

# Desert Ramblings

the newsletter of the  
Oregon  
Natural Desert  
association



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Volume 11, Number 3



ELAINE REES

Pronghorn "antelope" in the proposed Pronghorn Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

## ONDA proposes Pronghorn ACEC "Little Serengeti" would link two refuges

By Shauna Uselman

In May, ONDA and 23 other environmental and wildlife organizations submitted a proposal to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to protect 1.2 million acres between the Hart Mountain and Charles Sheldon National Wildlife Refuges as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). An ACEC is a special BLM management designation to protect natural areas, natural processes, and populations of plants or animals of particular significance due to their ecological, scientific, recreational, or cultural value.

The design of the proposed ACEC is based on the concept of a pronghorn antelope biological unit—an area which contains the full range of habitats necessary for pronghorn in this portion of their continental range. It would connect southeast Oregon's Hart Mt. Refuge with northern Nevada's Sheldon Refuge (see map, pg. 3), protecting a key pronghorn migration corridor linking the two refuges. The proposed ACEC also includes important winter range, similar to what was originally envisioned in the 1930s when a national pronghorn range was first proposed.

### High priority conservation area

In addition to its significance to pronghorn, the proposed ACEC encompasses a unique and sensitive high desert landscape which, if protected, would help preserve native biodiversity within the northern Great Basin. This habitat is critically important to 40 at-risk plants, animals, and natural vegetation communities. For these reasons, the area has been recognized by governmental agencies and environmental organiza-

## To think like a mountain

By Bill Marlett, Executive Director

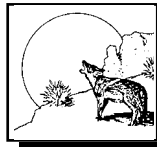
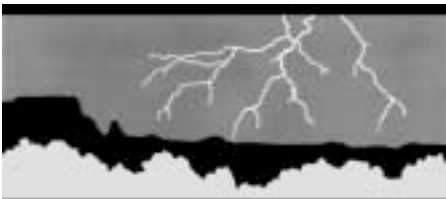
ONDA's proposal to designate over one million acres of the northern Great Basin as a Pronghorn Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), is one answer to Aldo Leopold's call to "think like a mountain." In Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), the esteemed pioneer ecologist wrote:

*We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes - something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then and full of trigger itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean a hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.*

### Killing wolves, killing coyotes

We'd like to think that our public land agencies have progressed from single-species management to an ecological or landscape approach, as Leopold advocated over 50 years ago. However, judging from their efforts to "control" coyotes on Hart Mountain, refuge managers still have to stretch their minds to "think like a mountain."

Since 1995, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) has twice failed to implement coyote hunts on Hart Mountain. Their flawed rationale for the hunts: coyotes, a native and natural predator, were



# FROM THE DEN

by Dave Funk

## Oregon Natural Desert Association

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### Mission

*The purpose of the Oregon Natural Desert Association is to promote the preservation, protection and rehabilitation of Oregon's arid-land environment and to educate the general population on the values of preserving the natural arid-land environment.*

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## Enjoying our desert wildlands

My favorite painting sits above the desk in my office. It shows the entrance to an old German building, a sidewalk, and a post with a "No parking" sign and another sign with an Edward Abbey quote in German. The translation: "It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it."

The message in the painting hit home a month ago. Bill Marlett and I had planned a raft trip on the Owyhee River. Bill was very excited about taking the trip, but had to cancel at the last minute. There was just too much work to be done in the ONDA office.

So I took the trip, and Bill stayed in Bend. As board president I felt guilty knowing that Bill was back home fighting to keep areas like the Owyhee beautiful for people like me. And I kept reminding myself of the painting on my office wall. I vowed that when I got back I would work harder on fund-raising so we could hire more staff and allow Bill to get out of the office and into the desert more often.

So this message to our members is my initial effort. Because of people like Bill, Gilly, and Joy, we desert rats have a better place to enjoy. Join me in increasing our donations and finding more friends of Oregon's high desert to join ONDA and help support our hardworking staff's efforts on our behalf.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Barbed Wire Round-Up

**Wed-Sun, July 22-26**

#### Hart Mt. National Wildlife Refuge

Join ONDA members, staff, and friends for a long weekend of habitat restoration, gorgeous sunsets, and soaks in the hot springs at our annual Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Barbed Wire Round-Up. Help improve pronghorn habitat by dismantling obsolete fences, while having fun with fellow desert lovers! Watch your mailbox for more information or contact Gilly at [glyons@onda.org](mailto:glyons@onda.org) or (503) 525-0193.

rats as we hike around the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and float on the Wild and Scenic John Day River (water levels permitting). Stargazing and evenings around the campfire included! Watch your mailbox for details, or contact Gilly at (503) 525-0193 or [glyons@onda.org](mailto:glyons@onda.org).

