



A THRIVING DESERT FOR EVERYONE, FOREVER

Oregon's high desert holds impressive rivers, craggy canyons, broad peaks and vast expanses of unbroken sagebrush steppe. A wide range of birds, plants, fish, insects, and animals live in this mix of habitats, many of which have developed close interdependent relationships.

This distinctive landscape draws together thousands of hard-working volunteers, dedicated donors and passionate advocates whose common bond is a deep, personal connection to the desert. **Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA)** is the only conservation organization dedicated exclusively to this remarkable region. ONDA's aim is to ensure that Oregon's high desert wonders are preserved for future generations to know and love just as we do today.

Through our thoughtful conservation campaigns, continuous policy vigilance and ambitious restoration work, ONDA keeps Oregon's desert natural, wild and thriving. ONDA helps people throughout Oregon and beyond connect with this incredible wild desert, and ensures that they have a say in how these public lands are managed.

MANY THANKS

ONDA is grateful to our members, volunteers and supporters who make all efforts to preserve the desert — including this handsome Wild Desert Calendar you're holding now — so successful. Special thanks for this publication go to the 90+ photographers who submitted images for consideration, our featured photographers, all of the naturalists who share phenological observations, and our highly dedicated calendar committee: Greg Burke, Dave Caplan, Mark Chidlaw, Jim Davis, Helen Harbin, and Wendy Wheeler-Jacobs.

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ROW 1 (L–R): Running in the Owyhee Canyonlands. *Photo: Angela Bohlke*. Carly Swisher about to embark on a thru-hike of the Oregon Desert Trail. *Courtesy: Carly Swisher*. Jim Greer with Abby, hunting pheasant on Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. *Photo: Monica Tomosy.*

ROW 2 (L–R): Cam'Ron Eagle Staff checking out a frog. *Photo: Beth Macinko.* Jill Hardy and Ariel Kemp near Leslie Gulch. *Photo: Ralph Daub.* Fly-fishing in the John Day River. *Photo: Jardon Weems.*

ROW 3 (L–R): Ajay Sapre paddling the Owyhee River. Photo: Corinne Handelman. Jude Pilz exploring Crack in the Ground. Photo: Natasha Bellis. Karen Lillebo restoring habitat along Clear Creek. Photo: Jim Davis.

ROW 4 (L–R): Cycling across the Alvord Desert playa. *Photo: Christian Murillo*. Derek and Erin Gaines on a rainy hike near Sutton Mountain. Courtesy: Erin Gaines. Nora Austin and Callie Magdziuk high in the Pueblo Mountains Wilderness Study Area. *Photo: Jeremy Austin*.

OREGON'S DISTINCTIVE DESERT

Eastern Oregon holds ancient junipers and petrogylphs dating back thousands of years. By day, you can enjoy sweeping vistas of the Sagebrush Sea. At night, the dark skies overhead fill with a multitude of stars a billion years old. These experiences, and more, 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.

We hope your passion for restoring and conserving these landscapes is renewed and reignited each month as you enjoy the new, breathtaking wild scenery in the Wild Desert Calendar.

WHERE ONDA WORKS

OWYHEE CANYONLANDS

Oregon's Owyhee Canyonlands is the largest undeveloped, unprotected expanse in the lower 48 states. Its red-rock canyons, vital rivers, and array of wildlife — including the imperiled greater sage-grouse — are unlike anything else in Oregon. Protecting the Owyhee is a top priority for the ONDA community. See March, April, June and August.

CENTRAL OREGON BACKCOUNTRY

With rolling sagebrush plains and dramatic river canyons, this gateway into Oregon's dry side offers world-class fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and more, all 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 natural beauty of beloved wild areas of Central Oregon. See December.

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 was instrumental in a community-driven proposal to protect Sutton Mountain being introduced in the Senate. See January and February.

GREATER HART-SHELDON

Spanning more than 3 million acres of Oregon and Nevada, the Greater Hart-Sheldon 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 May and November.

