

Desert Ramblings

the newsletter of the
Oregon
Natural Desert
Association

volume 4, number 6

november - december 1991



Message from the President

Alice Elshoff

As ONDA enters its fourth year, continued growth has necessitated a few changes:

1. Candidates for the Board of Directors for 1992 reflect an enlarged geographical representation, with members drawn from Ontario, and west of the mountains as well as Sisters and Bend. Logistics of a statewide board will necessitate fewer meetings, with a Bend based executive committee to handle day to day transactions. This new regime should allow a more efficient use of everyone's time.
2. Under discussion at the November meeting will be a new format for the *Desert Rambler*. The Board is considering a larger, more in depth but less frequent publication, with communications of a more immediate nature to be handled through ONDA News Alerts.

Speaking for the entire Board, I wish to heap accolades on Mike Sequeira for his outstanding job as *Desert Rambler* editor for the last two years. His special talents will be sorely missed. Thank you, Michael, for a terrific job.



1992 promises to be an extremely busy year for ONDA. Thanks to all of you for your support. Keep those memberships current and watch for updated news on The Oregon High Desert Protection Act (OHDPA) slated to arrive in your mailboxes this winter.

Alice Elshoff

Central Oregon Environmental Center

16 N.W. Kansas
Bend, Oregon

※ Grand Opening ※

Saturday, December 7, 1 - 7 P.M.

Refreshments

Music by David Savage & Irene Goodnight
Book and Calendar Signings by
Charles Blakeslee, Dave Dobkin, Denzel Ferguson,
Sandy Lonsdale, Al St. John
Special Showing by noted Oregon Photographers
Bruce Adams, Bruce Jackson, and Barry Peril

Desert Quilt Drawing

A beautiful Desert Quilt, hand-crafted by Caroline Tabor will be raffled. Caroline used desert tones and a log-cabin pattern to emphasize the beauty and history of the Oregon High Desert. Our thanks to Caroline for this exquisite contribution. Proceeds from ticket sales will be used to insure that those qualities we all value in the desert will still be there for generations to come. You may order tickets by mail, but you need to act quickly. (See Order Form).

Editor's Note: I appreciate the kind words from Alice. The experience of being the newsletter editor for the past two years has been very rewarding. Other commitments simply preclude my continuation as editor of *Desert Ramblings*. If anyone would be interested in taking on this fascinating and educational position, please contact Alice or me. Once again, I appreciate the chance to continue to take part in ONDA's important work.

Please continue your support and consider taking a more active role as the challenges offered by OHDPA, grazing, cyanide heap-leach mining, and others continue to evolve.





MINING

by Mike Sequeira

H.B. 2244 recently passed by the 1991 Oregon Legislature and signed by Governor Roberts provides for major changes in the regulation of chemical-process mines, particularly cyanide heap-leach operations. Key provisions of the bill include:

- A site-specific environmental evaluation including a cumulative impact analysis.
- A socioeconomic analysis for use by local communities.
- Several public input opportunities during the state permitting process.
- Backfill analysis on a case-by-case basis.
- Stringent wildlife protection and mitigation provisions.
- A project-specific coordination group that will meet in the local area.
- Establishment of an interagency, interdisciplinary technical review team.
- A consolidated application.
- A consolidated public hearing on draft permits and contested cases if needed.
- A new judicial review procedure designed specifically for this process.

The bill also requires the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) to complete rules for procedural aspects. Those rules are critical to the eventual implementation of the law. Copies are available in many public libraries and at DOGAMI offices in Albany, Baker City, Grants Pass, and Portland.

In late September, the U.S. Senate defeated Senator Dale Bumper's (D.-Ark.) one-year moratorium to prevent mining claims from being purchased outright for as little as \$2.50 an acre. The vote was 47-46.

