

# Ramblings

## DESERT RAMBLINGS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION  
SPRING 2008 EDITION VOLUME 21, NO. 1

OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION  
FROM THE OUTBACK

### Badlands, Spring Basin, and new restoration efforts top the agenda

By Brent Fenty  
*Executive Director*

**AFTER FOUR YEARS** in Alaska, I am very thankful to be working for ONDA once again. Likewise, I am deeply grateful for the warm welcome that many of you have extended over the past few months and for the confidence that ONDA's board and staff have shown in hiring me as ONDA's next Executive Director.

As a Central Oregon native, Oregon's high desert has always been a part of my life. I have long cherished places like Steens Mountain, the John Day River and Summer Lake. Like many ONDA members I have come to appreciate and embrace the responsibility we have to preserve these unique places for ourselves and for species such as bighorn sheep, sage grouse and steelhead that need these wild places to survive. It is often said that civilizations are judged not only by what they build but also by what they preserve. ONDA plays a crucial role in ensuring that Oregon's most unique and ecologically valuable landscapes are preserved for current and future generations; I am very proud to carry forward ONDA's legacy.

As Bill noted in the last newsletter, he has decided to retire as ONDA's Executive Director after nearly 15 years. Fortunately for me, when he is not out enjoying his new-found freedom in Oregon's desert wilderness or on Mexico's Baja Peninsula, he will continue to work part-time as ONDA's Senior Conservation Advisor. In other words, I need not go far to ask questions. ONDA has accomplished much under Bill's leadership and he leaves a tremendous legacy for ONDA and all its supporters to be proud of. A few such accomplishments include livestock-free landscapes such as Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge, see **FROM THE OUTBACK** page 3



PHOTO: JIM D. YOAKUM

*An adult buck pronghorn at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge.*

## 'Where Rolls the Oregon' Where the pronghorn runs free

By Jim D. Yoakum  
*Biologist*

**IT WAS DURING A SUMMER DAY** in June 1954 that I arrived on Hart Mountain. This was my first experience with the shrubsteppe plains. I inhaled the pungent sagebrush aroma personifying the poem "Where Rolls the Oregon." This was the wide open country where our pioneering forefathers traveled and it now held challenges for me. I had come to Hart Mountain to study the speedster of the plains – the native American pronghorn.

Unfortunately, pronghorn populations were not healthy then. There was estimated to have been a total of 200 to 300 pronghorn on the Mountain. Why – was the question – why so few animals? As far as you could see there were miles and miles of country to roam, lots of shrubs to eat, and the playas and meadows contained abundant drinking water. With all this wide open country, why did so few pronghorn "kids" romp and play on the plains of Oregon? Why? Why? Why?

We college students were here to help find the answer to this nagging question. Right away we found many fawn carcasses. We checked for diseases and parasites and found no major maladies. We observed coyotes and noted they liked pronghorn venison, but we were unable at that time (radio instrumentation was not available then) to determine rates of predation losses. We noted animal carcasses caught in barbed wire fences.

see **PRONGHORN** page 8

## Transition – a positive force

By Durlin Hickok

*President*



**A FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTIC** of organizations is to move from periods of relative calm to times of change. ONDA is currently in a stage of rapid change, and all indicators point to this being a very positive force. Brent Fenty began in his position as Executive Director last fall on a run and shows no sign of slowing his pace. Bill Marlett continues to contribute value to ONDA in his new role as Senior Conservation Advisor.

ONDA's recent success is also reflected in a substantial increase in staff and hiring of several individuals with outstanding experience and skills. This has also resulted in a move to improved office space, much to the delight of the staff.

While we will miss our previous staff and board members that have moved on to different places in their lives, we know that we can count on them for their continued support as ONDA enters into a new and very exciting period of change. To all of our members and longtime supporters – look for more exciting changes in the months to come!



# ONDA OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION

### BEND OFFICE

37 1/2 Irving Avenue  
Bend, OR 97701  
541.330.2638  
541.385.3370 fax

### STAFF

Brent Fenty  
*Executive Director*  
Jefferson Jacobs  
*Outreach Coordinator*  
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Gena Goodman-Campbell  
*Wilderness Coordinator*  
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### PORTLAND OFFICE

917 SW Oak Street, Suite 408  
Portland, OR 977205  
503.525.0193

Mac Lacy  
*Senior Attorney*  
David Becker  
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### AT LARGE

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### DESERT RAMBLINGS

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Jefferson Jacobs  
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*Design and Layout*

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## ONDA exists

to protect, defend, and restore forever  
the health of Oregon's native deserts.





PHOTO: GREG BURKE

*ONDA is working to convince lawmakers to give full wilderness protection to the Badlands in 2008. You can help by visiting [www.onda.org](http://www.onda.org) and sending an e-mail to lawmakers.*

## Campaign for Badlands Wilderness gains momentum in 2008

**2008 IS SHAPING UP** to be an exciting year for ONDA's ongoing efforts to protect Badlands Wilderness. This past fall, ONDA commissioned a report from Headwaters Economics on the potential economic impacts of Badlands Wilderness in Central Oregon. The report showed that protecting additional wilderness in Central Oregon would bolster our economy. This conclusion did not come as a surprise to many forward-thinking individuals around our community, but it did draw the attention of some unlikely allies. Top employers from around Central Oregon, including Mt. Bachelor, Deschutes Brewery and JELD-WEN, have recently signed on in support of Badlands Wilderness, and more people are jumping on the Badlands bandwagon every day!

