Welcome to Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin, Painted Hills Proposed Wilderness Areas

Located near Mitchell, Oregon, and surrounding the Painted Hills National Monument, Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin, and Painted Hills Proposed Wilderness Areas provide spectacular vistas of the John Day River, Bridge Creek valley and surrounding landscape. These unique wild areas offer recreational opportunities for hikers, horseback riders, hunters, botanists and other outdoor enthusiasts. The proposed wilderness areas encompass a diversity of habitat types including grasslands, riparian areas, sagebrush shrub steppe, woodlands, and forests. They also provide important habitat for threatened summer steelhead and Chinook salmon.

Sutton Mountain
The John Day River winds lazily around the base of Sutton Mountain, an iconic gem of the John Day Basin. This 29,000-acre potential wilderness area towers over steep ravines, native grasslands, and dramatic clay formations. To the North, green canyons protect sensitive plant species and provide several routes to its vast flattop – now a thriving bunchgrass prairie, thanks to reduced grazing and improved fire management. The Eastern and Southern hills are home to dozens of bird species, elk, deer, cougar, and coyote.

Pat’s Cabin
Characterized by rolling bunchgrass hills and providing important connectivity routes for elk, deer, and cougar, Pat’s Cabin proposed wilderness area (16,000 acres) is named for an old fur-trapper cabin still intact within its boundaries. Protection of this area and its watershed provide nearby Bridge Creek with some of the best potential for threatened steelhead recovery. This area’s rolling hills and secluded valleys are a prime location for quiet and solitude.

Painted Hills Proposed Wilderness Area
Painted Hills proposed wilderness area (7,089 acres) rises steeply to its peak, Sand Mountain, and contains over half of the Painted Hills National Monument. The area has dramatic vistas of the Ochoco National Forest to the South and the John Day River to the North, and is one of the best-suited places to view the most continuous geologic records (6–54 million years) in North America.

AREA FACTS

Plant Communities
Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin, and Painted Hills are all dominated by big sagebrush, native bunchgrasses, and western juniper, providing important habitat and forage for native wildlife. The sagebrush-juniper woodlands that characterize these unique areas provide vital habitat for the sensitive species Arrowleaf thelypody and Peck’s milkvetch.

Wildlife
This unique area provides essential habitat for a variety of wildlife, such as Western toads, lizards, snakes, Pygmy rabbits, bobcats, coyotes, cougar, mule deer, California bighorn sheep, and elk. A large number of birds also frequent the areas, including pileated woodpeckers, white-headed woodpeckers, red-naped sapsuckers, ferruginous hawks, grasshopper sparrows, sage sparrows, chukar, meadowlarks, and golden eagles.

Geology
From the brightly colored Painted Hills, to the basalt-flooded summit of Sutton Mountain, these lands display a staggering 50 million years of geologic activity. This activity deposited layer upon layer of ash, lava, and volcanic mud, solidifying and trapping plants and animals and preserving them. Over time, erosion has revealed these ancient fossils, mudflows, and ash-lakebed sediments, creating a diverse and beautiful geologic story.
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How To Get There
Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin, and Painted Hills proposed wilderness areas are located approximately 50 miles east of Prineville, northwest of the town of Mitchell. They are accessible from Highway 26 to the south, Rowe Creek Road via John Day Highway 19 to the north, and Service Creek Mitchell Highway 207 to the east. See map for details.

Land Stewardship And Safety
Visitors can help protect this fragile area by arriving prepared to follow Leave No Trace etiquette. What trails exist are unsigned, so visitors should be sure to bring a map, familiarize themselves with the area, and carry plenty of water. Please help protect the land by:

- Walking abreast rather than single file to avoid making new trails.
- Packing out trash, and burying human waste 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water.
- Respecting natural and cultural resources, leaving pictographs, rocks, plants, and other natural and cultural artifacts as they are.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages these areas to protect their natural values by prohibiting all motorized and mechanized vehicle use, including all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes. Please respect these land-use regulations. Please do not enter private lands without the landowner’s permission.

Bridge Creek Restoration
Flowing for 28 miles from the Ochoco Mountains until it meets the Lower John Day River, Bridge Creek provides important habitat for threatened wild steelhead and Chinook salmon, as well as other wildlife species dependent on healthy stream habitat. Historical agricultural and grazing practices in the area, as in much of the John Day Basin, have led to deepening of the stream channel and erosion of its banks, resulting in the loss of fish and wildlife habitat. ONDA is collaborating with several government agencies and local landowners to restore stream conditions using an innovative approach: encouraging native beavers to repopulate and subsequently, naturally reengineer the stream. Although current beaver populations in the West are a fraction of their historical numbers, there are active beaver colonies on Lower Bridge Creek. Beaver structures provide numerous benefits for stream systems, including fish habitat, water storage, and wetlands development, which attract a variety of native fish and wildlife species.

Painted Hills National Monument
The vivid Painted Hills of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument are also a must-see for visitors of the area. For more information about trails, exhibits and picnic areas, call the Painted Hills Unit of the National Parks Service at (541) 462-3961.
Support Permanent Protection for Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin, and Painted Hills Proposed Wilderness Areas

We love Central Oregon for its natural beauty and the many opportunities for outdoor recreation. As our population grows, so do the pressures on the natural landscape. It is our responsibility to preserve natural areas for wildlife and for future generations to enjoy. Ask Congress to permanently protect Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin and Painted Hills by designating them as wilderness. Find out more about ONDA’s efforts to protect the John Day Basin at www.onda.org.