### Malheur Refuge Conservation Outing

**Fri-Sun, Nov. 6-8**

#### Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

If you just can't get enough fence-pulling in your life, look no further! Join ONDA members and staff for a weekend of wildlife habitat restoration on the Malheur NWR's newly acquired southern unit, as well as hikes along the Wild and Scenic Donner und Blitzen River at the base of Steens Mountain. For more information, contact Gilly at [glyons@onda.org](mailto:glyons@onda.org) or (503) 525-0193.

### ONDA's Annual Membership Meeting

**Fri-Sun, Sept. 25-27**

#### Hancock Field Station

Please join us for an autumn weekend in the John Day Basin of Eastern Oregon at the Hancock Field Station for ONDA's Annual Meeting. Cavort with other desert

# Pronghorn ACEC proposed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tions as a high priority conservation opportunity, as evidenced by the numerous Wilderness Study Areas, Research Natural Areas, and small ACECs scattered within it. In fact, the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) identified a very large area around Hart Mt. as a potential biological reserve, and the Oregon Biodiversity Project has identified the region as a key conservation opportunity area.

Hunters, anglers, and other recreationists are attracted to this area by sage grouse, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and native trout as well as by the pronghorn themselves. Botanists and wildflower photographers likewise enjoy the diversity of species, from the very rare, fist-sized grimy Ivesia (*Ivesia rhypara*) to the ubiquitous and eye-catching Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja sp.*). Birders can spot burrowing owl, black-throated sparrow, ferruginous hawk, and even the occasional peregrine falcon all within the

boundaries of the proposed ACEC.

## Western icon

Americans have long felt a special fondness for pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), also known as antelope (technically a misnomer). Numerous written accounts detail people's fascination with the beauty and nimble-footedness of these creatures. We have marveled at everything from their astounding speed to their uncanny curiosity (see *Desert Ramblings*, Winter 1998). Once more widespread than bison, pronghorn numbers have rapidly declined since the arrival of Euro-Americans. However, pronghorn continue to attract strong interest and concern and are arguably the most notable native animal of the high desert.

Similarly, the sage grouse is another remarkable species appreciated by wildlife viewers and hunters. Numerous visitors are attracted to the proposed ACEC area during their breeding season (from late winter to spring) in order to witness their fascinating, elaborate courtship rituals. Unfortunately, like the pronghorn, their distribution and populations have declined dramatically in the past 150 years.

For both sage grouse and pronghorn antelope, as well as for pygmy rabbit, long-eared bat, Lahontan cutthroat trout, Crosby's buckwheat, Soldier Meadow cinquefoil, yellow-billed cuckoo, and the many other at-risk species of this small part of the



DANIEL SHERMAN

A male sage grouse in the midst of its dramatic courtship display. This declining game bird is one of 40 at-risk species would benefit from improved habitat conditions in the proposed Pronghorn ACEC.

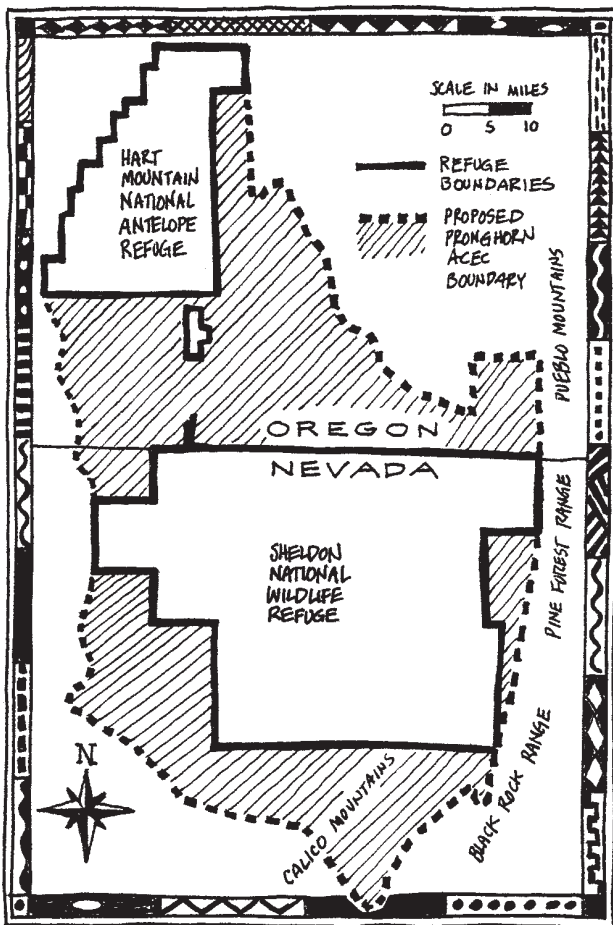
world, the area around Hart Mt. and Sheldon refuges is important. This remote and wild country offers an amazing conservation opportunity. There is no other place like it in the Great Basin. Hart Mt. and Sheldon refuges together comprise the Great Basin's largest cow-free area, and wildlife habitat on the refuges since the exclusion of

