

# 2007 Eastern WA/OR BCL Rendezvous

by Scott Noga

Immediately following the success of the 2006 Eastern Washington Rendezvous, planning began for a repeat in 2007. Organizing any kind of large gathering takes considerable time and effort so it's not something that can be put off to the last couple of months. Preparations for supplies, promotion, events, etc., continued all the while without a suitable available site. While considering a bit further north in the Godman Springs area, the location for the 2006 gathering, the region fell victim to a devastating summer wildfire that consumed 108,000 acres. Numerous alternatives were visited and/or contacted, with very few even willing to consider hosting such an event. Emigrant Springs, located 50 miles southwest of Godman Springs in the Blue Mountains of Northeast Oregon was the location of this year's rendezvous organized by Scott & Gayle Noga of Rattlesnake Ridge Ranch, just outside of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, ultimately became the new location, offering more facilities and easier access compared to last year. Food preparation was aided by a large commercial grade kitchen in the rented recently remodeled community building. Aside from tent and RV camping, nice cabins are available for rent and not far from the community building are campsites with small horse corrals.



No, that's not a kid, that's Barb Brady checking out our Canadian visitors. I think gravity is less up there.

We arrived on Wednesday to begin setup, following an extremely hectic couple of weeks of one unplanned crisis after another. Among those was a trip to WSU-Pullman with our primary pack llama Peppercorn due to apparent difficulty with raising his head and losing weight again. Following a series of radiograms, he was diagnosed with a pronounced case of cervical arthritis, prescribed phenylbutazone, but was said to be well enough to pack lightly until his normal weight was restored. Peppercorn, Morning Sunshine, and their "just turned 4" offspring King Asher accompanied us to the rendezvous for a family outing – their first together.

Participants began arriving on Thursday, with most rolling in throughout Friday. Heather Gibbons tended the registration table and welcomed attendees while Ryan helped folks set up camp and stake out llamas. Displays and vendor tables were set up at one end of the community building, with a multimedia center at the other end – an 8' wide movie screen and hi-fi sound. An introduction to llamas presentation with llama songs ran until the first hour introductory llama packing seminar was conducted. This was followed by a "welcome to the rendezvous" dinner prepared by Gayle, Heather and Ryan Gibbons, assisted by others, consisting of barbeque turkey, fresh carrots, onions, cucumbers slices, new potatoes and more, and other goodies supplied by attendees. After sundown, the feature

movie was presented along with homemade root beer floats (both the root beer and ice cream were made on site that day) and popcorn. Participants watched "The Story of the Weeping Camel," a moving documentary of a Mongolian family confronted with the plight of a rejected newborn camel.

Meanwhile, another drama was playing out. Peppercorn had been browsing around during the day and Thursday evening was taken for a walk with some other llamas, but although starting out excited and very animated about going somewhere he suddenly began acting abnormally and actually cushed along the way. He has never in his packing career ever cushed on the trail no matter how stressed or uncomfortable. Something

obviously wasn't right so he was walked back to our campsite. I returned later to check on him, finding him cushed but when he attempted to get up his legs gave out and he stumbled and fell. His condition was obviously deteriorating. It was uncertain if it was due to a badly pinched nerve at the base of the neck from dancing around, a poisoning, or tick paralysis setting in. He was isolated in a corral to monitor and control the "goes-ins" and "goes-outs", temperature taken, and a call was made to WSU. The on call vet recommended quadrupling his dose of bute. We were provided enough bute in the initial prescription to only cover the weekend at the regular maintenance dose. A prescription was faxed to a Pendleton veterinarian for pickup by the Ellen Pollick family (Exotic Animal Rescue of Hermiston, Oregon) on their way through town to the rendezvous. Bute typically takes a day or two before a response is seen so he was monitored frequently for any change, one way or the other. A restful night was totally out of the question as I worried if my favorite pack companion would be deceased by morning.

As it happened, Friday morning and through the day his condition appeared to be stable – no better or worse. With no significant improvement seen from the bute it was thought that it might be a case of tick paralysis. Janet Collier that evening contacted a Pendleton veterinarian (a relative) who made arrangements with Scott to rendezvous with Gayle and Barb at a Pendleton clinic at 11PM to provide a dose of Ivermectin, which we administered about midnight.