These momentous results could not have come without a whole lot of hard work – more than 20 years of hard work to be exact! Most recently, ONDA has been graced with the presence of two tireless organizers from Green Corps, an environmental field school that sends recent college graduates around the country to work on environmental campaigns. Although they were only with us for two short months, Ruth Morrison and Ben Walsh had a tremendous impact on the Badlands campaign, giving us a much needed influx of youthful energy. They distributed hundreds of yard signs around Bend, recruited scores of new volunteers and generated hundreds of e-mails to Senator Ron Wyden urging him to protect the Badlands.

Building on our successful local efforts, the Badlands campaign will soon be heading off to our nation's capital to convince Senator Wyden that the time is **now** to introduce Badlands Wilderness Legislation. On April 14, Gena Goodman-Campbell, ONDA's Wilderness Coordinator, will be taking three volunteers to Washington, DC, to meet with our congressional delegation.

Almost ten years ago, Senator Wyden wrote a letter to President Clinton listing Badlands Wilderness as one of his top priorities. On our trip to DC this spring, we will deliver a letter from local leaders calling on Senator Wyden to finally take action. The most important message, however, comes from YOU – as an ONDA member, you're the best possible advocate for Oregon's High Desert. Please take a moment after you read this article to go to ONDA's website – [www.onda.org](http://www.onda.org) – and send an e-mail to Senator Wyden telling him to heed the call to protect Badlands Wilderness.

## ONDA's agenda takes shape for 2008

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the Wild and Scenic Owyhee and Blitzen Rivers and Steens Mountain Wilderness.

In 2008, we plan to add a couple major successes to this list. We are gaining momentum daily in our efforts to secure Wilderness protection for the Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). Only a few weeks ago, Governor Ted Kulongoski wrote a letter to Oregon's Congressional delegation urging them to protect Badlands and Spring Basin. Support for these proposals is widespread and I am optimistic that Oregon's delegation will act soon to permanently protect these natural treasures as Wilderness.

Similar to years past, ONDA will engage hundreds of volunteers in restoration efforts this year throughout Oregon's High Desert. In addition to our continued tree-planting and barbed wire removal on Pine Creek, Hart Mountain and Steens Mountain, we will begin a new and innovative restoration project on Bridge Creek, a tributary of the John Day River. The project will involve collaboration with several partners including NOAA Fisheries, the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and local landowners. We expect that this project will set a precedent for restoring degraded streams and recovering native fish throughout Oregon's desert.

ONDA's top-notch legal team continues to stay busy ensuring that biodiversity conservation is prioritized in the management of our public lands. Toward this end, we have recently appealed a set of proposals that would remove thousands of gallons of water from Summer and Abert Lakes and allow development in adjacent WSAs. These proposals could have substantial impacts to migratory bird populations and we will continue our efforts to block this short-sighted development and other activities that degrade Oregon's Wilderness.

ONDA continues to be blessed with a fantastic staff and as you probably noticed, we have several new additions. With the new staff in our Bend office, we desperately needed a larger space and have recently moved into a new office a few blocks away from our old location. Please stop by, take a tour of the new office, meet the new staff and hear more about ONDA's efforts. ONDA is accomplishing a lot and, as a member, you are critical to our success. I hope you will continue to join us in our efforts to preserve and restore Oregon's High Desert.



## ONDA lifetime members

To thank our most generous supporters, we have created an ONDA Lifetime Membership to recognize the people who have made ONDA the amazing organization it is today. Lifetime Members have shown their commitment to the protection of Oregon's High Desert by each giving a total of over \$1,000. Their generosity has provided a lifetime of support and deserves a lifetime of recognition! Thank you to all of our Lifetime Members:



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### Thank you, Werner Family

**ONDA WOULD LIKE** to acknowledge the generous donation we received on behalf of Ann Werner through the kindness of her Mother Jane Werner. This donation was particularly unique as it launched our 2007 Board of Directors Matching Program. This gesture raised the bar, encouraging the board to participate at an unprecedented level. The success of this program was made possible through her thoughtful donation. A sincere thank you to both Jane and Ann from ONDA!

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PHOTOS: DAVID EDDLESTON

*The ONDA volunteers campsite in the Steens during a restoration trip; right, the view taken in during a Hart Mountain trip.*

# REFLECTIONS

## of an ONDA volunteer

By David Eddleston  
*Volunteer*

**ONE OF THE BEST THINGS** about being an ONDA volunteer is the variety and scope of the restoration field trips we undertake throughout the course of the year and the seasons.

From the wide, sweeping emptiness and lonely, high vistas of the Steens, to the spreading panoply of the Hart Mountain refuge, serene under an impossibly blue sky, to the close knit mountains of the Pine Creek Conservation area and the wild savage beauty of the Badlands Wilderness Study area, we can experience it all should we choose. At the conclusion of the trips, we can feel the satisfaction, sometimes the exhilaration, of helping to mend the ravages of man and restore the land back to a semblance of what it used to be.

The restoration trips also help kindle new friendships and maintain old ones, for we all know we are engaged in tasks worth while, sharing a common bond as we roll and coil barbed wire, revegetate cow-ravaged stream and river banks, and close roads to the encroachment of off-road vehicles.

Each excursion to these wild places is memorable. For the tasks we do, for the incidents that take place, for the banter, conversation and leg pulling; all a great leveler of volunteers.