The design of the proposed ACEC is based on the concept of a pronghorn antelope biological unit—an area which contains the full range of habitats necessary for pronghorn.

livestock has improved (*Desert Ramblings*, Summer 1997).

By mandating special management for this special place, the proposed Pronghorn ACEC would exemplify the new paradigm of landscape-level conservation. It is an opportunity to create a well-protected area for wildlife that will be loved by generations of people and lauded by the public as the West's "Little Serengeti."

For more information and maps, visit ONDA's website: [www.onda.org](http://www.onda.org)



DAVE FUNK



# To think like a mountain

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

eating pronghorn young. The fact is, the survival of young pronghorn naturally varies due to many factors, including predation by coyotes. Since a low in 1995, the survival of young pronghorn has increased (see Winter and Spring 1998 *Desert Ramblings*).

Last February, after withdrawing its coyote control plan for a second time due to its flawed scientific justification, one would hope the FWS would give up the idea. Instead, the agency recently initiated a formal amendment to the Hart Mountain Refuge Management Plan that, if adopted, will authorize coyote control in the name of pronghorn management.

## Landscape ecology management

We hope our proposed Pronghorn ACEC proposal helps stimulate the FWS to refine their management of Hart Mountain to benefit all wildlife species including predators. Of course, the ACEC would benefit pronghorn. In different seasons, pronghorn need different habitats at different elevations, and the new ACEC, by linking two existing antelope refuges, would better manage a key corridor and improve important winter range on BLM land adjacent to the two refuges.


Likewise, we hope the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will rise to the occasion. There is no dispute over the merits of protecting this landscape for the benefit of pronghorn and other wildlife. When the idea of a pronghorn refuge in the Great Basin was first discussed in the 1930s, the proposed area was larger than our proposed ACEC. Yet, just as FWS seems to focus on

pronghorn instead of entire ecosystem, BLM's focus on cows limits its ability to think like a mountain.

While BLM has a legal mandate to eliminate livestock grazing where other values deserve more protection, their track record is abysmal. To its credit, however, the agency has eliminated much of the grazing in the Warner Valley Wetlands ACEC, located west of the Hart Mountain Refuge.

BLM will need to drastically reduce or eliminate grazing on the proposed Pronghorn ACEC, which amounts to approximately 0.7% of BLM-administered lands in the lower forty-eight states. To have these 1.2 million acres cow-free would be a mere drop in the bucket compared to the vast landscapes managed by BLM where grazing would continue.

However, unless the BLM can demonstrate its capacity to better manage a national treasure like this proposed ACEC, it begs the question of whether FWS or another federal agency can do it better. Certainly, FWS should be recognized for having taken the politically difficult step of removing livestock from the Hart Mt. Refuge in 1991. (Grazing permits on the Sheldon Refuge were "bought out" by the Conservation Foundation the following year.) But given their recent fixation on coyote control, we must demand more enlightened ecosystem management from the agency in charge of our nation's wildlife refuges.

The proposed Pronghorn ACEC offers the agencies and local interests an incredible opportunity to think like a mountain. 



ONDA FILE PHOTO

*Sage Hen Canyon in the proposed Pronghorn ACEC. Stream canyons, such as this one in the Beatty Butte area, provide important riparian habitat used by 75 to 80% of the area's vertebrate species.*

**W**hen the idea of a pronghorn refuge in the Great Basin was first discussed in the 1930s, the proposed area was larger than ONDA's proposed ACEC.

# Court halts grazing on southwest national forests

## Precedent set for riparian area protection

By George Wuerthner

In a historic decision in April, a federal district court in Tucson, Arizona, affirmed a U.S. Magistrate's ruling that two national forests in Arizona and New Mexico must remove cows from 57 allotments to reduce the impacts on riparian (streamside) habitat.

