

The Leader

December 1, 2021
Issue 48 / Vol. 132

IN DEPTH • IN TOUCH • INDEPENDENT • SINCE 1889

\$1.50

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Bobtailed beauties



Kala Point resident Ron Gentry said he and his wife have seen bobcats around a dozen times in the past few years. They don't seem to have a fear of people, he said. *Photo courtesy of Ron Gentry*

Local wildcats adapt to human presence

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Corey Wilkerson saw one cool cat. “He was stunning, really,” said the Port Ludlow resident.

“He was a nice big cat,” Wilkerson added. “He never changed his pace like he was startled or alarmed or anything.”

Wilkerson and his husband Tom were standing in their garage on a weekday afternoon when movement caught Wilkerson’s eye.

“I just assumed it was a dog or something,” he said.

As soon as the couple realized that they were looking at a wild bobcat, Wilkerson pulled out his phone and started filming.

“I took four little clips,” he said. “He knew I was there; he stopped and looked at me.”

As a 2020 transplant from Sacramento, Wilkerson was amazed to be up close and personal — within 15 or 20 feet — from an animal known to be elusive and rarely seen.

“He never changed his pace like he was startled or alarmed or anything,” Wilkerson marveled.

His experience would seem to be unique, however, it seems lots of folks in Jefferson County are seeing bobcats, from Kala Point to Cape George to Paradise Bay Road.

Social neighborhood networking site Nextdoor threads have addressed the topic, with multiple snapshots posted at all hours of the day, in locations as unlikely as a backyard deck to roadside ditches.

Ron Gentry has lived in the county since 1999. It wasn’t until he and his wife Caryl Fallert-Gentry moved to Kala Point in 2014 that he started seeing bobcats.

“I think they pretty much stick to the woods,” Gentry said.



A pair of bobcats has been casually patrolling Kala Point, evidenced by this photo contributed by a resident who lives there on a bluff. *Photo courtesy of Ron Gentry*

“We’re not the only ones in this neighborhood that have seen them,” he said. “In this neighborhood, they seem comfortable with people.”

“Carol actually saw a bobcat right at the edge of our deck,” Gentry said, adding that it was pouncing on a rat.

Now, there is a duo of younger cats that stroll across the deck frequently.

“This is the only time we’ve seen them in a pair,” he said. “The bobcats are not shy.”

CATAWAMPUS

But *Lynx rufus*, the bobcat, is usually described as afraid of humans and furtive.

The species page on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s website echoes many professional opinions when it states, “because of their elusive nature and caution around humans, bobcats are seldom seen.”

Haley Withers, a keeper who cares for two bobcats at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park near Mount Rainier, has her own hypothesis.

“Bobcats are very adaptable animals and are adjusting to life in urban and suburban areas as residential and commercial development expand,” she wrote in an email to The Leader.

Both of the cats under her care were raised illegally in captivity, “Tahoma” in San Juan County, and “Tanner” in Montana state, before joining other felids at the wildlife park.

“Unsecured trash bins, unattended pet food left on decks or porches, and even bird feeders can attract smaller mammals and birds that are prey items for bobcats,” she wrote.

“Once a bobcat learns where it can find an easy meal, regardless of the time of day, it will continue to take advantage of that opportunity and will become more bold in doing so as time goes on,” she added.

Withers further noted, “Bobcats in Washington state have a healthy population and can be found across the state in most types of habitats. Without having past and current population data on the bobcats in Washington state, it is difficult to say if what we are seeing is a rise in population or just

see **WILDCATS**, Page A11

Murder suspect entered home firing gun

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The Port Townsend man accused of murdering a Quilcene man was upset about how people were talking about him just before the shooting, according to a police report.

Robin L. Richards, 62, was shot to death late Friday night as he was unarmed and sitting in a chair just inside the front door of his home on McInnis Road.

Authorities allege that Blake R. Fox, 37, had been visiting Richards along with a woman and her 6-year-old daughter.

They first went to the home about 9:30 a.m. Friday.

