



WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OREGON'S DESERT WILD AND WONDEROUS

Oregon's high desert holds swift rivers, rugged canyons, broad peaks and vast swaths of unbroken sagebrush steppe that provide critical habitat for well over 300 wildlife species and countless places for people to explore, exercise, reflect and make cherished memories.

This remarkable wild landscape has drawn together thousands of hard-working volunteers, dedicated donors and passionate advocates who know and love this region deeply. **Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA)** is a vibrant group dedicated to ensuring that Oregon's high desert treasures are protected for future generations to know and love just as we do today. Welcome!

Through thoughtful conservation campaigns and ambitious stewardship projects, ONDA connects more people throughout Oregon and beyond to this incredible wild desert each year.

SPECIAL THANKS

ONDA is grateful to the members, volunteers and supporters who make our efforts to preserve the desert so successful. We could not have made the beautiful Wild Desert Calendar you're holding now without the help of 90+ photographers who submitted images for consideration and so generously shared their work. Special thanks go to Scott Bowler and Craig Miller for contributing each month's phenological notes and to our dedicated calendar committee—Jim Davis, Greg Burke, Dave Caplan, Helen Harbin, Mark Chidlaw and Wendy Wheeler-Jacobs—for shepherding this publication from start to finish.

Copyright to all photographs herein belongs to the photographers who generously donated these images.

ROW 1 (L–R): A fresh snowfall at Fort Rock invites contemplation. Photo: Jill Rosell. After a 7-hour drive, Nicole Ferer is thrilled to inhale fresh desert air and encounter desert wildlife. Photo: Crystal Nichols. Taking in geologic history at the Painted Hills. Photo: Tram Nguyen.

ROW 2 (L–R): Brooke Walker-Knoblich painting en plein air on her first visit to the John Day River. Photo: David Lukas. Cresting a ridge in the Pueblo Mountains. Photo: Ellen Mendoza. Tina Barrows cutting juniper along the Nye Trail. Photo: Mark Darnell.

ROW 3 (L–R): Capturing the Milky Way over the Alvord Desert, one of the world's darkest spots. Photo: Sam Couch. Bob Lebens inspects the freshly sharpened edge of a Pulaski while working on the Big Indian Gorge Trail. Photo: Sage Brown. Fly-fishing the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River. Photo: Tim Lyden.

ROW 4 (L–R): Jordan McKinney pauses contentedly in White Horse Canyon, in the Fifteen Mile Wilderness Study Area, while out on a five-day backpacking trip through the Oregon Canyon Mountains. Photo: Scott Nechemias. An Oregon Desert Trail hiker meets a chilly October morning near Green Mountain. Photo: Michael LeMay. Riding across the Alvord Desert Playa. Photo: Bruce Couch.

OREGON'S DISTINCTIVE DESERT

Come to eastern Oregon and you'll find ancient junipers and petrogylphs dating back thousands of years. You can enjoy sweeping views by day and jet-black skies filled with stars a billion years old by night. These experiences give Oregon's high desert a distinctive timeless quality.

Since 1987, ONDA has worked to protect, defend, and restore Oregon's high desert public lands. By partnering with tribes, land management agencies, landowners, elected officials and people like you, ONDA is a strong voice for conservation in Oregon's high desert.

As you page through the jaw-dropping wild country that Oregon Natural Desert Association presents to you in the 2021 Wild Desert Calendar, we hope you'll be inspired to join us in conserving these landscapes.

WHERE ONDA WORKS

OWYHEE CANYONLANDS

At more than 2 million acres, Oregon's Owyhee Canyonlands is the largest undeveloped, unprotected expanse in the lower 48 states. Its red-rock canyons, vital rivers, and diverse wildlife—including the imperiled Greater Sage-Grouse—are unlike anything else in Oregon. Protecting the Owyhee is one of ONDA's top priorities. See January and March.

With rolling sagebrush plains and dramatic river canyons, the "gateway" to Oregon's dry side offers world-class fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and more just a few miles outside city limits. Many of its waterways are critical spawning grounds for salmon and steelhead. ONDA works with community members to conserve the region's vital waterways, including Whychus Creek, the Middle Deschutes River and the South Fork Crooked River. See May and November.