Of the trips my wife Diana and I volunteered for last year, there are three or four that have a little more edge to them that made them somewhat more memorable.

One was the ONDA Annual Meeting, held at the OMSI facili-

ty. It rained. And rained. Then rained some more. Dry rivulet beds that ran through the camp transformed into bustling, ochre colored, mud-filled streams. Gentle streams running nearer to our work area became whitewater torrents. The subsequent mud generated by the rain glutinously and remorselessly adhered to boots, gaiters and trousers and, on the field trip itself, (obsolescent barbed wire fence removal), made hiking and walking a different type of exercise – and fun sometimes! As we followed the fence along a ridge line, climbing higher, and steeper, it was amusing to see the efforts of other volunteers trying to keep on their feet, with four and six inches of unshakeable mud stuck to their boots.

Eventually the rain eased off toward the end of the day, and as we made our way back we knew we had accomplished something more than just pulling down fence. At the actual meeting itself that night, the salmon bake, the Moon Mountain Ramblers and the Silver Moon brew helped make more memorable the tasks we had successfully achieved that day.

*All in a day's work for an ONDA volunteer!*

The Hart Mountain field trip had its share of high hilarity and moments of friendly negotiation about campsites. Our restoration trip to the grandeur of Hart Mountain concurred with hunting season, the normal volunteer dress and attire of Patagonia and Columbia contrasting strongly with the dulled, dusty camouflage

see **REFLECTIONS** page 8

***“...we can feel the satisfaction, sometimes the exhilaration, of helping to mend the ravages of man and restore the land back to a semblance of what it used to be.”***





PHOTO: ONDA



PHOTO: JEFFERSON JACOBS

*Volunteers pull barbed wire on Sutton Mountain in 2007; right, Carla Delfino hauls willow in falling snow to her fellow restoration volunteers on Robinson Creek this spring.*

# VOLUNTEER

## restoration trips, 2008

**ONDA INVITES YOU** to get to know your desert. A rewarding way to explore the beauty and ruggedness of Oregon's high desert is by volunteering on a restoration trip.

From spring through fall, ONDA is leading restoration trips in the Steens Mountain Wilderness, Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, Pine Creek Conservation Area, and the Badlands and Sutton Mountain Wilderness Study Areas. The trips range from multi-day backpacking trips to single day educational hikes, and the work includes removing barbed wire fence, monitoring sage grouse leks, closing roads and more.

To learn more about each trip or to sign up, visit the volunteer section of our website at [www.onda.org](http://www.onda.org). Space is limited. We hope you'll join us.

> ONDA undertakes new "citizen science" efforts. Article, page 16.

March 15–16 Pine Creek Conservation Area, Tree Planting

April 11–13 OMSI Field Station, Annual General Meeting

April 24–27 Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, Sage Grouse Lek Monitoring

May 1–5 Owyhee River Float Trip

May 8–11 John Day River, Float and Fence Pull

July 2–6 Steens Mountain Wilderness, Fence Pull

July 12–13 Steens Mountain Wilderness, Annual Vegetation Monitoring

July 28–31 Hart Mountain Fence Pull

Aug. 6–10 Steens Mountain Wilderness, Fence Pull

Sept. 5–6 Sutton Mountain Restoration Trip

Sept. 10–14 Steens Mountain Wilderness, Fence Pull

Oct. 24–26 Pine Creek Conservation Area, Restoration Trip

## Restoration trip season off to a good start

**A SUCCESSFUL** Robinson Creek Stream Restoration Weekend at Pine Creek Conservation Area (PCCA) on April 14 marked the beginning of ONDA's 2008 season of volunteer trips. In just over a day, ONDA volunteers and staff were able to plant over 1,200 trees in the creek bed, a tributary of the John Day River. These new little saplings of willow, cottonwood, and other species will provide shade for the steelhead smolt in the creek, stabilize and reverse the erosion problems caused by previous grazing, and provide food and building materials for local beaver whose dams will hopefully further rehabilitate the incised stream. These planting efforts contribute to previous efforts in the same drainage, by augmenting numbers, increasing plant densities, and replacing some of the plants that didn't survive last year's low-water summer.

The restoration trip also represents the first project in a new formal cooperative effort between PCCA and ONDA. As part of this agreement PCCA will help offset some of ONDA's Outreach Program expenses in exchange for ONDA's significant volunteer contributions on-site. As a neighbor (on three sides) to the Spring Basin Wilderness Study Area, and as a home to native fish species, elk and mule deer, our restoration efforts (such as tree planting and fence pulls) at PCCA help further ONDA's goals in the surrounding John Day watershed. Additional work still remains to be done along Robinson Creek however. Subsequent planting efforts will take place during the Annual General Meeting and during the weekend of October 25th. On these trips we will continue our planting efforts and expand the work further up stream. Please join us in the fun!

## Reflections of an ONDA volunteer

REFLECTIONS from page 6

of the hunters, jostling for limited camping space. Some hunters visited us in our first campsite and expressed interest and solidarity with our continuing work. After Erin, our fearless leader, chatted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, we relocated to the best campsite of all, right in the grounds of the refuge headquarters; plenty of camping space, with running water and showers. Volunteer life was good, helped by conviviality around the common area!