Fox stepped outside, according to the statement of probable cause for his arrest, and was smoking a cigarette when he came

see **MURDER**, Page A11

Complaint over ‘proof of vax’ mandate accuses officials of treason

Jefferson, Clallam counties agree to pursue joint defense

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Jefferson County will join with Clallam County to defend against a “criminal complaint” claim made by a Port Angeles woman who claims the adoption of the “proof of vaccination” mandate for indoor dining violates her constitutional rights.

The complaint is being pursued by Paris Jean Humble, a Port Angeles resident and dance instructor, and was filed in Tacoma Nov. 8 and delivered to commissioners in Jefferson and Clallam counties earlier this month.

Titled as a “First Amendment Petition for Redress of Grievances,” the complaint names Jefferson and Clallam county commissioners as defendants, as well as members of both boards of county health.

In the claim, Humble alleges her First, Fourth, Fifth, and Eighth Amendment rights have been violated.

see **TREASON**, Page A11

United Good Neighbors supports the nonprofits, staff, and volunteers who are dedicated to providing critical programs and safety-net services to those most in need in Jefferson County.

Donors can choose to contribute to the Give Jefferson fund or can pick a specific partner to support.

Donations to Give Jefferson ensure that food, shelter, healthcare, and education continues to be available to those weathering uncertainty and recovering from crisis.

Go to www.givejefferson.org to learn more, view a complete list of eligible recipients, and donate.

You can help United Good Neighbors!



THIS YEAR'S GOAL: \$300,000

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Murder: No clear motive apparent yet in shooting

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back and started shooting. The woman told a detective that Fox had been standing in the foyer when he opened fire.

After the shots, Richards said, "He killed me," the witness told police.

She also said she saw a weapon in Fox's hand.

Her 6-year-old daughter had been asleep on a couch, she told investigators.

The woman said Fox ran away after the shooting, then came back to see if her daughter was OK. Fox then fled the scene in a red 2008 Ford F-150 pickup, according to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies found Richards lying on the floor about 10 feet from the front door when they arrived.

Within a few minutes, EMS personnel determined he was dead.

The murder prompted an intensive search for Fox Saturday morning.

Authorities posted Fox's driver's license photo and a photograph to social media of the type of Ford pickup he drove from the scene, warning the public that he was considered armed and dangerous, was paranoid and believed to be under the influence of drugs.

A sheriff's detective contacted Fox's parents, who said he had a long history of drug use and needed treatment. They also said they



Jefferson County deputies said Robin L. Richards, 62, was shot and killed in his Quilcene home sometime around midnight Friday, Nov. 26. Leader photo by James Sloan

could not help him anymore and he had been told he had to leave their home. They did not know where he was living and did not think he had a job, according to the statement of probable cause.

About 12 hours after the shooting, police learned that Fox had run out of gas and was hiding in the woods near West Valley Road in Chimacum.

A sheriff's detective was able to talk to him on the phone, according to the statement of probable cause, and he was upset and distraught.

"I asked him where he was and he would not answer," Detective Art Frank said in



Blake R. Fox makes his first appearance in Jefferson County Superior Court Monday via video from the county jail. Leader photo from Zoom

the statement. "He told me he heard a siren and I must know where he was."

Fox eventually told the detective where he was and

he ultimately agreed to walk toward West Valley Road where deputies were looking for him.

Fox said he was armed but

agreed to put down his gun before meeting with deputies, according to the statement of probable cause.

After he was taken into custody, Fox allegedly told the detective he had thrown his Glock into the woods.

He also said: "I should have just left, the way they were talking to me."

After getting a warrant to search Fox's bedroom at his parents house, police found hundreds of rounds of ammunition, in eight different calibers. They also found an AR-15 rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun.

Investigators believe Fox fired at least three times during Friday night's shooting.

Two bullet holes were found in the front door, and two additional holes were discovered in the chair where Richards had been sitting.

Fox was booked into Jefferson County Jail in Port Hadlock for second-degree murder just before 1:30 p.m. Saturday and was initially held without bail.

Fox made his first appearance in court Monday via a video monitor from the Jefferson County Jail.

He shook his head "no" when Judge Keith Harper read the account of the crime as detailed in the statement of probable cause.