JOHN DAY RIVER BASIN
Without dams to block their path from
the sea, the John Day River provides safe
passage for summer steelhead and Chinook
salmon. The surrounding landscape offers
critical habitat for mule deer, elk and more,
with exceptional recreational opportunities
to boot. ONDA's dedication to conserving
the area has resulted in a community-driven
proposal to protect Sutton Mountain now
being considered in Congress. See April.

GREATER HART-SHELDON REGION

Spanning over more than 3 million acres of Oregon and Nevada, the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region is a diverse expanse of mountains, wetlands, sagebrush steppe and canyons that provide a safe haven for wildlife. More than 300 species thrive here, including migrating waterfowl, pronghorn antelope and the imperiled Greater Sage-Grouse. ONDA spends many hours monitoring and restoring wildlands in this region each year. See February, August and September.

STEENS MOUNTAIN REGION

Stunning Steens Mountain, with its glacier-carved gorges, aspen groves and flower-filled alpine meadows, was the first place in Oregon's desert to earn protection as wilderness. ONDA played a critical role in making that happen and continues to serve as a vigilant advocate for this iconic mountain and the nearby Alvord Desert today. From challenging "right idea, wrong place" industrial scale energy development to preventing unnecessary roads, we continue to protect this jewel of the Oregon desert. See July, October and December.

OREGON DESERT TRAIL

With long stretches of cross-country travel stitched together by pieces of defined trail, the Oregon Desert Trail is a long-distance hiking route like no other. Whether you head out for a day, a week or a month, this route through eastern Oregon's public lands will grant you an intimate connection to the wildest stretches of Oregon's high desert. See February, March, May, June, August, October and December.





JANUARY



Loggerhead Shrike. Photo: Richard Eltrich

Bearing witness to both the beauty and pain of our world is a task that I want to be part of.

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS from at talk at Williams

Look for Trumpeter Swans at the Summer Lake Wildlife Area and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. ♦ Watch any open waters to see Bald Eagles fishing, waterfowl hunting and scavenging, and songbirds busily foraging for seeds among any unfrozen aquatic plants and grasses.

sunday 27	MONDAY 28	TUESDAY O 29	WE	dnesday	THURSDAY 31	FRIDAY	SATURDAY 2
						New Year's Day National Environmental Policy Act, 1970	Quadrantid meteor shower (40/hour) Perihelion (Earth closest to Sun) 5:50a.m. PST
3	4	5		6	/	8	9
		ONDA incorporated, 1989		10			
10	11	• 12		13	14	15	16
17	18	19		20	21	22	23
	Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday observed						
²⁴ / ₃₁	25	26		27	° 28	29	30



FRIDAY

SATURDAY

THURSDAY

FEBRUARY



Great Basin collared lizard. Photo: John Shewey

Wilderness is not supposed to be easy. In wilderness, we abandon even the wheel, and we set out on foot. We come to wilderness to meet the earth as it is, as it was, as it yet might be—if we can hold the line.

CHRISTOPHER SOLOMON

Outside magazine

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	• 11	12	13
14	15 Presidents' Day	16	17	18		20
21	22	23	24	25	26	° 27
28	1	2	3	4	5	6

WEDNESDAY

Watch for junipers to become brighter green, and for new shoots of perennials and even some early blooming annuals popping up after warmer spells. ◆ As the ice on desert lakes and ponds melts, waterfowl begin their northward migration. Thousands of Snow Geese will make their usual stopovers at Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and the Summer Lake Wildlife Area by month's end.



MARCH



Western yellow-bellied racer and Gray's desert parsley. Photo: Hilary Garrett

I think there's going to come a time among all people ... I don't know when that time will come ... when all people will humble themselves to know that we are not in charge.