STEENS MOUNTAIN REGION

With wild rivers coursing through broad gorges, golden aspen groves and lush wildflower meadows, Steens Mountain is simply stunning. ONDA played a critical role in securing wilderness designation for Steens and continues to serve as a vigilant advocate for this iconic mountain 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, and care for the nearby Alvord Desert and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. See July, September and October.

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 March, April, June, July, August and October.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Oregon's high desert holds the traditional, since time immemorial, homelands of the Northern Paiute, Shoshone, Bannock, Wasco and Warm Springs peoples. Many Indigenous people live in this region today, including members of the Burns Paiute Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (Wasco, Warm Springs and Paiute), the Klamath Tribes (Klamath, Modoc and Yahooskin), the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation.





JANUARY



Mountain bluebird, female. Photo: Tara Lemezis

Drifting across the vast space, silent except for wind and footsteps, I felt uncluttered and unhurried for the first time in a while, already on desert time.

REBECCA SOLNIT

Writer, historian, and activist From Wanderlust: A History of Walking

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
-							New Year's Day Last day of Kwanzaa
'	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
s _		Quadrantid meteor shower (40/hour) Perihelion (Earth closest to Sun) 10:52 _{P-M} . PST		ONDA incorporated, 1989			
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
_							
	16	° 17	18	19	20	21	22
		Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday observed					
_	23/30	• ^{24/} 31	25	26	27	28	29

Red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, bald eagles and golden eagles are all searching for food and found in large concentrations at the Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Rock, Christmas Valley, Silver Lake, Summer Lake Wildlife Area and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.



SATURDAY

5

FRIDAY

FEBRUARY



Bobcat. Photo: Angela Bohlke

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

When we learn to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for both our natural and cultural spaces, we have richer, fuller and more empowering experiences.

JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ

Conservationist, educator, and the founder of Latino Outdoors From "Encontrando Mi Parque"

30	31	1	2	3	4	5
		Black History Month Lunar New Year				
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	° 16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	Presidents' Day					
27	28	1	2	3	4	5

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

With little else available, the evergreen leaves of big sagebrush make for valuable winter forage for greater sage-grouse, mule deer, pronghorn and numerous other wildlife species. • The very first plants will often begin growing now, often tiny annuals on dry, bare slopes. Juniper subtly begin to turn from their rusty brownishgreen of winter to a brighter greenish-blue of spring.



MARCH



Cusick's chaenactis, yellow phacelia and cryptobiotic crust. Photo: Ellen Bishop

One of the delights of exploring nature is entering that realm of subtlety where the smallest detail matters: The molecular composition of the soil. The microscopic creatures in the water.

MICHAEL SOULÉ

Conservation biologist From an April 2018 interview with Leath Tonino

Courtship season begins for greater sage-grouse, with male birds performing elaborate dances for the females in open areas, called leks, amidst their sagebrush strongholds.
Sandhill cranes are gathering in Klamath, Summer Lake, and Harney basins on their northward migration.
Perennials resume growing and the first seeds sprout to take advantage of increasing sunlight and peak soil moisture. Mountain mahogany trees, a genus found only in the American West, are greening up, with both the leaves and blossoms giving off a lovely smell. Ungulate herds are moving off their winter ranges, dispersing as vegetation appears. Side-blotched lizards are perching on sun-bathed rocks. Their thin, flat body heats quickly, so it's usually the first reptile species to be active in early spring.

sunday 27	MONDAY 28	TUESDAY 1	WEDNESDAY Ash Wednesday	THURSDAY	FRIDAY 4	SATURDAY 5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Daylight Saving Time begins, 2A.M.	14	15	16	17	° 18	19
20 Spring Equinox, 8:33A.M. PDT	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	Oregon Badlands & Spring Basin wilderness areas designated, 2009	• 31	1	2



APRIL



Bighorn sheep. Photo: Shannon Phifer

If you free yourself from the conventional reaction to a quantity like a million years, you free yourself a bit from the boundaries of human time. And then in a way you do not live at all, but in another way you live forever.

