

Weekly Register-Call

COLORADO'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

PUBLISHED SINCE 1862 IN GILPIN COUNTY

NEWSPAPER OF RECORD FOR GILPIN COUNTY, BLACK HAWK, AND CENTRAL CITY • JUNE 3, 2021 • \$1.00



DON IRELAND

Have you seen Bigfoot? Rumors are that he's been seen around here, and drones are being implemented to catch a glimpse. **p12**

Maybe you need the help of a drone

by Don Ireland

What do Bigfoot, Girl Scout cookies, soccer, Michael Jordan, police and s'mores have in common?

They all have been the subject of recent news stories involving drones, technically called small Unmanned Aerial Systems by the Federal Aviation Administration. Although drone operations and sightings rarely generate much news in Gilpin County, they are creating a multitude of headlines around the country. Among the many reports:

- The community of Christiansburg, Virginia is getting Girl Scout Cookies delivered by drone. Commercial delivery services have been experimented with in the town since 2019 by Wing, a subsidiary of Google's parent company, Alphabet. Girl Scouts were having trouble selling their cookies during the pandemic this spring because fewer people in the rural community were going out to shop. To help, Wing helped the local Girl Scouts by flying and lowering containers of the cookies to those who ordered online. Wing also helped deliver drugstore supplies, FedEx packages and locally-made pastries, among other things. (FYI: "Thin Mints" were the most-delivered cookies.)

- Coronado High School in Colorado Springs will host the nation's first drone soccer competition in late July. Although it may be hard to visualize, participants play by racing special drones in a netted area with a hoop on either end. Teams try to prevent opponents from flying into their hoop by blocking their flexible plastic drones and crashing into them. The event is called the Rocky Mountain State Games. Kyle Sanders, vice president for U.S. Drone Soccer, said the games are "like a mini-Olympics," which includes other events and will include activities for those with physical disabilities. The upcoming state games will also be the first such public tournament in the country for drone soccer.

- When you call the police department in the southern California town of Chula Vista, there's a strong likelihood they'll send out an officer and a drone to respond to the scene. The department says drone-use examples include providing an overhead view of an area or incident for ground personnel, safety clearing the interior of buildings, providing detailed docu-



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To date, no drone has spotted a Bigfoot. However, maybe it's because the big, hairy fellow has his own drone (on his shoulder) to keep an eye on curious humans.

mentation of crime and accident scenes and searching for lost or missing persons. Chula Vista, located just outside San Diego, has nearly 275,000 residents. The Chula Vista department's drone program is the first of its kind, enabled by a special, sweeping regulatory waiver from the FAA in 2018.

- King Soopers' parent company, Kroger, has partnered with Drone Express to make deliveries to customers' home or their cellphone location in Centerville, Ohio. The pilot project began in May. "The possibilities for customers are endless – we can enable Kroger customers to send chicken soup to a sick friend, or even get a quick delivery of olive oil if they run out while cooking dinner," said Beth Flippo, chief technology officer for Telegrid Technologies, the company that owns Drone Express. The grocery chain is designing groups of products, like a baby care bundle with wipes and formula; wellness bundle with medications and fluids; and s'mores bundle with graham crackers, marshmallows and chocolate that meets the limitations of the drone delivery service. The current weight limit for drone delivery is about five pounds. Some orders can be delivered in as little as 15 minutes. The grocery chain plans to expand the service to more stores in the near future.

Companies, including Amazon, UPS, Google and others, are experimenting with drone deliveries elsewhere. It may take several years before drone delivery will be common in many places in the United States because FAA regulations would need to be modified, according to experts.

- NBA superstar Michael Jordan's new golf course in Hobe Sound, FL offers air delivery service of food and beverages while you're on the greens. The Grove XXIII – the roman numerals representing "23," Jordan's jersey number – is an exclusive golf club designed by architect Bobby Weed, who worked with Tiger Woods. Perhaps the decision to use drones may be something other than a coincidence since the NBA Hall of Famer's has a nickname, Michael "Air Jordan."

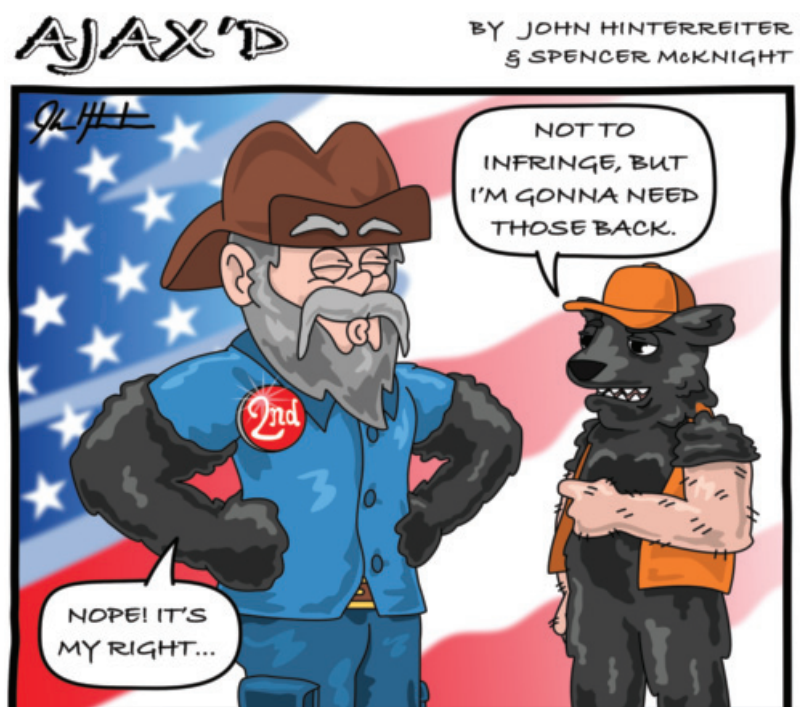
- Finding Bigfoot by using drones are ongoing efforts in various places nationwide. The drones are equipped with special cameras and heat-detecting thermal devices, alerting the drone pilot if a large, ape-like Sasquatch creature is roaming the forest nearby. Trail cameras, night goggles, and other gizmos also have been deployed along with drones in attempts to find the elusive creature. Even the Travel Channel has tried using high-tech gizmos to find Bigfoot, which has reportedly been spotted by hundreds of people over the

centuries. So far, however, no compelling drone photos or videos showing conclusive "evidence" has turned up... leaving many skeptics laughing about the folks trekking through the forest hunting for something that may not exist.

You can actually see an artist's rendition of a life-sized Bigfoot sculpture and other related photos at the Sasquatch Casino in Black Hawk. Souvenirs and other likenesses also can be spotted and purchased at the Sasquatch gas station

located at the bottom of the Central City Parkway along I-70 east of Idaho Springs. If you snap a photo of an authentic Bigfoot anywhere in the Gilpin County area – whether it's from a drone or conventional camera – please email it to the *Weekly Register-Call*.

"Age of Drones" is an occasional feature, explaining how this evolving technology is having positive impacts on businesses, government, and humanity.



"...ACCORDING TO THE 2ND AMENDMENT— TO KEEP AND WEAR BEAR ARMS."