We urge all ONDA members to write to their state and federal legislators urging responsible reform of the 1872 Mining Law. For much valuable information, contact:

The Mineral Policy Center
Room 550
1325 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20000

OFFICERS

President:	Alice Elshoff	389-4566
Vice-President:		
Secretary:	Lynn Premelaar	W. 388-0304 H. 549-8661
Treasurer:	Lauren Perkins	388-4592
Newsletter:	Mike Sequeira	382-1227



MARKETPLACE

ONDA shirts, short-sleeve and long-sleeve t-shirts and sweatshirts, just in time for Christmas. Colors available are *grey, navy, peach, or white*. Sizes available are *small, medium, large, and extra-large*.

Prices: Sweatshirts \$22.00 Short-sleeve t-shirt \$12.00 Long-sleeve t-shirt \$16.00

ORDER FORM

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

ITEM	COLOR (NOTE CHOICE 1 and CHOICE 2)	SIZE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
RAFFLE TICKETS: HANDMADE QUILT \$1.00 PER CHANCE			NO SHIPPING	
MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: ONDA		MAIL TO: ONDA P.O. BOX 1005 BEND, OREGON 97709	SHIPPING/HANDLING	\$2.00
			TOTAL:	



DESERT NOTEBOOK

by Richard Wilhelm

When we arrived at the site near Rincon WSA and decompressed ourselves from the two-hour, bone jarring ride, the leader of our group, Bruce Crespín, BLM archaeologist quickly had us believing this was a special place. We had come by way of a road out of Fields to the west, over the north end of the Pueblo Mountains. As the road gained elevation, the view became spectacular. We paused briefly at a mountain pass in the Pueblos to look over the road and watched as miniature dust devils spun away from the dry road bed. We looked where we were going, into a seemingly endless, treeless terrain of benches, buttes and valleys, eroded by the wind and rain, and sparsely inhabited by the hardiest of wildlife. At our feet was a miniature multicolored world of mountain flowers, all in full spring glory, bracing themselves against the steady wind. Like some Lilliputian landscape, every plant was a scaled down replica of itself and surrounded by polished stones. Here there were no livestock, few people, and little outside interference; it was a natural place for the magnificent cycle of flowering, pollinating, and self-seeding to occur and recur.

Back in the Suburban (odd name for a vehicle whose nearest namesake was a few hundred miles away) we bounced down one road after another, into and out of valleys, over lesser ranges and table lands, across range land run by one of the few ranches in the area, until we reached the very brink of the table land. A "narrow defile," Bruce euphemistically termed it, lay before us. It was actually a ravine rotated to nearly 45 degrees, with no more than ruts where the only other vehicle within the past year to pass this way was probably Bruce. You get used to these roads in this country, but a healthy respect for them is in order. So to lighten the load on the brakes, some of us chose to walk, picking off the more aggressive rocks from the road's surface, eyeing likely escape routes should we need them.

Soon we arrived at the site. Our attention was directed toward the gaping mouth of a wash, similar to any of the hundred we had just passed. But in this one we were to find evidence of an ancient gathering spot, probably used for hunting, certainly for the making of tools and many fine petroglyphs.

The first thing that was apparent was that this had been a popular place to the early people of the region. There were ample traces of stone tool-making as the leftover flakes – lithic scatter – covered the ground in places. The small shards of black obsidian so brilliantly reflected the intense sunlight they could have been flaked away from a larger piece just last week, yet they had been dropped there hundreds, maybe thousands of years ago. The nearest source for this material was probably Beatty's Butte, some 15–20 miles away which contains stones of black, gray, red and orange; only black was used here for tools.



We began to hike toward the mouth of the wash, a nondescript place, save for the subtleties which are the hallmarks and treasures of the region – local points of geological interest, tracks of the many species of wildlife, various gray-green botanical specimens, and a lot of open space. The wash, more like a notch cut into the wall of a much larger canyon-like valley was perhaps a half-mile long. Its walls were 200 feet high, perhaps twice as wide at the rim, with a dominant rimrock ledge buttress-like against the deep blue desert sky. The sides of the wash had steep talus slopes and the bottom was littered with boulders of all sizes up to

that of a VW bus. As the wash continued upwards top, its floor became more seriously obstructed by boulders, obliterating any sign of an easy route.