He fidgeted through the short hearing, occasionally crossing his arms as the judge spoke, or leaning forward to prop himself up on a

table in front of him.

When Harper asked him if he wanted to be represented by a lawyer, he said, "Of course."

The judge then asked if he would hire his own attorney, or need a public defender.

"At this point I don't have any money, so I'm asking for a public defender," Fox said.

Prosecuting Attorney James Kennedy asked bail to be set at \$750,000.

Kennedy said Fox did not have an extensive criminal history, but noted a juvenile assault charge from 1994 in California, as well as other minor charges and three driving-under-the-influence cases from 2005, 2007, and 2011.

Fox also has a history of eight bench warrants for his arrest, Kennedy said, as well as a significant substance abuse problem.

Kennedy said Fox had "many firearms and a lot of ammunition" and noted he fled the scene of the shooting.

Lillian Powers, an attorney speaking on behalf of Fox, asked bail be set at \$75,000.

For Fox, that represents a significant amount, Powers said.

Harper set bail at \$750,000.

Fox will next appear in court for his arraignment on the charge of second-degree murder, armed with a firearm, on Friday, Dec. 3.

Conviction of second-degree murder can result in a maximum penalty of life in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

Wildcats: Bobcats increasingly sighted all over county

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an increase in sightings."

CAT-ASTROPHE, AVERTED

Sara Penhallegon, a vet tech who works at Center Valley Animal Rescue in Quilcene, weighed in during a conversation early this week, saying, "It is a little uncommon for people to see them [bobcats] on their porches."

The animal rescue recently took in two late-season female bobcat kittens, both apparently orphaned around 3 months of age in entirely different parts of the state.

One kitten was found sitting atop a quail cage on a porch north of Hoquiam, where she was trying desperately to get at the birds. The homeowners scooped the baby up in a parrot cage, but couldn't get her back out of it.

"Everything on a bobcat is sharp," Penhallegon said, explaining that Center Valley was able to intervene and bring the kitten back to Quilcene.

"You don't want to raise a single animal," she said, the result being a socially inept individual.

Luckily, a kitten with a similar story who came from Monroe was paired with the first kitten, and the two are staying nice and feral, just as Penhallegon hoped.

"They were late babies," she said. "Typically, they'd be 6 months



Bobcats "Tanner" and "Tahoma" at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park in Eatonville. Katie Cotterill photo | Northwest Trek Wildlife Park

old" at this time of year, she added.

A 3-month-old bobcat is extremely vulnerable, she explained, and totally dependent on their mothers.

Bobcats are strict carnivores; animals that eat only meat. Even the pet food that Penhallegon uses to supplement the little cats' diet of live mice and rats, and quail and brook trout flesh, is all-meat.

"We haven't had bobcats in several years," she said. "They're beautiful little animals."

COEXISTING WITH NATURE

However, felids are a COVID species, meaning the virus can be passed to bobcats by humans.

Dr. Allison Case, head veterinarian at Northwest Trek Wildlife

Park, said that when working with wild felids closely, like they do in the wildlife park, it is possible for humans to transmit COVID. Wild felids not under human care, however, have a much lower risk of getting COVID due to not having close contact with humans who may be carrying the virus, she wrote via email.

The kittens in Penhallegon's care were processed and handled in head-to-toe protective suits to reduce the risk of contagion. Now, the two kittens have been released into an outdoor pen on the property and she rarely sees them.

"They're not being handled," she said.

As much as it's natural to gravitate toward creatures so similar to domestic cats — female bobcats are close in size to a large house cat, while males can reach upwards of 30 pounds — the best thing people can do is avoid inadvertently domesticating them.

"Wild bobcats can stay truly wild if humans were more aware of the potential food items they are making available for bobcats," Withers explained.

She offered some solutions.

"Do not leave pet food or water outside unattended," she added. "If using a bird feeder, ensure there is no overflowing seeds on the ground attracting rodents and ultimately attracting bobcats. Install appropriate fencing to keep livestock and chickens securely contained, and bring your cats and dogs inside for the night."