Some of the hilarity was caused by Sampson, Erin's canine copilot, who had always suffered from gustatory rumblings. While running around the hundreds of thousands of Hart Mountain acres, his gustatory peculiarities dissipated into the blue, unnoticed. Unfortunately, as we drove daily to our fence-pulling work-sites in the confines of various work vehicles, Sampson's presence with us was always very strong! If in the same vehicle, the loud "Oh no, aaarghh not again", with heads hung out of the windows to catch fresher air and to breathe in clean dust were a high note, in more ways than one.

On our non-working day, a group of us hiked high into the Mount Graham area. It is an area of stupendous open vistas, and many times we saw grand herds of pronghorns, pausing, before running across the terrain and then over the ridges. Sage grouse burst out in front of us and we caught sight of two bighorn sheep, seen through the crystal clear air across one of the deep scouring ravines.

*All in a day's work for an ONDA volunteer!*

The last Steens Mountain fence pull of the year was a marked contrast to the previous field trips. We camped the first night at the South Steens campground and met our BLM contact the next morning and drove close to our true wilderness campsite.

Drive is an understatement. In two 4 x 4 Suburbans, one of them mine, both suitably equipped for high-clearance, off-road travel, with good cross-ply tires. For about six miles we cautiously negotiated what had once been a road; it was strewn liberally with huge boulders and lava rock, deep rutted, and criss-crossed by precipitous dry river gulleys and toppled junipers. It took us about 90 minutes to reach the Wilderness boundary.

From the spot where we left the vehicles, we backpacked a half mile to the most beautiful camp site of all the trips of the year – a lonely, lovely place, on the broad banks of a cold and clear river.

Daily we hiked in about two and three miles through the solitude of the Steens Wilderness to our restoration work site. It was a gorgeous, wild terrain of two ravines, marred by barbed wire fence and steel poles. It took over two days, but we succeeded in removing the fence and poles, a hard task which we all took great satisfaction in achieving.

One wonderful highlight on this trip was seeing an ancient obsidian arrowhead as we hiked back to camp on the last day. The sharing of my last couple of cold ones with my volunteer colleagues on the last night was also memorable. We all rested there, content, until the night took over, and our ceiling became the star-spread heavens, and I was able to discern, with microscopic clearness, the phantom glides of satellites across the skies of Steens Mountain.

*All in a day's work for an ONDA volunteer!*

## Where the pronghorn runs free

PRONGHORN from page 1

Severe winters took their toll on adults and yearlings. Natural accidents such as miring in muddy travelways and bucks dueling to death added losses. After five years of living in the high desert plateaus, we tallied a long list of reasons contributing to pronghorn deaths, but no single agents appeared responsible for limiting larger numbers. However, we observed certain areas maintained higher densities of pronghorn than other sites. If we learned why some sites maintained higher numbers of animals per acre than adjacent areas – then maybe we would have an idea why these areas supported more animals. Again, the elusive why, why, why.

For the next 30 years, we continued to observe and report pronghorn herd numbers. During the late 1960s, the prevailing predator control program was curtailed. Subsequent pronghorn numbers increased but ever so slowly. Rangeland management

practices remained relatively similar with cattle, domestic sheep and feral horses continuing to consume the majority of the herbaceous plants (grasses and forbs – forbs are clovers, lupines, primroses, paintbrushes and many more flowering plants). Then by the 1970s, domestic sheep herds were no longer on the Mountain, a result of economic circumstances rather than government decree. Feral horse numbers also declined. At the same time the annual surveys of pronghorn indicated that herds were slowly increasing. The trend in pronghorn numbers was two or three times greater than surveys during the early 1950s – times were becoming better for the little speedster of the plains.



Jim D. Yoakum is the author of *Pronghorn: Ecology and Management*, and has been studying pronghorn at Hart Mountain since 1954.

The winds were changing and so were the attitudes of the public relative to how their public lands and wildlife were being managed. During the late 1980s, a coalition of conservation organizations pressed the government to better control permitted

livestock grazing that was allegedly competing with wildlife for limited forage, plus deteriorating soil and water conditions. This action resulted in an agreement whereby the government conducted an intensive assessment of historic and present resources and management strategies. Completed in 1994, the comprehensive management plan resulted in the decision to remove all livestock for fifteen years, and then re-evaluate the condition and trend of natural resources. Vegetation studies after removal of livestock indicated herbaceous plants were increasing. So did pronghorn populations; numbers totaled more than a thousand for subsequent years.

Another program started during the mid-1990s shed new light on information influencing pronghorn fawn survival. In 1994, fawn survival was extremely low and observations of coyotes were high; consequently, planning efforts were developed to use airplanes to shoot coyotes. When this plan was revealed to the public, ONDA took the case to court and litigation stopped the program. A second attempt to decrease predators by authorizing sportsmen to shoot coyotes ended with another legal case by





*Two adult buck pronghorn.*

PHOTO: JIM D. YOAKUM

ONDA canceling the proposed program. Then an outstanding research program was instigated to obtain science-based data for management objectives. The study lasted twelve years. It used radio telemetry devices installed on fawns to track the animals for three months. During the study, deaths due to predation averaged annually from 20 to 90 percent of the fawn crop; however, the average loss per year for the 12 years was 49 percent. Most revealing was that even though fawn losses because of predation averaged around 50 percent annually, the herd at the same time almost doubled in numbers. Clearly, an average predation loss of around 50 percent of the fawns did not stop the herd from increasing nearly 100 percent. This is the one and only long-term (more than 10 years) research study accomplished regarding the effects of predation on pronghorn fawns conducted anywhere in North America.

