legislators, please understand that photographers usually don't use the park any differently than anyone else. So we shouldn't have to pay more than anyone else. Instead, please modify the code so that it is similar to the National Parks guidelines.

Persons wishing to comment upon this proposed action of State Parks may appear at the scheduled public hearing or may provide their comments, data, views or concerns in written form to Division of State Parks, 901 S. Stewart St., Suite

5005, Carson City, NV 89701-5248. Written submissions must be received on or before March 31.

Carolyn E. Wright is a licensed attorney dedicated to the legal needs for photographers. She provides free legal information online.

Broc’s Puppies owner skips out on court hearing

Dennis Franks is making a habit of being a no-show for court appearances.

The former owner of Broc’s Puppies in South Lake Tahoe didn’t appear for his March 18 preliminary hearing. In June 2011 he failed to appear for an arraignment.

Retired El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Jerry Lasarow, who now acts as a visiting judge throughout the state, issued an arrest warrant for Franks. Franks now lives in Las Vegas.

The pet store had been controversial since almost the day it opened. Several dogs bought there later died. It was also linked to puppy mills. The store led South Lake Tahoe to create an ordinance banning the sale of dogs and cats in the city limits, which was a ground breaking law at the time. Several cities have followed suit since then.

Franks faces numerous grand theft and forgery charges.

Broc’s Puppies and its sister store in Carson City, Lil’ Pups, closed in April 2010.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Loose dog that bit man being sought

Authorities are looking for a dog that bit a South Lake Tahoe man.

The man, whose name has not been released, saw the Husky-type dog on March 16 about 6pm near Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Washington Avenue. When he went to read the dog's tag it bit him.

El Dorado County Animal Services said the man was treated and released, but did not disclose the extent of the injury or where the bite occurred.

The dog is described as medium-sized, with gray and white fluffy fur, wearing a blue collar and tags.

Officials want to speak to the dog's owner to verify it is current on its rabies vaccination so the man does not have to have post-exposure rabies treatments. Anyone with information is asked to call 530.573.7925.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Warmest winter on record worsens Calif. drought

By Laila Kearney, Reuters

SAN FRANCISCO – California is coming off of its warmest winter on record, aggravating an enduring drought in the most populous state, federal weather scientists said Monday.

The state had a average temperature of 48 for December, January and February, an increase from 47.2 F in 1980-81, the last hottest winter, and more than 4 degrees hotter than the 20th-century average in California, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in a statement.

Warmer winters could make the already parched state even drier by making it less likely for snow to accumulate in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, NOAA spokesman Brady Phillips said. That snow, melting in the spring and summer and running down through the state's rivers, is vital for providing water in the summer, when the state typically experiences little rain.

Read the whole story