WILSON WEWA

Northern Paiute / Palouse Spiritual Leader from a talk on why wild lands need protection $\,$

Sagebrush buttercup are among the earliest wildflowers to bloom in Central Oregon's basalt canyons. Wooly pod milkvetch begins to show its gorgeous purple pea-like blooms and softly hairy and silvery leaves underfoot in the sage lands. • Pollinators, especially native bees and bumblebees, begin to hatch out and can be found working the blooms as soon as the day becomes warm enough. • The raucous screams of Sandhill Cranes carry across the fields where they gather in Klamath, Summer Lake, and Harney basins on their northward migration.

SUNDAY 31	MONDAY 1	TUESDAY 2	wednesday 3	THURSDAY 4	FRIDAY 5	SATURDAY 6
7	8	9	10	11	12	• 13
Daylight Saving Time begins, 2 A.M.		16	17	18	19	Spring Equinox, 2:37A.M. PDT
• 21	22	23	24	25	26	Passover (begins at sunset)
° 28	3 29	30	31	1	2	3

Oregon Badlands & Spring Basin wilderness areas designated, 2009



APRIL



Western Meadowlark. Photo: Greg Burke

Bird by bird, I've come to know the earth.

PABLO NERUDA

The Art of Birds

Bitterroot begins blooming in April in many places from the Central Oregon Backcountry to the Owyhee Canyonlands. ♦ Greater Sage-Grouse congregations at leks peak in early April, with males aiming to attract female attention with their elaborate courtship display. ♦ Flocks of shorebirds such as Least and Western Sandpipers stop along shorelines and mud flats to fatten up for their long migration to breeding grounds above the Arctic Circle.

sunday 28	MONDAY 29	TUESDAY 30	wednesday 31	THURSDAY 1	FRIDAY 2	SATURDAY 3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
• 11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	Earth Day Lyrid meteor shower (20/hour)	23	24
25	° 26	27	28	29	30	1



THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

15

29

WEDNESDAY

MAY



Coyote, one of the desert's skilled hunters. Photo: Shannon Phifer

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tired into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one destiny, affects all indirectly.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

SUNDAY

MONDAY

from A Christmas Sermon on Peace

Eta Aquarid meteor shower (30/hour) 9 12 10 13 Mother's Day 16 19 20 18 23/30 24/31 26 27 Total Lunar Eclipse, Memorial Day

TUESDAY

Bright-plumaged neotropical passerines, such as warblers and tanagers, are arriving in large numbers. • When pronghorn give birth in May and early June, their fawns are able to walk within a mere 30 minutes of being born. They enjoy the nutritious spring growth at Hart Mountain, one of the most important pronghorn fawning grounds in the Great Basin.

28



JUNE



Bruneau mariposa lily. Photo: John Lasseter

From the desert's harshest landscapes have emerged some of nature's most marvelous adaptations. Plants, insects, reptiles, fish embody the tremendous power and persistence of life's evolutionary forces. Can we match this perseverance as we strive to protect these magical places?

RYAN HOUSTON

ONDA Executive Director, from a letter to members

A wide range of flowering plants and shrubs are in full bloom now, including antelope bitterbrush, paintbrush, owl's clover and prickly poppy to name just a few. • Watch for crab spiders lurking in desert blooms, especially those of the Sunflower family. • Birds, on their breeding grounds, fill the dawn with chorus to mark and defend their nesting territories. • When beaver give birth between May and July, their three to four kits are born with full fur, open eyes and all of their teeth.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	Т	HURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	1	• 2		3	° 4	5
6	7	8	9	•	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	•	17	18	19
20	21	22	23		24	25	Juneteenth 26
					_		
Father's Day Summer Solstice, 8:32p.m. PDT							
27	28	29	30	•	1	2	3



THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

JULY



Burrowing Owl. Photo: Shannon Phifer

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

Aloof and noble, the great buttes Rear up their rimrock, let Their slopes slide motionlessly down In the necessary curve from heaven.