Recent investigations into the reasons why pronghorn populations have increased and decreased have provided information that was unknown 50 years ago. More than 30 case history studies in the Great Basin documented healthy vegetation conditions favored higher pronghorn numbers. However, the reciprocal also happens – herds decrease when the quality and quantity of forage is lacking. The key phrase is “healthy vegetation conditions.” For Hart Mountain, this means increased annual production of preferred, succulent, nutritious forage – in other words, a rich plant community containing diverse plant species in combination with large quantities of plants produced per acre. When one understands the ecology of large animals, the reasons are clear why healthy forage conditions produce healthier and larger numbers of animals. That is, pronghorn (or mule deer or bighorn sheep) during the last pregnancy trimester produce the greatest fetus growth rate when the mother has nutritious forage. If high quality forage is not available, then the mother absorbs the fetus, or the sub-normal fawn drops and succumbs. When ranchers lose

calves this way, they refer to the case as “weak-calf syndrome.” There is a reason to believe now that increased availability of nutritious forbs during late winter and spring significantly contribute to the survival of healthy fawns, and thus result in larger herds of pronghorn. Remember pronghorn estimates for the refuge in 1954 were around 250 and herbaceous forage was meager. Compare this to Refuge reports for more than 2,700 pronghorn in 2006 when nutritious forage was abundant. Recent research on the Mountain also discloses increased sage grouse numbers are linked to the abundant and diverse forb species.

In summary, we now have information substantiating reasons for healthy pronghorn populations on Great Basin ecosystem. We are closer to answering the question that has plagued management – what major factor(s) predominantly influence increasing pronghorn numbers on Hart Mountain? One significant factor is the restoration and maintenance of the abundant quality and quantity of nutritious forage – especially forbs. Such ecological and management studies on Hart Mountain serve as an example for wildlife management on other high desert rangelands. May the healthy numbers of pronghorn on Hart Mountain continue as an example of a success story for the “Where Rolls the Oregon.”



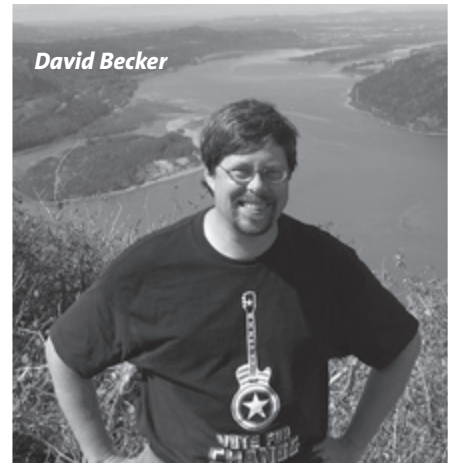
# ONDA people ...



*Devon Batley*



*Jefferson Jacobs*



*David Becker*



*Kelly O'Brien*



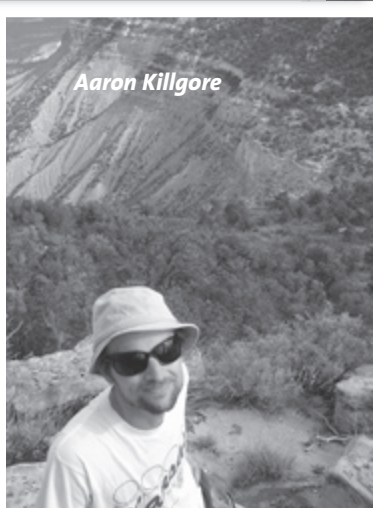
*Kate Martin*



*Maureen Collin*



*Erin Barnholdt*



*Aaron Killgore*



*Kristin Ruether*



*WendyKay Gewiss*



*Patrick Nelson*



# on the move

ONDA is growing: our membership, our successes, and our staff! Since our last newsletter, a long eight months ago, we have seen several changes and additions in interns, staff, and board members, as well as our new Executive Director (see page 1). Thank you to our two GIS interns who helped aggregate wilderness inventory shapefiles (Maureen Collin) and assess wilderness land exchange options (Patrick Nelson). Over the past eight months, a few of the ONDA family have moved on to pursue career goals and growth beyond ONDA: pursuing higher education (Erin Barnholdt), setting up a private legal practice (Kelly O'Brien) and practicing environmental law with ONDA's partner, Advocates for the West (Kristen Ruether). After 15 years of combined service to ONDA we also reluctantly accept resignations of three long-time ONDA Board Members (Lee Christie, Dave Funk and Phil Conti).

Staff changes include some new faces at ONDA as well as familiar faces in new roles. Brent Fenty returns to ONDA as Executive Director, succeeding Bill Marlett who becomes ONDA's Senior Conservation Advisor. New faces at ONDA include Membership Coordinator Devon Batley, Staff Attorney David Becker, Development Director WendyKay Gewiss, Outreach Coordinator Jefferson Jacobs, John Day Coordinator Aaron Killgore, and Kate Martin in the newly created Bridge Creek Coordinator position. We also extend a sincere and warm welcome to Ray Hartwell, Piper Lucas and Julie Weikel in their new roles as ONDA board members.