JOHN MCPHEE

Writer

From Years, Forever, Way, "Annals of the Former World"

Tens of thousands of geese — snow, Ross's, and greater white-fronted — begin to gather in the Harney Basin as they migrate northward. ♦ As desert waterways reach peak flows, cold water fish are waking up and hungry. ♦ Bitterroot's showy pink blooms begin to appear. Their thick green leaves that emerged earlier have been reabsorbed by the plant with the energy directed to the blooms. ♦ Antelope bitterbrush begins to bloom across cooler and snowier parts of the Great Basin, feeding bees, butterflies and other pollinators and sheltering innumerable birds and mammals. ♦ On sunny days when the air temperature rises to 70 degrees or more, rattlesnakes emerge from hibernation and bask at their rocky den sites on south slopes.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	Tirst day of Ramadan	2
3	4	5	6	7	• 8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15 Passover (begins at sunset)	° 16
17	18	19	20	21	Earth Day Lyrid meteor shower (20/hour)	Last day of Passover
24	25	26	27	28	29	• 30

Last day of Ramadan



MAY



Burrowing owl. Photo: Angela Bohlke

I don't see the desert as barren at all; I see it as full and ripe. It doesn't need to be flattered with rain. It certainly needs rain, but it does with what it has, and creates amazing beauty.

JOY HARJO

performer and writer of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and 23rd Poet Laureate of the United States

In the high desert's aquatic habitats, the eggs of frogs, toads and salamanders have now hatched, attracting garter snakes to feed on the plump tadpoles. • Many waterfowl species and many varieties of warblers, tanagers and other neotropical passerines are arriving in the Malheur Wildlife Refuge and Warner Wetlands. • Pronghorn and other mammals are giving birth. • Early summer wildflowers in bloom include globe mallow; paintbrush; balsamroot; shrub purple sage; shooting stars; lupine, vetch, and other members of the pea family; members of the buckwheat family; and many many more. • Found in sandy and more alkaline soils, the desert shrub spiny hopsage is showing off pinkish blooms.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Asian American and Islander Heritage N	1 2	3	4	5	Eta Aquarid meteor shower (30/hour)	7
Mother's Day	8 9	10	11	12	13	14
° 1	5 16	17	18	19	20	21
2	23	24	25	26	27	28
2	.9 30 Memorial Day	31	1	2	3	4



JUNE



Yellow-headed blackbird. Photo: Greg Burke

I outgrew my rage, but retained my passion.

BETTY REID SOSKIN

National Park Service ranger (Born on September 22, 1921, she is the oldest ranger.)

Many widespread flowering plants and shrubs are in full bloom now, including paintbrush, owl's clover, desert parsley, and the iconic keystone species of the high desert: sagebrush. And, in select vernal ponds scattered throughout the Great Basin, at roughly 5,500 - 6,500' elevation, the delicate orchid-like blooms of the Great Basin calicoflower appear. ◆ The nests of resident shorebirds, such as the black-necked stilt, snowy plover and spotted sandpiper, are filled with eggs, with downy chicks arriving soon. As these baby birds fledge and leave the nest, their parents will teach them to forage. ◆ As rivers warm up and water levels drop, many cold-loving fish migrate upstream, if possible, or hunker down into deeper pools.

5 6 7 8 9 10 1 12 13 ° 14 15 16 17 1	
12 13 ° 14 15 16 17 1	5
	12
19 20 21 22 23 24 25	19
Summer Solstice, 21/3A.M. PDT 30 1	Juneteenth





Greater sage-grouse. Photo: Richard Eltrich

What is a fish without a river? What is a bird without a tree to nest in? What is an Endangered Species Act without any enforcement mechanism to ensure their habitat is protected? It is nothing.