The suit, filed by Forest Guardians of Santa Fe and Southwest Center for Biodiversity in Tucson, Arizona, argued successfully that livestock grazing was degrading riparian habitat along the Gila and San Francisco Rivers, directly contributing to the endangerment of dozens of species, including the southwest willow flycatcher and a number of native fish species. The plaintiffs argued that the Gila and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests of New Mexico and southeastern Arizona, by continuing to permit grazing in riparian zones, were in effect causing the extinction of these species and thus violating the Endangered Species Act



COURTESY OF FOREST GUARDIANS

*The dramatic contrast on the San Francisco River between the grazed side of a fenceline, which supports no streamside vegetation, and the ungrazed side, which supports riparian habitat.*

(ESA). The Court ruled in the plaintiffs' favor and ordered the Forest Service to remove the livestock.

### Damaged riparian areas

That cattle have damaged public lands is undeniable. By the Forest Service's own estimates, only 16% of its southwestern riparian areas are up to its own minimum standards; 27% fail to meet them and are not improving. The rest (57%) fail to meet the standards but are said to be improving incrementally.

The livestock industry had appealed the ruling by U.S. Magistrate Ralph Terlizzi and requested a stay blocking the livestock removal. However, on April 19 a federal judge upheld the original decision. The judge's denial affirmed the magistrate's opinion which stated:

*"As a starting point, the importance of riverbed areas to wildlife in the desert Southwest cannot be overstated. Riparian areas serve as critical habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species...The ESA flatly requires that the USFS ensure that its programs and permits do not jeopardize the survival or critical habitat of any listed species...(The*

*Forest Service) argues that granting the TRO (temporary restraining order) would enjoin the USFS from performing actions which it feels are required under the ESA...The Court acknowledges that some permittees will suffer significant economic hardships, but those hardships do not outweigh the sweeping, definitive scope of the ESA. Additionally, if the USFS does not follow through on its plans to exclude grazing on a shortened time line in order to protect listed species, and a violation of the ESA results, the harm could truly be irremediable."*

This favorable ruling creates a legal precedent that may be applied to BLM and Forest Service lands throughout the West. With numerous salmon and trout runs across Oregon being proposed for listing under the ESA, in part as a consequence of livestock-induced riparian damage, a similar removal of cattle from public land allotments containing streams may be warranted to comply with the law. 🐾

George Wuerthner serves on ONDA's Advisory Board.

## Riparian areas: Desert Oases

Although they comprise less than 1% of the desert landscape, riparian (streamside) areas are essential to approximately 75 to 80% of the West's vertebrate wildlife. Healthy riparian zones also filter water (thereby contributing to clean water supplies) and reduce floods. Cattle, animals that are adapted to moist woodlands, spend inordinate amounts of time in riparian zones, particularly in arid climates. Their continued presence in these ecologically critical habitats results in water fouled by their excrement, as well as erosion and sedimentation from the destruction of shrubs, trees and grass that hold stream banks together and provide habitat needed by many wildlife species. 🐾

## Bringing Back Our Native Desert Fish

By Alice Elshoff

*Cindy Deacon Williams, senior aquatic ecologist for the Pacific Rivers Council, spoke at Desert Conference XX in early May about conservation strategies for desert fish. The following is a synopsis of her presentation.*

Cindy Deacon Williams treated attendees of her workshop on “Conservation Strategies for Desert Fish” to a visual tour of the desert’s diverse aquatic systems. In Nevada’s bizarre Devil’s Hole, a narrow slit in the ground, endemic pupfish live in the dark waters and have only one small ledge on which to lay their eggs. And in the region’s varied hot springs, aquatic life has adjusted to temperatures as high as 36° C (97° F.). For example, Borax Lake, a hot lake in southeast Oregon’s Alvord Desert, supports the endangered Borax Lake Chub.

Williams emphasized that aquatic species face graver threats than terrestrial critters, yet receive less attention. It came as no surprise to Desert Conference attendees that the number one cause for the desperate situation facing desert fish and other aquatic species is habitat modification, impacting 338 of the 364 North American fish species which are at risk of extinction. Second is the introduction of exotic species, most of which compete with or feed on native species. A third problem is the restricted range of desert fishes, due to falling lake levels. A long-term drying period has isolated fish populations, in contrast to the greater connectivity among the region’s basin lakes thousands of years ago when these fish evolved.

### Restoration vs. rehabilitation

Many of our attempts to rehabilitate aquatic habitats have been one-shot projects—engineering structures to create pools in creeks (which are not always effective) and “feel-good” plantings of willows (which may or may not survive). We have tended to do these projects and then move on rather than monitor the results. These attempts at rehabilitation have met with only limited success. Restoration, on the other hand, involves a long-term commitment to inventory, plan, implement, and monitor.


