

# Desert Ramblings

the newsletter of the  
Oregon  
Natural Desert  
association

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## PROFILE OF PLACE

As summer reaches its height, we hope that you've all had a chance to get out to the desert and enjoy some of those special places. The editor is spending a good deal of time at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge in southeastern Oregon. This vast refuge covers some 240,000 acres and would take a lifetime to explore. Home to antelope, mule deer, sage grouse, bighorn sheep, and an abundance of birds, you never know when the magic of the desert will surprise you.

There are several WSAs in the vicinity that need looking into. In fact, there is lots of inventory work throughout the high desert to do and we hope you will help. Many areas are remote, but there are regions close to towns as well. We hope that some of you can take on sponsorship of a particular WSA, visit the area, take photos, make notes of what you see there and let us know your findings.

BLM's final recommendation to Congress of lands for potential inclusion in a Desert Wilderness Bill is woefully small. We need to document the nature of the many outstanding areas that have been dropped from consideration. Herein, we describe briefly a few of the many areas open for research by you. For a complete list, refer to the *Oregon Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement* (a four-volume, complete listing with detailed maps) available for free from the BLM. All it takes is a note or a phone call to get your own copy. There are additional copies available at the Natural Resource Center in Bend for you to consult. Also refer to the *Wilderness Adoption Brochure* available from ONDA.

## IN THE VICINITY OF HART MOUNTAIN:

*Unit 33: Beatys Butte.* Just east of Guano Valley, this region includes the highest point in that part of Oregon at 7,910 ft. Scattered juniper and aspen groves are mixed in with the sage and native bunchgrasses. Great camping and hiking along with sage grouse habitat and antelope range.

*Unit 41: Hart Mountain-Guano Country.* Very diverse area that drains Hart Mountain. Numerous small rims, valleys, and canyons along with ephemeral lakes make this an area worth exploring. Some of the vegetation is in excellent condition due to lack of access by livestock.

*Unit 44: Poker Jim Country.* This is a vast area and includes rims and canyons. It's habitat for pronghorn, mule deer, prairie falcon, and other raptors.

*Unit 52: Warner Lakes.* This unique area lies just west of Hart Mountain. A series of lakes provide significant waterfowl habitat when full. This year, they are dry, but still offer excellent opportunities for exploration.

## TO THE NORTH:

*Units 2, 3, 12: Lower and Middle John Day and North Fork of the Crooked River,* respectively are for river lovers. Much information is already on hand, but enthusiastic sponsors are needed to polish off these proposals. Choose one of the three.

*Unit 13: Redman Rim.* No one has looked at this unit, so you have a chance to do it all and go for the glory. Close to Bend, this unit is located just north of Route 20 between Hampton and Riley.

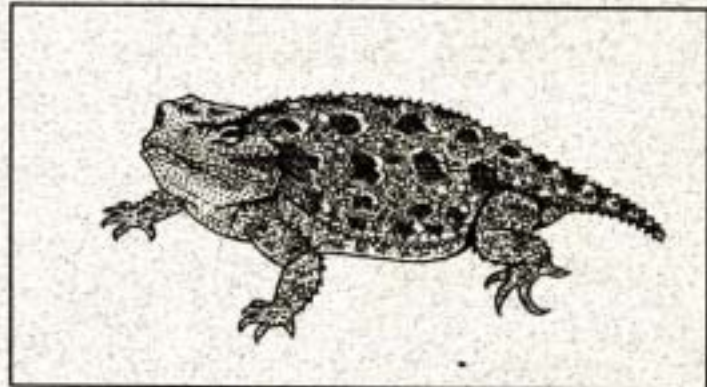
(continued on pg. 3)



## DESERT NOTEBOOK

by Al St. John

The bizarre, spiny appearance and odd body shape of the well known "horny toad", or horned lizard, cause them to resemble tiny dinosaurs or dragons. Of the two species native to Oregon, the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*) sports large, crown-like spines at the back of the head and a scattering of smaller spines on the body, legs and tail. Adults are usually three to five inches in length.

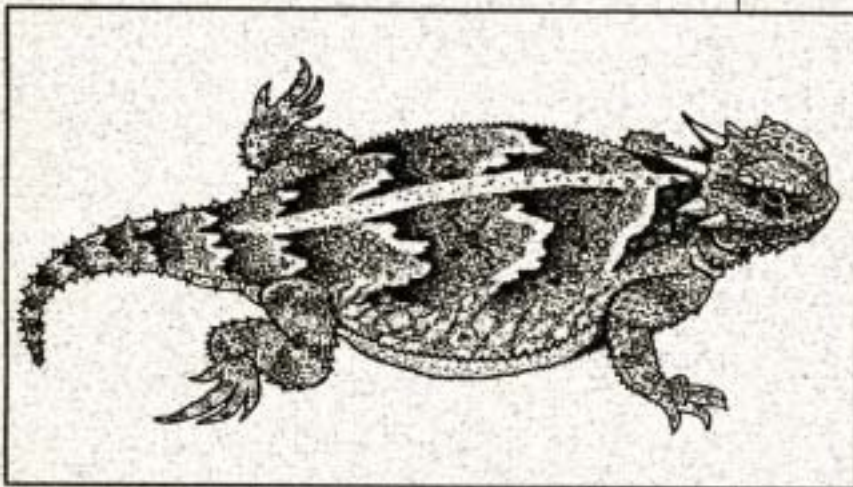


*Short-Horned Lizard*

The short-horned lizard, more tolerant of cold, scurries throughout the open sagebrush country of central and eastern Oregon, and even ranges to the top of the Cascade Mountains in open lava-dust areas along the crest.