JAY INSLEE

Governor of Washington state

From "House Approves Revised Endangered Species Act"

Wildflower species that were blooming in May or June at lower elevations will now be blooming at higher elevations. July is prime time for sagebrush mariposa lilies, scarlet gilia, gray-green thistle and Steens Mountain thistle. ♦ Baby birds and animals are out and about, learning from their parents and honing their survival skills. Those baby rodents, lagomorphs and ungulates who haven't yet developed strong skill sets are feeding their mammalian predators. ♦ Flies and mosquitoes, crickets and grasshoppers, butterflies and moths, and an amazing variety of beetles are at peak population now and supplying their manifold predators with a steady food source.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WE	DNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28		29	30	1	2
3	Independence Day Aphelion (Earth farthest from Sun), 12:10a.m. PDT	5	•	6	7	8	9 First day of Eid al-Adha
10	11	12	0	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	•	20	21	22	23
24/31	25	26		27	Delta Aquarid meteor shower (20/hour)	29	30



AUGUST



Coral Hairstreak butterfly on rabbitbrush. Photo: Alan Gregory

For every place there will always be people that want to exploit it, and there will always be people — hopefully — that want to save it and keep it as it is. Even with the risk of inviting the crowds into paradise, better to publish your photographs and rally the troops. What's in the frame of the photograph matters artistically, to be sure, but what's outside the frame can destroy it.

PHILIP HYDE

Landscape photographer and conservationist From Slickrock: The Canyon Country of Southeast Utah

Pika are busy cutting and drying little "haystacks" to provide the food stores they will depend upon in winter since they do not hibernate. • Green rabbitbrush explodes into waves of bright yellow bloom this month all across the high desert. • The subalpine wildflowers in the upper meadows and gorges of Steens Mountain, the Hart Mountain summit, and in the Pueblo, Trout Creek, and Oregon Canyon Mountains are reaching their peak. • Many shorebirds will begin their southward migration now • Kestrels are searching fields for their favorite and most abundant prey: grasshoppers. Seed-eating birds are busy fattening up as plants ripen. • Most reptiles retreat into cool hiding places at midday, except for the heat-adapted Great Basin collared lizard which can be seen basking on boulders — even when it's 100 degrees.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	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	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	• 27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3



FRIDAY

SATURDAY

THURSDAY

SEPTEMBER



Black-crowned night heron. Photo: Richard Eltrich

Land and water are not things, nouns, or commodities. They aren't even natural resources. They are living processes, flows of energy and matter in motion across perceived boundaries, like the animacy and unity of water in our bodies, in plants, in rivers, and in the oceans.

MELISSA K. NELSON

SUNDAY

Rosh Hashanah

(begins at sunset)

MONDAY

TUESDAY

Rosh Hashanah

(ends at sunset)

Ecologist, professor of Indigenous rights and lifeways, Anishinaabe/Métis From "Time to Indigenize Lands and Water Conservation"

28	29	30	31	1	2	3
						The Wilderness Act passed, 1964
4	5	6	7	8	9	° 10
11	12	13	14	Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15)	16	17
18	19	20	21	Autumn Equinox, 6:03p.m. PDT	23	24
• 25	26	27	28	29	30	1

WEDNESDAY

When water is available, you can expect large numbers of Wilson's phalaropes, eared grebes and American avocets to stop at Lake Abert to feast on brine shrimp and brine flies in preparation for their southward migration. • Gray rabbitbrush is in bloom, feeding the same pollinators that enjoyed green rabbitbrush blooms last month. • Aster and Erigeron species abound through early autumn.



FRIDAY

SATURDAY

THURSDAY

OCTOBER



Frost on aspen leaves. Photo: Kevin Clark

SUNDAY

Steens Mountain

Cooperative Management

& Protection Act passed, 2000

Diwali (24th)

MONDAY

TUESDAY

We have the chance to see differently, imagine differently, and be actively involved in the regeneration of our communities, in the broadest sense. When we know different, we do different.

DR. CAROLYN FINNEY

Storyteller, author and cultural geographer From Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors

6 John Day Fossil Beds National Monument National Wild & Scenic Yom Kippur Yom Kippur Rivers Act passed, 1968 (begins at sunset) (ends at sunset) founded, 1975 9 10 13 15 Indigenous Peoples' Day 18 19 20 Orionid meteor shower (20/hour) 24/31 23/30 25 26 27 28

WEDNESDAY

Big sagebrush comes into bloom, when the blooms on most flowering shrubs have faded and most plants have put out their seed heads. • Aspen, found in large groves on Hart and Steens Mountains, generally reach peak color early this month. • For deer, elk, pronghorn and bighorn sheep, this is mating season. • Grouse, juncos and other sparrows, chickadees, the corvids, and a great many raptors are foraging for seeds, insects, small mammal prey, and increasingly carrion, and seeking sheltered areas with shrubby cover, near water, to settle into for winter.