**Inventory:** An inventory should research historical conditions, catalog current conditions and identify the factor or factors limiting the habitat’s potential. Is it grazing, water withdrawal, the presence of exotic species, or other factors?

**Planning:** Once the inventory is done, Williams recommends developing a tentative plan which first seeks to protect the best of what habitat is left. According to Williams, the best habitats and the greatest concentrations of natives are often in the upper watersheds since pioneers historically settled the lowlands first. Then, identify how best to modify or eliminate the land use practices that are causing the problems. These can be addressed through cooperative efforts or the force of law.

Keeping in mind the importance of natural recovery, look next at elimination of exotic species by first improving the habitat to favor the native species. In other words, poisoning exotic fish with Rotenone may not be a wise first choice. Re-introduction of beaver instead may effectively restore habitat and conditions more favorable to native fish in streams with gradients of less than 3%. (In steeper gradients dams tend to blow out periodically so that no permanent structural change can take place.)

If re-introductions of native fish are called for, find populations in which the genetic material is as close to the original species as possible. If the pure strain has been lost forever, select from the largest gene pool of the strain that most resembles the original. While arguments about this continue, it would seem that a successful mimic is better than no fish at all.

**Implementation and monitoring:** Finally, a restoration plan must contain a time line for each step in the process and must identify who is accountable for its implementation and monitoring. Monitoring is absolutely essential: Is the plan being followed? Are we controlling cattle trespass? Is the system responding? There must be flexibility to adapt and experiment in the event that our best restoration plans do not produce the intended response.

Although her primary focus was on desert fish, Williams stretched our thinking to include *all* aquatic species, from microscopic organisms at the base of the food chain to the flies, frogs and salamanders that together indicate a healthy, diverse aquatic ecosystem. She reminded us that they live in puddles, seeps, bogs, marshes, and huge lakes, as well as springs, tiny creeks, and rushing rivers. These systems also differ in dynamics and salinity, all of which contribute to the huge variety of aquatic life on this planet. 





**ABOVE LEFT:** Bob Jackson and other Desert Conference volunteers helped nature reclaim a road closed in BLM's Pueblo Mountain Wilderness Study Area. The work party helped stabilize the road to prevent erosion and speed natural rehabilitation. The road, which a BLM staff person said "should never have been built in the first place," also passes through a Research Natural Area for sensitive plant species.

**BELOW LEFT:** Road reclamation volunteers take a well-deserved break. **BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Alex Berlin, Maitreya, John Hawksley, Dan Wright, Bob Jackson, Brenda Lincoln. **FRONT ROW:** Elisa Hawksley, Judy Elli.



**ABOVE:** Adventurous hikers ford Bluebucket Creek on a Desert Conference field trip to the Bluebucket Wilderness Study Area.

SCOTT MOORE



SCOTT MOORE

DAVID STONE

## Grazing Permits: Retirement vs. Free Market

*Grazing permits for the public lands are currently available only to ranchers and must be used for grazing livestock. Regulations do not allow a permit holder to not graze the leased land for more than three consecutive years. Conservation groups in the West are engaging in a dialog about alternatives to this system. Speakers on a panel addressed the topic at Desert Conference XX.*

CATHY CARLSON, NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION, said her organization is involved with discussions with both the cattle and sheep industries to work out a marketing system for grazing permits which would benefit both ranchers and conservationists. This system would extend the length of a public lands permit from 10 years to 30 years and would allow non-ranchers to bid on the permits. In this way, conservationists would have the ability to obtain a permit for purposes other than grazing and ranchers would have a longer tenure on the permits they obtain.

SUSAN SHOCK, GILA WATCH, expressed her group's opposition to putting grazing permits on the free market, stating that "the extent to which the public lands are now being destroyed by grazing is the extent to which the free market is already driving grazing." Competitive bidding for the permits would drive the price up, forcing top-bidding ranchers to run more cattle in order to realize a profit on their investment. This, she

says, is bad for the land. Instead, Gila Watch advocates a government buy-out and permanent retirement of grazing permits for allotments that are not economically or ecologically viable.

FOREST GUARDIANS' SAM HITT suggests the use of the Range Betterment Funds—an existing pool of monies representing one-half of the government's income from grazing fees—to buy permits from willing sellers. The permits could then be retired at no cost to the taxpayer.