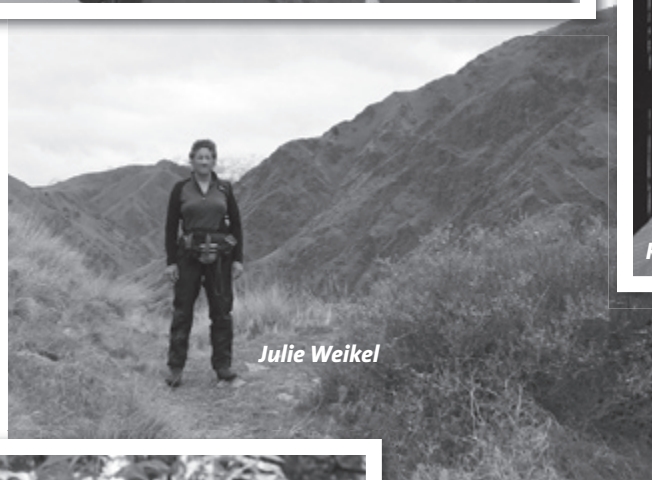
Lee Christie



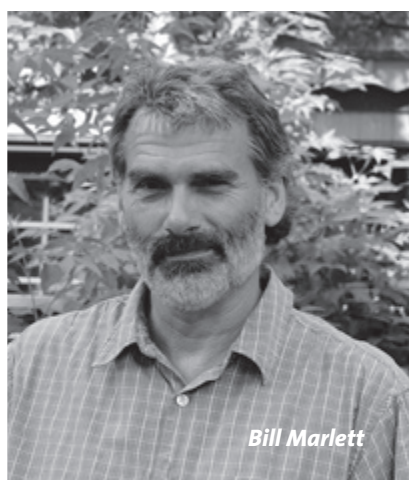
Brent Fenty



Ray Hartwell



Julie Weikel



Bill Marlett



Phil Conti



Dave Funk



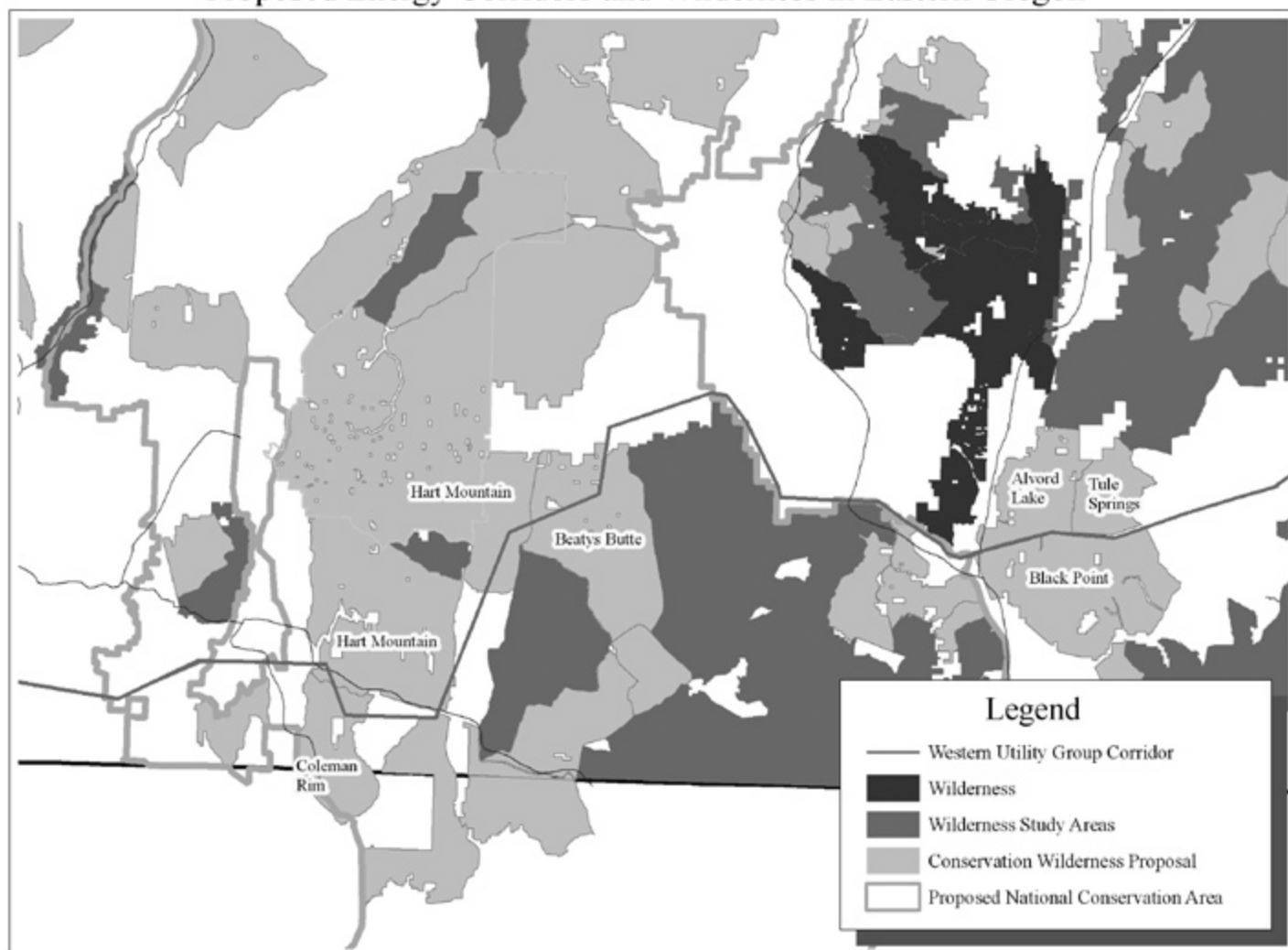


## ONDA urges early, full environmental review of proposed energy corridor in western U.S.

**ON VALENTINE'S DAY**, ONDA submitted comments to the Department of Energy (DOE) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on a draft programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) for the designation of West-Wide Energy Corridors under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The draft EIS proposed the designation of 6,055 miles of energy transmission corridors for oil and gas pipelines and high-voltage electrical lines in eleven western states, including 591 miles throughout Oregon. The proposed corridors, which could be over a mile wide in some places, would run near some of the jewels of the High Desert, including Steens Mountain and Hart Mountain. The map below shows the most troubling of the proposed corridors. It would cut through three proposed Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), run adjacent to several proposed or existing WSAs (and along the southern boundary of the Steens Mountain wilderness), bisect an important pronghorn migra-

tion route between Hart Mountain National Antelope Preserve and Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, and fragment largely-intact sage grouse and pygmy rabbit habitat. ONDA urged DOE and BLM to use the current environmental review to thoroughly evaluate the inevitable harm to the environment from projects within these corridors, rather than putting off any assessment of those impacts until specific projects are proposed. We also requested the DOE and BLM to develop alternative corridor routes that would avoid particularly sensitive areas – such as those which retain their wilderness character and serve as important habitat for hard-pressed wildlife. The agencies are expected to release their final environmental impact statement later this year along with a decision designating some or all of the proposed energy transmission corridors.

Proposed Energy Corridors and Wilderness in Eastern Oregon



## Louse Canyon, West Little Owyhee Canyonlands

**AS REPORTED IN DESERT RAMBLINGS** last year, in February 2007, as a result of legal pressure from ONDA, BLM agreed to halt range-land project construction activities (including the six-mile long Sacramento Hills Pipeline), within the Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area. The case was stayed during the remainder of 2007 while BLM went back and evaluated ONDA's wilderness inventory report for this half-million acre area in southeast Oregon.

In early 2008 BLM released the results of its wilderness review. Of the 137,791 acres ONDA has inventoried and found to possess outstanding wilderness values, BLM agrees that 111,891 acres have wilderness character. These are lands outside of existing Wilderness Study Areas. Of 286,262 acres of public lands BLM has analyzed in the Louse Canyon area since the 1970s and 1980s, ONDA agrees with the agency on 260,362 acres as to which lands do or do not have wilderness character.

We are very hopeful that these findings will result in protection for these unique places in the Owyhee. The LCGMA includes the West Little Owyhee Wild and Scenic River and vast expanses of important sagebrush steppe habitat. This spring, BLM will conduct additional environmental analysis and seek public comment on a revised management proposal for the LCGMA.