Although popular as pets, these lizards usually do not live long in captivity and are best left in the wild. In fact, both species have been placed on the sensitive species list in Oregon.

(Editor's note: Both the article and the illustrations are from works by ONDA board member Al St. John's books, *Eastern Oregon, Portrait of the Land and its People* and *Knowing Oregon Reptiles.*)



*Desert Horned Lizard*

The second variety, the short-horned lizard (*Phrynosoma douglassii*), shows smaller and fewer spines. It is also not so large as the other species. Sometimes called the pygmy horned lizard, the short-horned lizard has a maximum length of no more than three inches. Both species are basically brown or gray with darker markings, although coloration varies greatly from one area to another as they match their habitats quite well. Desert horned lizards generally exhibit brighter colors, often with rusty-orange speckling.

All horned lizards (there are 14 species in North America) have wide, flat bodies and short tails. This low profile allows them to quickly burrow into the sand when seeking escape. The spines discourage hungry predators.

Horned lizards prefer open areas with scattered bushes and soil that is sandy or gravelly. However, both species rarely share the same location. In Oregon, the desert horned lizard inhabits the low, hot, arid basins of the southeastern part of the state.



*Range Map,  
Desert Horned Lizard*



*Range Map,  
Short-Horned Lizard*

#### BETWEEN BURNS AND VALE:

*Unit 5: Beaver Dam Creek.* Streams, springs, aspen, and good wildlife to be seen. Some land ownership conflicts exist, but certainly worth putting in some effort. The area needs a sponsor to visit, check on the boundaries, and write up a report.

*Unit 7: Castle Rock.* Deer and elk habitat surround this 6,837 foot volcanic core. Good country and needs a sponsor.

*Unit 10: Malheur Canyons.* An enthusiastic sponsor is needed for this challenging area. Good big game country with excellent hiking opportunities, this area is near Drewsey.

*Unit 14: Stinkingwater Pass.* Also near Drewsey, this is good country with sage grouse leks and summering pronghorn in some steep drainages. There is some archaeological value that needs exploring.

#### FURTHER EAST TOWARD VALE:

*Unit 54: Cottonwood.* Streams with some Redband Trout and good riparian vegetation in this unit. Bighorn sheep have been reintroduced and their status needs updating. Good raptor country, this region needs a sponsor.

*Unit 58: Freezeout Mountain.* See it in the summer! This will be a challenging, but important area that needs a good adopter.

*Unit 70: Westfall Highlands.* There are reports of beautiful bunchgrasses in this unit. It has been seen from the east and needs to be looked at from the western access.

Anyone with a high-clearance, 4-wheel-drive rig, there is still a lot of Owyhee country that needs looking. It's far away with tough access, but this is beautiful country and we need to know more about it.

For the serious backpacker, how about the far southeast corner of the state, the Owyhee Canyonlands, upstream from Rome.

Anyone interested in bats, one of the areas, *No. 64* has lava tubes with habitat for bats, including the rare long-eared myotis. Also, winter range for a large pronghorn herd and possibly kit fox!

Why not join in the fun and help us wind up this inventory work. We can find an area that you will fall in love with. Come on in and talk to us.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

All meetings are held at **The Natural Resource Center**, 1005 N.W. Newport. Refreshments at 7 P.M., meeting at 7:30 P.M.

July 31: **ONDA** meeting. No program planned; this will be essentially a working meeting for the Board, but we encourage attendance by all interested members. We need input from everyone.

☛ The good news this month is the receipt of a grant for \$1,900 from the *McKenzie River Gathering Foundation*. This money was granted for our Adopt a Wilderness program and will enable our adoptees to complete the field work necessary to prepare the Oregon High Desert Protection Act. Many thanks to MRG for their generous contribution and a special thanks to Elaine Rees for preparing this grant.

☛ The Oregon BLM publishes a monthly newsletter titled, *BLM NEWS*. An important feature is the listing of all current opportunities for public comment in Oregon/Washington BLM planning, environmental impact assessment, and decision making processes. We recommend that every ONDA member subscribe to keep up to date on proposed actions.

The paper is available free by writing:

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P.O. Box 2965  
Portland, Oregon 97208

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by calling Louise Power, Editor, 231-6275.

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