Omnibus Oregon Wild &

Scenic Rivers Act

passed, 1988



FRIDAY

SATURDAY

THURSDAY

NOVEMBER



Pronghorn family. Photo: Greg Burke

SUNDAY

MONDAY

28

TUESDAY

It is not that the land is simply beautiful but that it is powerful. Its power derives from the tension between its obvious beauty and its capacity to take life. Its power flows into the mind from a realization of how darkness and light are bound together within it, and the feeling that this is the floor of creation.

BARRY LOPEZWriter
From Arctic Dreams

30	• 31	1	2	3	4	5
		Native American Heritage Month First Day of Dia de los Muertos	Last Day of Dia de los Muertos			
6	7	° 8	9	10	11	12
Daylight Saving Time ends, 2a.m.		Total Lunar Eclipse, maximum at 2:59A.M. PST			Veterans Day	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
				Leonid meteor shower (15/hour)		
20	21	22	• 23	24	25	26
				Thanksgiving		

WEDNESDAY

The tundra swans at Summer Lake Wildlife Area and Klamath National Wildlife Refuge are assessing the temperatures and how much of the water has frozen over and deciding whether they will stay for the entire winter or carry on. • Migrating species have moved on, leaving resident animals to settle into their winter ranges — lower, warmer areas with less snow, accessible food, water and shelter.



DECEMBER



Black-tailed jackrabbit. Photo: Shannon Phifer

When day comes we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it.

AMANDA GORMAN

U.S. National Youth Poet Laureate 2021 From "The Hill We Climb"

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	27	28	29	• 30	1	2	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
_	4	5	6	° 7	8	9	10
_	11	12	Geminid meteor shower (100/hour)	14	15	16	17
_	Hanukkah (begins at sunset)	19	20	Winter Solstice, 1:48 _{P.M.} PST Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge established, 1936	22	• 23	24
	25	26	27	28	° 29	30	31

Many desert animals are denned up, or clustered in larger, tighter groups. ♦ Large groups of elk and mule deer are congregating in their winter ranges. ♦ Raptors are actively hunting as well as scavenging carrion near water sources where geese and ducks overwinter.

First Day of Kwanzaa Hanukkah (ends at sunset)

Christmas

OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION • WWW.ONDA.ORG

New Year's Eve

OREGON'S HIGH DESERT THROUGH THE YEAR



JANUARY JOHN DAY RIVER



FEBRUARY JOHN DAY RIVER



MARCH OWYHEE CANYONLANDS



APRIL OWYHEE CANYONLANDS



MAY GREATER HART-SHELDON



JUNE OWYHEE CANYONLANDS



JULY STEENS MOUNTAIN



AUGUST TROUT CREEK MOUNTAINS



SEPTEMBER MALHEUR N.W.R.



OCTOBER STEENS MOUNTAIN



NOVEMBER GREATER HART-SHELDON



DECEMBER CROOKED RIVER

This Wild Desert Calendar will drop you into twelve of the most dramatic and enlivening landscapes in Oregon's vast high desert, including a still, snowy morning in the John Day River Basin, a steep-walled gorge in the Owyhee Canyonlands, and a birdsong-filled marsh in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. You'll also come eye-to-eye with the wildlife that inhabit this landscape, as you get a sideways look from a burrowing owl, a stealthy glance from a bobcat perched in a tree and more. Prose, poetry and provocative questions from Amanda Gorman, Joy Harjo, Barry Lopez and others will inspire contemplation and action. And, with moon phases, meteor showers, expected wildflower blooms and migratory bird arrivals all helpfully provided, you can use this calendar to help you immerse yourself into 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, John Day River Basin and Steens Mountain. To conserve the desert places you love, visit www.ONDA.org/give.



Oregon Natural Desert Association 50 SW Bond Street, Suite 4 Bend, Oregon 97702 541.330.2638 | www.ONDA.org

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