## North Fork Malheur Geographic Management Area

**IN THIS GMA NORTH** of the Louse Canyon area, BLM has proposed a similarly wide-ranging series of range projects to remedy widespread grazing problems. In 2004, BLM determined that an astounding 45 pastures on 11 grazing allotments, covering one-third of this 240,000-acre area, had failed to meet rangeland health standards due to current grazing practices. Rather than reduce grazing, BLM proposes instead to construct a vast series of range projects, including new fences, a pipeline, and almost 100 new wells and water developments. BLM also intends to cut, spray and burn as many as 84,000 acres of juniper in the area – all the while leaving existing cattle numbers and stocking rates in place.

ONDA has appealed the agency's decision. The North Fork Malheur area features many important environmental and natural resource values, including the North Fork Malheur River, which is designated as administratively suitable for "Wild" classification under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (Castle Rock and North Fork Malheur River), and significant archaeological resources. The area also contains remarkable wilderness values. It encompasses the 6,200 acre Castle Rock WSA and about 1,100 acres of the Beaver Dam Creek WSA. It also contains two areas, the Lake Ridge Proposed WSA and the Beaver Dam Creek Proposed WSA Addition, which were found to contain wilderness characteristics in a 2004 citizen inventory conducted by ONDA using BLM's own wilderness inventory protocol.

After losing our administrative appeal of the vegetation treatments portions of the decision in March, we are now briefing the grazing decisions and considering whether to seek further relief in federal court.

## Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan

**IN NOVEMBER 2007**, ONDA attorney Mac Lacy argued ONDA's Southeast Oregon RMP case before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Portland, Oregon. The argument focused on the issue of whether BLM had violated the National Environmental Policy Act when it adopted the plan without considering impacts to wilderness values – including throughout more than a million acres of public land later inventoried by ONDA and found to possess outstanding wilderness character. The appeal also asks the court to determine whether BLM considered reasonable grazing alternatives with respect to lands allocated to grazing and forage levels dedicated exclusively to domestic livestock. The outcome of this case will have profound impact in particular on all of ONDA's wilderness-related litigation, including the Louse Canyon and North Fork Malheur GMAs and our pending challenges of the Lakeview and Andrews-Steens RMPs.

## Juniper Mountain, Hart Mountain, Beaty Butte

**LAST SUMMER**, ONDA won two preliminary injunctions before the Department of the Interior's Office of Hearings and Appeals concerning BLM-proposed rangeland projects on Beaty Butte and on Juniper Mountain. The injunctions stopped BLM from constructing a series of pipelines, fences and roads within areas ONDA has inventoried and found to possess outstanding wilderness values. The court found that BLM failed to properly consider the impacts of the projects on wilderness values, in part because the agency offered no evidence to rebut the scores of photographs, GIS maps and other inventory information provided by ONDA.