URSULA K. LE GUIN

"Harney County Catenaries" Edge of Awe: Experiences of the Malheur-Steens Country

27	28	29	30	THURSDAY 1	2	3
						Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 1918
4	Aphelion (Earth farthest from Sun), 3:27p.m. PDT	6	7	8	• 9	10
Independence Day	trom Sun), 3:2/P.M. PDT	13	14	15	16	• 17
18	19	20	21	22	° 23	24
25	26	27	28 Delta Aquarid meteor shower (20/hour)	29	30	• 31

WEDNESDAY

Enjoy the showy blooms of sagebrush mariposa lilies, purple sage, and scarlet gilia. • Rattlesnakes are active at dawn and dusk. • As soils dry out, toadlets will seek out spots to estivate, entering into a prolonged state of dormancy to avoid the heat of the summer.



FRIDAY

SATURDAY

THURSDAY

AUGUST



American White Pelicans. Photo: Greg Burke

This vast open can't quite be named. It stays always one step ahead of the namers, luring us who would try deeper and deeper into its embrace.

ELLEN WATERSTON

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

Walking the High Desert: Encounters with Rural America Along the Oregon Desert Trail

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
•	8	9	10	11	Perseid meteor shower	13	14
•	15	16	17	Malheur National Wildlife Refuge established, 1908		20	21
0	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31	1	2	3	4

WEDNESDAY

Rabbitbrush is just beginning to bear its bright yellow flowers, attracting hordes of butterflies, bees, and other pollinating insects. • Pronghorn, mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk have headed up to higher elevations, seeking cooler temperatures and finding shade under mountain mahogany trees or among the deciduous trees along streams.



SEPTEMBER



Greater Sage-Grouse. Photo: Richard Eltrich

... the West is studded with visionary environmentalists ... and the landscape of the West seems like the stage on which such dramas are played out, a space without boundaries, in which anything can be realized, a moral ground, out here where your shadow can stretch hundreds of feet just before sunset, where you loom large, and lonely.

REBECCA SOLNIT

Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics

Expect large numbers of Wilson's Phalaropes, Eared Grebes and American Avocets to gather at Lake Abert to feast on brine shrimp and brine flies in preparation for their southward migration. • Asters and goldenrod are still in bloom, while the leaves of cottonwood trees, net-leaf hackberry, choke and bitter cherries, red osier dogwood and Saskatoon bushes are turning shades of yellow and red. • The ripening seeds of Great Basin wild rye provide a valuable food source for a wide variety of fall birds, particularly sparrows, goldfinches and pine siskins.

sunday 29	MONDAY 30	TUESDAY 31	wednesday 1	THURSDAY 2	FRIDAY 3	SATURDAY 4
5	Rosh Hashanah (begins at sunset) Labor Day	7	8	9	passed, 1964	11
12	• 13	14	Yom Kippur (begins at sunset)	16	17	18
19	° 20	21	Autumn Equinox,	23	24	25
26	27	28		30	1	2



OCTOBER



Cedar Waxwing. Photo: David Lukas

Mountains are often regarded as sacred places, and Steens Mountain feels no different. Beneath the whisper of the aspen I can almost hear a heartbeat, the rhythm of the mountain. Perhaps this is what draws me to the monolith of basalt rock; perhaps it is the feeling of seclusion that the slopes of the mountain bring.

SEAN BURNS

"Two Sides of the Mountain" Edge of Awe: Experiences of the Malheur-Steens Country

Early in the month, the aspen on the high points of Steens Mountain and Hart Mountain take on brilliant hues of chartreuse, gold, orange or rust, while providing warmth and cover for elk, mule deer and pronghorn. ◆ Look to the skies for hawks migrating along north-south ridges such as Green Ridge, Winter Ridge, Abert Rim and Steens Mountain.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	2/	28	29	30	1	2
						National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act passed, 1968
3	4	5	• 6	7	8	9
					John Day Fossil Beds National Monument founded, 1975	
10	11	• 12	13	14	15	16
47	Indigenous Peoples' Day	40	0 20	0.4		
17	18	19	° 20	21	22	23
				Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 1976 Orionid meteor shower (20/hour)		
²⁴ / ₃₁	25	26	27	• 28	29	30
Halloween First Day of Dia de los Muertos				Omnibus Oregon Wild & Scenic Rivers Act passed, 1988		Steens Mountain Cooperative Management & Protection Act passed, 2000



THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

NOVEMBER



Red Crossbill. Photo: John Shewey

SUNDAY

Hanukkah

MONDAY

TUESDAY

To trace the history of a river or a raindrop ... is also to trace the history of the soul, the history of the mind descending and arising in the body.