We arrived at midday when the temperature had already reached the mid-80s and was just starting to gain strength. In two hours it would be in the mid-90s. Dust devils were playing in the larger valley, into which our wash emptied. There, water appeared to be just a sweet memory. Aside from a few lizards and various insects, there was no animal life to be

(continued on pg. 3)

(Desert Notebook, continued from pg. 2)

seen. Sage was the dominant plant life. The rock of the region was volcanic in origin, save for a few roadcuts which exposed other geological stories. The boulders on the floor of the wash had coned to develop a black sheen of desert varnish, microscopic layer upon layer of mineral precipitate, leached from the underlying rock by the action of the morning dew and oxidized by the sun and air.

Between several hundred and 2000 years ago the varnish was used as a medium of expression by the people of the region. By pecking through the varnish, the lighter-colored rock was exposed to create a black and white representation. The data are not conclusive yet to be able to accurately pinpoint the exact time for this site. The age of rock art is based on comparisons to other sites, then fitting similarities within the established record.

Among these boulders we found a small trail into the wash and the site. Finally we had arrived at the bottom end of the site and a small human-like petroglyph – anthropomorph – greeted us. More were found and the boundaries of the main area of glyphs began to define itself. Gazing at these carved figures and then at the surrounding landscape, it was easy to be projected back into the time and place of the makers of these glyphs. I wondered at how time has changed what I see from what they saw. There seemed to be less water now, also the type of game that is depicted on the rocks, particularly bighorn sheep and elk are no longer found within the area. Otherwise, it had probably changed very little. There were also figures of antelope which are still found in abundance here. At the site are two natural rock cisterns for the collection and storage of water. These cisterns have been known to the animals of the region, and presumably to the people for thousands of years. This location in the sea of sage and hills of rock was where a hunting party chose to lie in wait, perhaps to make a sacred place for the hunt, to make their obsidian points, to create strong bonds with their natural world, and to create images on the rock surfaces depicting the nature or supernature of life as perceived. The cisterns were at the center of the site.

Anthropomorphic figures with round heads, stick-like bodies, some with circles around their midsections, the antlered and horned heads of common or desired game, then an abstraction – a circle with two or three squiggly lines coming out of it, perhaps representing a spring – all found in this site which covered perhaps a little more than half an acre. And there were many more designs. In all, we located 43 sets, some with only one glyph, a few with up to ten or more. One set particularly mystified us. It contained a line which, in an irregular manner, circum-

scribed the large, nearly five-foot wide, flat surface of one rock seemingly showing certain landmarks. Along this line and near it figures were placed in a methodical way. There were animals, anthropomorphs and abstractions, including the spring-like symbols. Where the line crossed the top edge of the rock and dipped nearly a foot down the other side before coming back up and over, there was an image which was radiantly sun-like in its shape. Could it really be a map? Maybe a spiritual journey? The life circle of the game they came to hunt?

Our prime focus at this site was to document the petroglyphs for the BLM and to accomplish this Bruce had brought rolls of a clear heavy plastic and markers, along with tape, and other accoutrements needed to do tracings of each set. Rubbings may have worked for several of these petroglyphs, but most were too shallow and rock's texture too coarse for rubbings to be practical, though they can often be much more realistic and reflect the tool work of the original art much more accurately. Photographs and notes were made to set the location and proximity of each petroglyph set for future study. The job of documentation took about three hours. Then, slowly, we began to gather around the stacks of completed tracings. A California brown bat, apparently disturbed from its roost beneath one of the rocks, began to fly around us. It went from one group to the other, then back, in a lazy flight around these rare visitors to its home. Back at the top of the *narrow defile*, we stopped and had one final look over the mile-wide valley, again contemplating the story behind the site.

