



A YEAR IN ANIMAL NEWS

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Sunday FAIRBANKS Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today No injuries reported in plane crash between Fairbanks, Anatumuk Pass. » A4

The social impact of legal pot

Major effects of decriminalizing marijuana in Alaska have not yet come to fruition

By Amanda Bohman
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Drug counselors say more workers are testing positive for marijuana and more weed is reportedly getting confiscated at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, but other feared social ills from decriminalizing marijuana in Alaska have yet to be seen in Fairbanks.

No one went to the emergency room at the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital in 2015 complaining of a marijuana overdose. Also, no child was taken there who had ingested the intoxicating plant, according to a hospital spokeswoman.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District reports that so far they've seen no increase in students caught bringing mar-

ijuana to school, according to Montean Jackson, the Safe and Drug Free Schools coordinator.

Fairbanks International Airport, Border Patrol and Fort Wainwright also reported that the new law decriminalizing personal use of pot on Feb. 24, 2015, caused little or no new problems for their agencies.

"I don't think it's really impacted us much," Fair-

banks District Attorney Gregg Olson said last week.

That could change once the state begins licensing marijuana businesses later this year and marijuana edibles, known to be more potent than smoking pot, become mainstream. But, for now, the impacts of more-permissive pot laws in Alaska are limited.

Bill Watson, who runs an outpatient treatment facility for substance abuse, Sev-

en Secrets Counseling, said that probably a handful of his clients tested positive for cannabis in a urine test because they mistakenly thought the new law overrode their workplace anti-drug policies.

Kelly Andaloro, another substance abuse counselor, said she has also noticed an uptick in workers testing positive for marijuana in a workplace drug test.

"Now, when it's legal, it

just gives people that blasé attitude about it," she said.

At UAF, Deputy Police Chief Steve Goetz said he thinks marijuana is more widely used on campus than it used to be even though possessing pot is against school policy.

"We get a lot of reports of the odor of marijuana in the dorms now," Goetz said.

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GOOD MORNING



The weather.
Mostly cloudy in the morning, then clearing up with highs in the lower to mid-20s.
High today 22
Low tonight 7
WEATHER » A7

Aurora forecast.
Auroral activity will be high. Weather permitting, highly active auroral displays will be visible overhead

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

AKITAS
Japan recognizes long-haired version of the dog breed.
SUNDAY FUN
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SOURDOUGH JACK:
"Even humans find themselves hungry in strange places, little birds."



State struggles to help hundreds of stranded seabirds

By Matt Buxton
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For the last two months, Southcentral Alaska has been inundated with grounded seabirds known as common murrelets starving and stranded miles from open water.

Now, the black-and-white birds, which need water to take flight, are being discovered even farther up north with sightings in Cantwell, Healy and even Two Rivers.

Cantwell resident Lynn McAloon and her sister, Jill Boelsma, took in four of the birds discovered by local mushers, including one from Jeff King, during the last week.

"There's a lot of them up here," McAloon said. "We actually saw three when we went into Cantrell to get some herring that was given to us by a local fisherman."

She said Boelsma set up a pen for the birds on their porch complete with a cooler filled with water for the birds to swim in after they got permission from Alaska Wildlife Troopers to house and care for the animals, as the system has been overwhelmed with the birds.

Down in Anchorage, the nonprofit group Bird Treatment and Learning Center has been slammed with rehabilitating the birds, Executive Director Guy Rundo said.

"Today was crazy again," he said. "Since Wednesday, it's been really bad. We're on 300th, 350th common murre checked in here."

It's unclear what is driving the birds inland, Rundo said. Some have speculated that it could be warmer weather, tough fishing conditions or high winds.

"It's completely unprecedented," he said. "I don't really have any concrete culprit. I can't point at any one thing that is causing it."



Common murrelets are taken care of in Cantwell. PHOTOS COURTESY LYNN MCALOON

said any volunteers are welcome.

"If they're near water leave them alone, but if they're inland, the best thing we can tell you to do is to try to get them to us. We'll fatten them up as quickly as we can and get them right out back to the ocean and hope for the best," he said.

More information on what to do if you find a stranded common murre is available on the Bird TLC website at www.birdtlc.net or by calling. For a murre found in the Anchorage, call 562-4852 for further instructions. For murrelets found north of Anchorage, call the Alaska Wildbird Rehabilitation Center at 892-2927.

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