"All of these easy tactics will deter bobcats from your neighborhood and will encourage bobcats to prey on more appropriate items such as rabbits and field mice," Withers noted.

Treason: Complaint claim form came from fringe website

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Her 30-page filing, which includes a "Declaration of Revision" that begins with an extended quotation of the Declaration of Independence, says state, county, city, and local government public servants have established "an absolute tyranny over WE THE PEOPLE."

The claim alleges that Jefferson and Clallam county officials have engaged in a conspiracy and have committed treason.

"I understand the matter and have first hand knowledge of the commercial damage to this/our wonderful community, and face to face testimony from my fellow citizens, reports from local newspapers, and news from social media," the complaint says.

It alleges that "people have been denied the liberty of eating in local restaurants because they choose not to toxify their bodies with untested vaccines (in the 1950s in the U.S. white's and colored people suffered segregation in the southern states)."

The claim also says people have lost their jobs due to the proof of vaccination mandate, adding "men and women of said community have been denied vital services, such as food and government services, because they refused to show VAX ID cards."

FREEDOMS LOST

It also alleges that people's religious

freedom has been denied because of imposed mandates that include Costco and other merchants.

"Men and women have been assaulted by employees of stores while shopping when they were not willing to wear a mask over their nose, mouth, and face which deprives them of vital oxygen to breath[e]," the complaint continues.

The claim also criticizes schools that require children to wear masks.

The complaint, it also notes, is needed to "clean up the legal cesspool" and "overcome the corruption of the courts, officers, attorneys, judges, and public servants."

In addition to the "Declaration of Revision," the 30-page document also includes a one-page nearly illegible "declaration schematic," two-page "supporting tables" of constitutional references, six-page detailing of "explicit ledgering," which includes checked items that include the statements "No law-abiding person shall be forced to do anything he does not want to do," "Any action taken against me must be fully described to me in writing, issued by a court of law (not an agency — like IRS), signed by a judge (not an agent — like IRS), and sworn on oath," and "The right of people to keep and bear arms shall never be limited or infringed."

The complaint also notes the "civil value" of the claim is more than \$5.1 million.

Exhibits included in the complaint include the vaccination public health orders adopted

for Clallam and Jefferson counties by Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry in early September.

Also included: a resolution passed by the Jefferson County Board of Health that declared COVID misinformation a public health crisis.

FROM THE WEB

The cover page for the criminal complaint is identical to one that is widely available on the internet from a webpage for a sovereign citizen advocacy group, which proclaims on its homepage, "The 'truth' is whatever we want it to be."

An earlier post on the website includes an "advisory to all Patriots."

Posted Dec. 16, it recommends that patriots have a 10-day supply of food and bottled water and buy an "old school" CB radio for communication, "while you can still get one. At some time between December 18 and 24th, President Trump will tactically implement the sanctions from his 2018 Executive Order on Voter Interference. This will freeze the money and assets of people and entities to include Facebook, Twitter, the Fake News Corp, AND Chinese U.S. financial accounts. (Also why we have prepared our land and sea borders against invasion). Be prepared to assist the National Guard and other military commands in defense of our nation."

The post concludes: "During this time, local law enforcement will have no authority.

So, assemble small Patriot teams to patrol and secure your own and surrounding neighborhoods."

JOINT DEFENSE

County officials recently had a Zoom meeting with their insurance risk pool, which offered to defend Jefferson and Clallam officials against the claim, which was filed in Tacoma Nov. 8 by Brent Wilson, who is not an attorney.

Interim Jefferson County Administrator Mark McCauley said the county agreed to the offer via email.

Jefferson County commissioners OK'd the arrangement last week.

Their decision came after a private executive session to talk about potential litigation with McCauley and Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Philip Hunsucker.

After officials returned to an open public session, Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour suggested "that we accept the risk pool's offer to provide counsel in joint defense of Clallam County to defend the claims made by Brent Wilson and/or anyone related to him."

There was no extended discussion and her fellow commissioners unanimously agreed.

Commissioner Kate Dean said it was "another example of how we spend county resources; trying to defend claims that are ... most often proved to be frivolous."

"Here we go again," she added.