Packing Seminar

Saturday morning began early with a fabulous breakfast. All you can eat eggs, sausage, hash browns, juices, (orange, grape, apple), milk, and more. Breakfasts were to be provided by local 4-H groups as a fundraiser in support of llama projects, but this fell through a few days before rendezvous so Gayle organized the meals in support of llama rescue – sorely needed these days, unfortunately.

An introductory seminar on lost llama tracking was provided by Scott. This is a small radio frequency transmitter attached to a collar and a portable handheld directional receiver. It allows you to quite easily locate a runaway llama within a several mile radius (approximately 2-20+ miles, depending on terrain) and

has a battery life of more than 720 hours of continuous use. Pack with greater peace of mind. Contact Scott at [llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com](mailto:llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com) for more details.

Scott also explained the GPS Treasure Hunt that was available throughout the day. Coordinates led to numbered flags and participants had to match the correct number to the coordinate. Each flag located entitled the participant to an extra card to better his or her hand for an earlier pick at the prize table. Part 2 of Packing with Llamas by Barb Brady followed in the community building, which went into great detail regarding what to bring and how to efficiently and effectively pack your gear (and how to efficiently find it again).

A llama driving seminar started in the open field behind the community building, provided by Lisi Ott and Jeff Johnson. This was a new experience for many interested youth as they learned first hand what it takes to drive their llamas and how to go about it. Several could be seen practicing in the surrounding area afterwards.

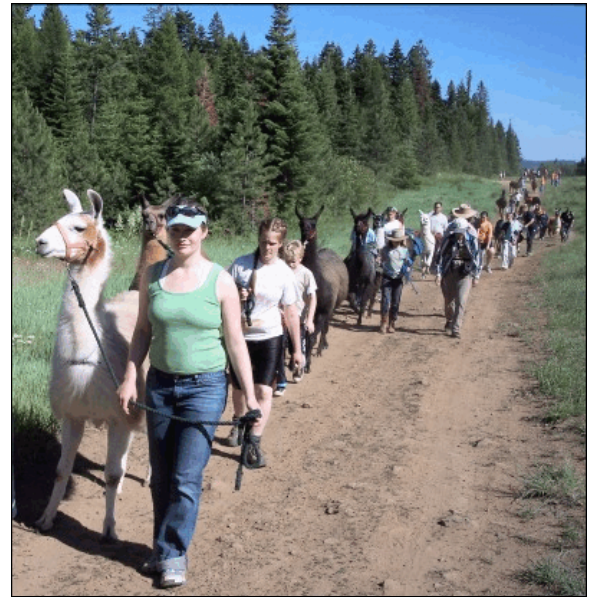
Food was provided for active people on the move – build-your-own sandwiches and sack lunches. In addition to dried fruit, veggies, and snack foods, fresh cherries had been hand picked the morning we left for rendezvous and made available.

Herb and Barb Barrus provided a demonstration of how to process llama fiber from raw to finished product, which included preparation, cleaning, carding, spinning, weaving, knitting and more. For that less-than-

desirable fiber, Debra Langley-Boyer showed how to felt it into craft items. She followed this with a very informative how-to outdoor seminar on backcountry camping, applying leave-no-trace principles. Many very helpful wilderness camping tips were shared that could otherwise only be learned the hard way.

Over 50 people with llamas "saddled up" and converged in the ballfield to hike the poker run. This was a two part varied trail. Folks had the option of taking the short course, or continuing on the long course for a couple of extra cards to build the hand. Most opted for the long course. The trek included narrow forested trails with felled trees and some varied elevation, wide trails, a little mud and water, a derelict cabin, open road for a more expansive view, and a bit of steep hill climbing – nearly five miles in all.

Dinner was provided soon afterwards, enhanced by potluck for lots of variety. An educational public demonstration was provided to a group of park campers in the parks outdoor amphitheater, which according to a park ranger was 42 people, most of the camp residents along with the park hosts and on-duty rangers. With several llamas in attendance and ready for work, Barb demonstrated packing, Lisi and Jeff driving, Ellen Pollick family public relations, and Scott general llama facts and attributes. It was very well received and left with a much greater appreciation for llamas. Add to that tally the park visitors and drop-ins that "checked out the llamas" over the weekend (even though we were hidden in the back) we were investigated by 86 people.