ONDA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BILL MARLETT expressed the opinion that with the average age of the public land rancher now at almost 60 years and with few of the younger generation going into ranching, retirement of permits would offer a graceful way out for the permittees. Total "buy-out" of all the grazing permits in the West is probably unrealistic (with a price tag of possibly \$1 billion), but for selected areas of ecological importance it might be within reach.

*These issues were to be debated extensively at a regional conference in Utah in June. ONDA's Executive Director Bill Marlett will participate in those discussions and will report on the issue in the next issue of Desert Ramblings.*

# Bombing range on Owyhee horizon

## *Air Force proposal would close BLM lands and airspace*

By Jason Seivers

The wild and scenic Owyhee River drains parts of Oregon, Idaho and Nevada, eventually joining the Snake river on Oregon's eastern border, just south of Ontario. Approximately 12,000 acres of land and nearly 3 million acres of airspace within the Owyhee Canyonlands would be withdrawn from public use and turned into a bombing range if the U.S. Air Force's Enhanced Training Initiative (ETI) is approved.

In March, the Air Force released its Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed \$30 million Mountain Home Air Force Base expansion in southwestern Idaho. This is the fourth time since 1989 that the Air Force has tried to enlarge the base, arguing that expansion will improve training for pilots and will save money by eliminating the need to fly to farther training grounds in Utah and Nevada. Each time the proposal has been turned back by citizens concerned with impacts on wildlife, recreation, and lifestyle.

### Environmental Impacts


In April, Boise's conservative *Idaho-Statesman* editorialized against the project, reporting that each year an estimated 41,000 people visit the area, which includes 24 designated BLM wilderness study areas and 15 rivers stretches eligible for

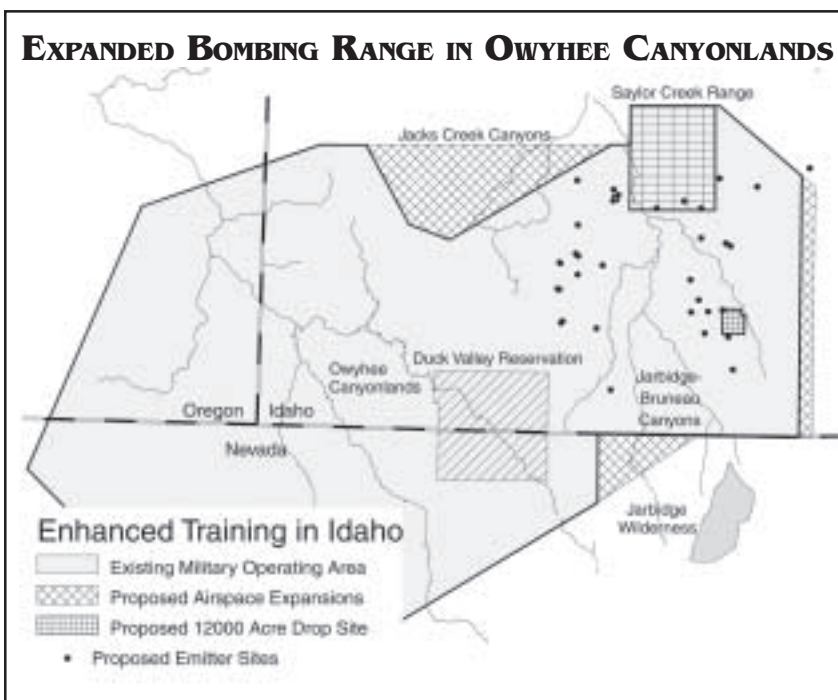
federal Wild and Scenic status. Project Opponents, led by Boise-based Owyhee Canyonlands Coalition (OCC), argue that expansion is unnecessary and will have a destructive impact on the area.

According to OCC, the Final EIS fails to adequately address the following critical impacts that would result from the expansion:

- noise from the sonic boom events;
- degradation of wilderness recreation experiences resulting from noise, litter, fires, and nighttime lighting;
- increased pollution from chaff, the aluminum fiber dropped from jets; and
- water quality degradation resulting from erosion associated with new road building, runoff of chaff into canyon streams, and human-caused fires.

Furthermore, OCC questions the actual need for the project and points out that it contradicts BLM's objectives for preserving the wilderness character of the area.

Idaho's governor and four congressional delegates are united in support of the project, but the list of those who oppose the expansion is growing and includes the editorial boards of four major newspapers in the Boise area. If the BLM accepts the Air Force's proposal, the document will go to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt who will prepare legislation for Congress. 



### **ACTION ALERT**

Please comment on the ETI. Write your U.S. Representative and both Senators. Oregonians should thank Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) for his opposition to the project, and urge Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) to also oppose the bombing range expansion. It's time to end this battle over the future of the Owyhee Canyonlands once and for all.

