



with News & Classifieds From: The Ore

SEARCH The Oregonian Enter Keyword(s) GO FIND A BUSINESS Enter Keyword

- Home News+Biz Local Sports Forums Living Entertainment Travel Marketplace

- Part 1: Turf wars in Idaho's wilderness
Part 2: Life on the ranch

Turf wars in Idaho's wilderness

Sunday, October 29, 2006
RICHARD COCKLE

McCALL, Idaho -- Wolf researcher Jim Akenson is riding a mule on an icy mountain trail in central Idaho when he comes upon a dead cougar. Suddenly, a pack of wolves materializes and begins howling.

For one terrifying moment, the 48-year-old biologist thinks his startled mules are going to stampede and carry him off a 200-foot cliff into Big Creek.

"We could not turn around," says Akenson, describing that tense winter episode four years ago in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. "It is the most precarious condition you can imagine, with wolves howling around you."

Advertisement

CONTINUE STORY

MORE SEARCHES

Classifieds

- Jobs
Autos
Real Estate
All Classifieds

Death Notices & Obituaries

- Death Notices
Guest Books
News Obituaries

Local Businesses

- Find A Business

Entertainment

- Movies
Music
Arts & Events
Dining & Bars

Jobs | Auto
Real Estate | Plac

All Classified

Shop Oregon

Your Complete SF Section Online

- See our Game of the Week
Arianna Huffington's New Bc
Broadway Books Best Seller Giveaway



OregonLive.com / no

SEND THIS PAGE

PRINT THIS PAGE



HIGH SCHOOL FALL SPORTS Follow Every T Know Every So

FROM OUR ADVERT



- >> [Power your resume](#)
- >> [Find your dream home](#)
- >> [Super deals on new wher](#)

» [Advertise With](#)

OUR AFFILIATE

Hillsboro
Argus

The crisis ends quickly. Akenson's saddle mule, Daisy, gives the carcass an indifferent sniff, steps over it and proceeds down the trail. Cricket and Rocky, his pack mules, follow, paying the wolves no heed.

Akenson shrugs it off as part of life in the Idaho wilderness.

"There are circumstances when you could be in trouble with wolves," he muses. "But I think they are very rare."

Akenson and his biologist wife, Holly, 48, are in the ninth year of a University of Idaho-sponsored research project on wolf and cougar interaction. They live and work at the Taylor Ranch Field Station, deep inside the largest block of contiguous wilderness in the lower 48 states. The ranch is 34 miles from the nearest road and is believed to be the most remote year-round human habitation in the nation, outside Alaska.

It is hoped their research will deepen the understanding of wolf behavior, as the predators flourish in Idaho and move into Oregon, where they are feared mainly for the damage they can do to livestock. And as wolves limit the territory of a burgeoning cougar population, that could have deep impact in Oregon, where cougars have rebounded to 5,000 individuals.

But the work of this couple is carried out as remotely as the animals they observe.

A bush plane delivers mail and groceries once a week. Their three-room log cabin's amenities include running water, wood heat, a flush toilet and a hydropower unit that provides electricity for lights, computers and a satellite TV. They have no telephone, but they keep in touch with the outside world via Internet e-mail and an FM-band "backcountry radio."