Poker Run

The awards presentation followed immediately after and was conducted at a pretty fast pace. Just like last year I don't think anyone in attendance left empty handed as lots of great prizes were available to choose from. More treats were provided and a very well done educational video on hiking in bear country was shown.

Sunday again started with a fabulous breakfast with bacon, eggs, pancakes with berries and whipped cream, juice, milk and more. While Saturday was filled with lots of activities to choose from Sunday was an open day. Most people had to pull up stakes and begin the trek home. Lunches-to-go were provided from the leftover food for many families hitting the road. Camp clean-up was thorough. The park staff were very favorably impressed and the hired crew that ensures the community building is clean reported they had nothing to do. We

have been invited back next year. A group photo was taken Sunday following cleanup after half the participants had already left (make note to do better organizing a group shot next year...)



Eagle Creek Meadow

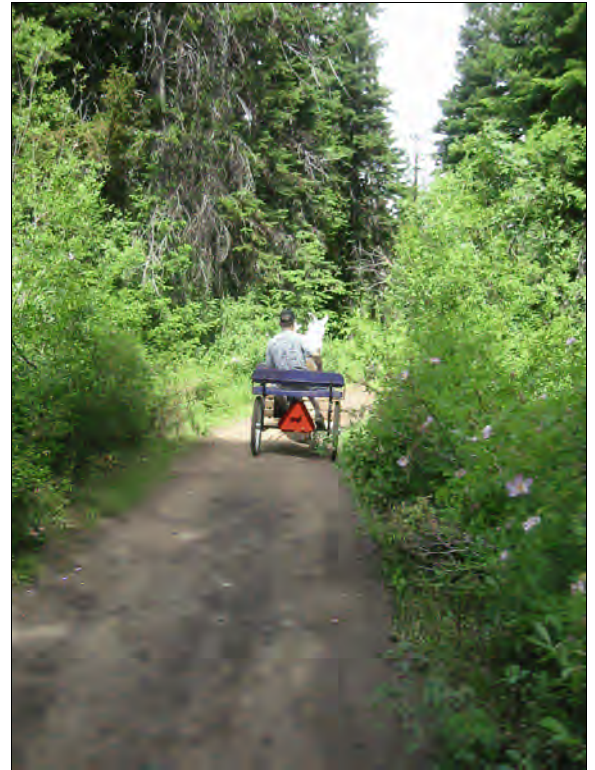
Barb and Scott (meeting up with three others) left Sunday afternoon for a three day pack trip in the Wallowa Wilderness area to collect details for next years rendezvous, which will include an actual pack trip for those so inclined. Watch the rattlesnakeridgeranch.com website for more details.

Gayle remained at Emigrant Springs to relax and take care of Peppercorn while he recuperated. Although improving, a strong evening cold front passed over

dropping temperatures twenty degrees in less than an hour to near freezing, with wind and pouring rain. Pepper got drenched and with his compromised condition became chilled and began to go hypothermic, shivering. Gayle put a rain fly over him but it wasn't enough. A prayer was spoken followed by a call from Ellen, concerned about what was going on, and launched a rescue mission. She arrived in the late evening with family and trailer to take Peppercorn off the mountain down to Hermiston – nearly 120 miles round trip, not counting the 60 mile return trip just made earlier. When we arrived to pick him up Wednesday on the way back home he was up and around, back to his old self, wooing all the ladies across the fence with his practiced serenade. He continues to do well, though I suspect his rapid aging is related to the chronic high level of endophyte poisoning he was unknowingly exposed to continuously for a couple of years. None of his close relatives have exhibited such symptoms.

All in all, despite the underlying drama and frenetic pace, it was an enjoyable (even for the organizers), educational and successful event, with so much of that success due to the efforts of many volunteers lending a helping hand. A big thanks goes out to all attendees! The number this year was 62 people. We hope to see you all, and more, next year. See the [rattlesnakeridgeranch.com](http://rattlesnakeridgeranch.com) website for more details and lots of photos.

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Adios