**Congressional Switchboard: 202-224-3121**

*(Ask for the office you wish to speak to.)*

**Sen. Wyden's office: 202-224-5244**

*E-mail: senator@wyden.senate.gov*

**Sen. Gordon Smith's office: 202-224-3753**



# Refuge

From *Refuge* by Terry Tempest Williams, Vintage Books, New York, 1991.

It's strange how deserts turn us into believers. I believe in walking in a landscape of mirages, because you learn humility. I believe in living in a land of little water because life is drawn together. And I believe in the gathering of bones as a testament to spirits that have moved on.

If the desert is holy, it is because it is a forgotten place that allows us to remember the sacred. Perhaps that is why every pilgrimage to the desert is a pilgrimage to the self. There is no place to hide, and so we are found.

In the severity of a salt desert, I am brought down to my knees by its beauty. My imagination is fired. My heart opens and my skin burns in the passion of these moments. I will have no other gods before me.



One night, a full moon watched over me like a mother. In the blue light of the Basin, I saw a petroglyph on a large boulder. It was a spiral. I placed the tip of my finger on the center and began tracing the coil around and around. It spun off the rock. My finger kept circling the land, the lake, the sky. The spiral became larger and larger until it became a halo of stars in the night sky above Stansbury Island. A meteor flashed and as quickly disappeared.

The waves began to hiss and retreat,  
hiss and retreat.

In the West Desert of the Great Basin,  
I was not alone.



ELAINE REES

# Elshoff Receives Desert Conservation Award

ONDA's Executive Director Bill Marlett presented the 1998 Desert Conservation Award to long-time desert activist and ONDA board member Alice Elshoff. This annual award, presented at Desert Conference, recognizes a member of the Nevada/Idaho/Oregon conservation community for his or her outstanding contribution to high desert preservation.

In the late 1970s, Elshoff organized the Badlands Bunch, a group of Bend-area residents to support wilderness designation for the nearby Badlands Wilderness Study Area. She is also a founding member of ONDA. Alice has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Oregon High

Desert Protection Act (a proposal to protect over 6 million acres of arid wildlands), speaking widely about the importance of preserving our wild desert lands. Her ability to relate to diverse audiences has won respect both within and outside the conservation community.

In presenting the award, Marlett noted Elshoff's outstanding ability to educate people about the desert. "As a teacher by profession, she has literally taken hundreds of people by the hand and opened their eyes and hearts to the desert."

Congratulations, Alice, and thanks from all desert lovers and desert dwellers.



ONDA FILE PHOTO

Alice Elshoff, recipient of the 1998 Desert Conservation Award.

## Farewell, Graden

The Northern Rockies are a magnetic part of the continent. And Graden Oehlerich, formerly ONDA's Wild Rivers Coordinator, has been drawn into this awesome landscape of craggy peaks and velvety hillsides.

In April, Graden accepted a position with the Montana Environmental Information Center as their Blackfoot River grassroots organizer (despite the fact that we barricaded the office door in an effort to keep Graden in Bend!). While all of us at ONDA are sad to see Graden leave, we know that she will bring enthusiasm, dedication, and creativity to her new position with MEIC. The High Desert's loss is most certainly the Blackfoot Valley's gain.

Many thanks to Graden from the board and staff of ONDA for all of her excellent work on behalf of Oregon's desert waterways and for her invaluable help with ONDA's membership development program. We wish Graden all the best in her new surroundings. We'll miss you!

RIGHT: *Dimeresia* blooms in Oregon's high desert.

## Thank you

ONDA would like to gratefully acknowledge the following foundations for their generous support of our work to protect Oregon's High Desert.

Northwest Fund for the Environment

The Oregon Jewish Community Foundation

The Sperling Foundation



ELAINE REES

## CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS!

### We Couldn't Have Done it Without You!

Desert Conference XX hosts—ONDA, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, and the Committee for Idaho's High Desert—would like to extend many hearty thanks to the following volunteers who helped make this year's conference a success:

*Preconference preparations:* Evelyn Brown, Jon Cain, Jim Davis, Nancy Gilbertson, Angela Rice, June Tillman.

*Name Tags:* Alice Elshoff.

*Registration:* Kris Balliet, Craig Bradle, Evelyn Brown, Michael Carrigan, Katherine Chou, Mary Ellen Deckelmann, Nancy Gilbertson, Connie Lonsdale, June Tillman.

*Meal Ticket Collection:* Katherine Chou, Nancy Gilbertson, Ashley Henry, Connie Lonsdale, Shauna Uselman, Helen Wagenvoord.