There are many such sites scattered about the Oregon High Desert and the Great Basin. Perhaps with enough documentation, study, and preservation, we can begin to piece together the puzzle of what the symbols represent and have a clearer view into the past.

A note: We were some of the first people in recent times to see this site. It had been "discovered" within the last year or so. We were very fortunate to have had this opportunity. These glyphs had been untouched by anyone since they were made and were still in fine condition. This is not the case for many other sites around the West, which have been defaced, damaged or have had articles and entire glyphs removed by collectors or vandals. Finally, I have deliberately scrambled some of the directions we took to get to this site, but it does exist. Find out more about this and other petroglyph sites and the work being done to preserve and document them. Happy glyphing. □





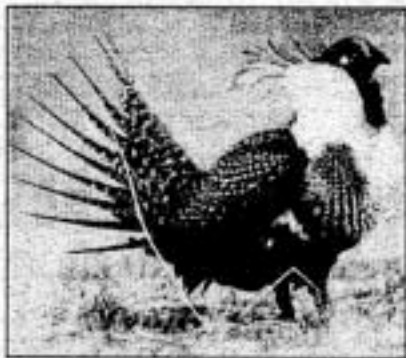
CONSERVATION CORNER

Sage Grouse in Oregon
by Craig Miller

Studies directed by John Crawford, PhD, professor at Oregon State University, indicate a serious ongoing decline of Sage Grouse in Oregon. The subspecies appears to be in danger of extinction throughout its range in Washington, Oregon, and California. Although listed as a candidate for consideration as threatened or endangered in 1985, information has until recently been insufficient to determine the degree of danger the Sage Grouse is in, and the factors involved in causing their decline.

Over the last 40 years the abundance of Sage Grouse has declined approximately 60%. Even more worrisome is the 67% decline of chick to adult ratio that has occurred in the same time period indicating a progressively aging population with poor reproductive success. Dr. Crawford found that key factors involved in their decline include loss of protective grass cover needed for successful nesting and a lack of forbs needed for successful brood rearing.

Poor range condition caused by livestock grazing and fire suppression appears to be the most significant factor causing the decline in the Sage Grouse population. Other impacts such as ORV use, mining, hunting, pesticide use and conversion of rangelands to pasture or croplands are also likely factors in their decline. ONDA is considering petitioning the Fish and Wildlife Service to list Oregon's Sage Grouse as an Endangered Species.



CONSERVATION CORNER

*Middle Deschutes and Lower Crooked
Rivers*
by Barbara Butler

ONDA is being represented in the Middle Deschutes, Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic Rivers work group. BLM has been mandated by Congress to work with the National Forest to accomplish an appropriate Management Plan and Environmental Assessment.

There has been a public scoping and at this point the work group is discussing issues, which will lead to the formation of the alternatives. The *Issues and Alternatives Public Mailer* is scheduled to be sent out about November 15. The draft preferred alternative is scheduled for about December 17. A public comment period on the Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment is scheduled for about April or May, 1992. The final plan approval is scheduled for August 28, 1992.

Work group members include representation from various interests, including fisheries, agriculture, water rights, minerals, ranching, environmental concerns, and agencies. State Parks, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Deschutes and Jefferson County Planning, Central Oregon Irrigation, Fish and Wildlife, and USFS Grasslands are participants.

The five issues currently being addressed are:

1. Where should the final Wild & Scenic River boundaries on the Middle Deschutes and Lower Crooked Rivers be located to best manage river values and address public concerns?
2. How should the Middle Deschutes and Lower Crooked Rivers' outstandingly remarkable and significant river values be protected and enhanced?
3. Where and what type of access should be provided to the Middle Deschutes and Lower Crooked Rivers?
4. What kind of recreational opportunities should be managed within these Wild & Scenic River Corridors?
5. How should the private property owners within the river corridors and the managing agencies cooperate in management of the river corridor?