GRETEL EHRLICH

Islands, The Universe, Home

31	1	2	3	• 4	5	6
		Election Day		Diwali		
Daylight Saving Time ends, 2A.M.	8	9	10	Veterans Day	12	13
14	15	16	Leonid meteor shower	18	° 19	20
21	22	23	24	25 Thanksgiving	26	• 27
28	29	30	1	2	• 3	4

WEDNESDAY

Coyotes' coats have grown thicker, looking quite plush in the late fall. Look for masses of white birds at Summer Lake Wildlife Area and Klamath National Wildlife Refuge as thousands of Snow Geese land here during their migration south to warmer climes. They join the Tundra Swans, many of whom stay for the entire winter, depending on temperatures and how much of the water freezes over.



DECEMBER



Petroglyphs, Greater Hart-Sheldon Region. Photo: Greg Burke

I knew then that although I'd be leaving the next day, a part of me would be left here: a breathlessness, a quiet, a listening, a wonder.

Something infinite. And I knew that I would have to keep coming back to find it again.

I breathed in and smiled into the night.

THOMAS C. MEINZEN

"My Infinite Summer"

Edge of Awe: Experiences of the Malheur-Steens Country

Short-tailed and long-tailed weasels are investigating brush and rock piles, hunting for ground squirrels, mice and pack rats. • Beaver are living off the hardwood sticks cached at the bottom of their pond, staying below the ice until the spring thaw. • Mule deer and elk can be seen in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and concentrated in places where snow cover is thinner with brushy or treed cover. If you come across them in rut, be careful not to intrude.

	sunday 28	MONDAY 29	TUESDAY 30	wednesday 1	THURSDAY 2	• 3	SATURDAY 4
	5	6	7	8	9	• 10	11
	12	Geminid meteor shower	14	15	16	17	° 18
_	19	20	Winter Solstice, 7:59A.M. PST Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge established, 1936	22	23	24	25 Christmas
_	26 First day of Kwanzaa	27	28	29	30	31	1

A YEAR IN OREGON'S HIGH DESERT



JANUARY OWYHEE CANYONLANDS



FEBRUARY DIABLO MOUNTAIN WSA



MARCH OWYHEE CANYONLANDS



APRIL SPRING BASIN WILDERNESS



MAY OREGON BADLANDS



JUNE PUEBLO MOUNTAINS WSA



JULY TABLE MOUNTAIN WSA



AUGUST GREATER HART-SHELDON



SEPTEMBER GREATER HART-SHELDON



OCTOBER STEENS MOUNTAIN



NOVEMBER DESCHUTES CANYON WSA



DECEMBER STEENS MOUNTAIN

From a pastel sunrise in the Owyhee uplands to a golden sunset in the Steens Mountain Wilderness, this Wild Desert Calendar showcases twelve dramatic landscapes in Oregon's vast high desert. You'll also enjoy captivating portraits of the Burrowing Owls, Loggerhead Shrikes, Great Basin collared lizards, coyotes and other wildlife that give this landscape its pulse. Prose, poetry and reflections from Terry Tempest Williams, Ursula K. LeGuin, Gretel Ehrlich, and others will inspire contemplation. And, with moon phases, meteor showers, expected wildflower blooms and migratory bird arrivals all helpfully provided, you can use this calendar as a guide to the many natural phenomena found in Oregon's high desert.

All proceeds benefit Oregon Natural Desert Association. ONDA protects, defends and restores public lands in eastern Oregon in the Owyhee Canyonlands, Central Oregon Backcountry, Greater Hart-Sheldon Region, John Day River Basin and Steens Mountain. To conserve the desert places you love, visit www.ONDA.org/give.



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SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS:













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