*First Annual Desert Youth Program:* Colleen Cole, Teleia Maher, Othon Molina, Kathleen Simpson Myron, Joyce Respess. Special thanks to coordinator Sharon Riggie.

*Hospitality Room Hosts:* Jason Seivers and Emily Thomas.

*Official Keg Tappers:* Rob DeLucia and Jack Sterne.

*Audiovisual technician and saviour:* Trygve Steen.

# MARKETPLACE

## Books

- The Sagebrush Ocean: A Natural History of the Great Basin*  
by Stephen Trimble ..... \$24
- Waste of the West: Public Lands Ranching*  
by Lynn Jacobs ..... \$28
- Sacred Cows at the Public Trough*  
by Denzel & Nancy Ferguson ..... \$9
- Hole in the Sky*  
by William Kittredge ..... \$20

## Scientific Papers

- “Survey of Livestock Influences on Stream and Riparian  
Ecosystems in the Western United States”  
by Joy Belsky, A. Matzke, and S. Uselman ..... \$5
- “Effects of Livestock Grazing on Stand Dynamics in Upland  
Forests of the Interior West”  
by Joy Belsky and Dana Blumenthal ..... \$1 (for postage)

## T-Shirts

- ONDA T-shirts (short sleeve)  
*Specify size (L or XL only) and color (sage or natural) .. \$12*
- "Boycott Beef" T-shirt (short sleeve) ..... \$12

## Bargain Sale!

- Clean Stream Initiative T-Shirts (w/salmon art)  
*Specify sleeve length. Color is salmon only.*
- Short sleeve (XL only) ..... \$5
- Long sleeve (XL only) ..... \$8

## Etc.

- Stunning 18"x 28" color poster of Big Indian Gorge ..... \$10
- Road Map to OHDP lands ..... \$5
- "Cows Kill Salmon" bumper sticker ..... \$1



## ONDA Marketplace Order Form

ITEM DESCRIPTION	COLOR (1st & 2nd choice)	SIZE	QUANTITY	ITEM PRICE	TOTAL
				x	=
				x	=
				x	=
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>					

## YES!! I'LL JOIN OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION!

### Annual membership levels:

- \$35 Individual  
  \$50 Family  
  \$100 Advocate  
  \$250 Patron  
  \$15 Living Lightly

### The High Desert Defense Fund Monthly Contribution Program:

Automatic bank deductions are convenient, and cut down on paper use and mail solicitations. Deductions from your account may be stopped or adjusted at any time by simply sending a written notice or by phoning ONDA at (541) 330-2638.

High Desert Defense Fund monthly membership levels: (enclose a signed, voided check)

- \$5  
  \$10  
  \$25  
  \$50  
  \$100

**Add my name to the Clean Stream Net** (for communicating to state legislators)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address (for electronic action alerts) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form with check to ONDA, 16 NW Kansas, Bend, OR 97701



OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION  
*Desert Ramblings*  
16 NW KANSAS STREET  
BEND, OREGON 97701

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EUGENE, OR  
PERMIT NO. 532

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE:

**ANOTHER LEGAL VICTORY  
FOR DESERT STREAMS!** (SEE PG. 5)



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## ONDA Events - Join us!

### **1998 BARBED WIRE ROUND-UP** **Wed-Sun, July 22-26** **Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge**

It's great to be high atop Hart Mountain in mid-summer, and it's great to put muscles to work restoring wildlife habitat. You can have both! From Wed. to Sun., July 22-26, ONDA will sponsor its annual Barbed Wire Round-up at the Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Join your friends and colleagues for some fence-pulling, hiking, and soaking in hot springs in the high desert. If you can, arrive for Wednesday night dinner, as we begin Thursday morning working with refuge staff. Bring your own camping gear as well as work gloves and any fence-demolishing tools you have (tools will also be supplied). Dinners will be potluck; please bring something to share each night. Plan for your own breakfasts, lunches and snacks. For more information, contact Gilly at (503) 525-0193 or by e-mail at [glyons@onda.org](mailto:glyons@onda.org).

### **ONDA'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** **Fri-Sun, Sept. 25-27** **Hancock Field Station**

- Explore John Day Fossil Beds National Monument
- Float the Wild and Scenic John Day River.
- Enjoy campfire camaraderie
- Stargaze in the evenings!

*See pg. 2 for details.*

### **MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE CONSERVATION OUTING** **Fri-Sun, Nov. 6-8** **Malheur National Wildlife Refuge**

*See pg. 2 for details*