In December and January, ONDA successfully settled each of these appeals. In both, BLM agreed to vacate its decision and prepare a new environmental analysis of the impacts of these projects on wilderness values. The agency also agreed not to undertake any road improvement activities in ONDA's proposed WSAs until new decisions are issued.

## Steens Mountain Transportation Plan

**IN JUNE 2007**, the District of Oregon ruled in ONDA's favor on our transportation plan claim in our Andrews-Steens Resource Management Plan (RMP) case. The court agreed that an RMP appendix lacking key inventory and other information did not satisfy the Steens Act's requirement that BLM prepare a "comprehensive," "integral" transportation plan for Steens Mountain's "Cooperative Management and Protection Area." Among other flaws, the plan failed to conduct basic route inventories and failed to consider or plan for non-motorized trails and recreation.

While the RMP case was pending in district court, BLM pushed forward with a "Travel Management Plan" which the agency claims "implements" the transportation plan. In January 2008, ONDA appealed BLM's new TMP, which still fails to account for non-motorized uses, leaves open to motorized use all but a single

LEGAL DOCKET from page 13

mile of 550 miles of routes on Steens Mountain, and opens routes that BLM itself cannot even locate on the ground in existing Wilderness Study Areas. (BLM calls these nonexistent roads “obscure routes.”)

The district court’s June decision will help ONDA address this flawed transportation plan and encourage BLM to prepare a truly comprehensive plan that takes into account non-motorized uses and closes obsolete, redundant, non-existent and resource damaging routes on Steens Mountain. This spring, the court is considering whether to set aside BLM’s unlawful transportation plan and require the agency to complete a single, comprehensive plan for motorized and non-motorized use on Steens Mountain, as required by Congress.

## North Steens Mountain ecosystem management project

**BLM HAS PROPOSED** to cut and burn native juniper trees throughout 336,000 acres on Steens Mountain, including over 105,000 acres within the Steens Mountain Wilderness and the Donner und Blitzen Wild and Scenic River, and over 79,000 acres within six WSAs. As part of the project, BLM will use CMPA routes as fire lines and vehicle/equipment access corridors, will allow off-road, cross-country travel to access treatment areas, and will maintain roads consistent with maintenance levels assigned by the (unlawful) Steens Mountain transportation plan. ONDA appealed the project to the Department of the Interior’s Board of Land Appeals (“IBLA”) in October 2007 and awaits a decision this spring.

## John Day and Malheur River basins

**LAST YEAR, ONDA** won on almost every claim we raised in our challenge of the National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s (FWS) 2006 biological opinions concerning grazing in threatened steelhead and bull trout habitat on the Malheur National Forest. Among other things, the federal district court ruled that NMFS “failed to evaluate whether short-term habitat degradation caused each grazing season will reduce the steelhead’s ability to survive and recover.” The Court also noted that Forest Service did almost no monitoring and that it was not clear whether the agencies would enforce existing grazing standards.

In May 2007, the agencies released new Endangered Species Act consultation documents intended to cover 2007 to 2011 grazing on the Malheur National Forest. ONDA reviewed the agencies’ new 5-year grazing and consultation decisions as well as conditions on the ground, and in December filed a new lawsuit against the Forest Service, NMFS and FWS. This latest round of litigation, coupled with two cases on remand following our success in the Ninth Circuit in 2006 (upholding the public’s right to challenge annual Forest Service grazing decisions), will continue to hold the Forest Service and the fisheries agencies accountable and ensure the protection of local bull trout and steelhead populations.



## May 22 is deadline for ‘Desert Wilderness’ calendar

**WE ARE HAPPILY TAKING** submissions for the 2009 ‘Desert Wildlands’ calendar. The calendar is our greatest outreach tool. Many Oregonians have no idea what desert treasures are to be found east of the Cascades. Our calendar serves to educate people about these magnificent areas and inspire them to join our efforts to protect them. The 2009 calendar will be the fifth calendar published by ONDA.

We encourage you to send in your favorite photos that meet the requirements listed below. Submission deadline is June 1.

### Priority areas:

1. Badlands wsa
2. Whychus Creek – Alder Springs
3. South Fork Crooked River wsa
4. Owyhee Canyonlands
5. Bully Creek on Owyhee
6. Spring Basin wsa
7. John Day River – anything along the river
8. Wild Steelhead photos
9. Hart Mountain
10. Area just south of Hart Mountain

### Submission details:

- Please submit no more than 20 of your best desert images.
- Transparencies: 35mm, 2.25, 6x7 or 4x5
- Digital: minimum of 36 mb or 9 x12 inches at 300 DPI on CD, include printed proof sheet(s) with 2-in. x 3-in. thumbnail images.
- Be sure that a description of each photograph is provided, either on the photograph itself, or on a separate sheet with corresponding numbers. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission to ensure proper protection and return of your images. Complete details can be found at our website in the pressroom section:  
[www.onda.org/pressroom/press-releases](http://www.onda.org/pressroom/press-releases)
- Mail submissions directly to:  
ONDA  
c/o Devon Batley  
37 1/2 NW Irving Avenue  
Bend, Oregon 97701
- Questions? Call (541) 330-2638

Thank you to photographers who have generously volunteered their images and time to make this calendar a success.

## ONDA bids farewell to wilderness advocate and geologist

**LARRY CHITWOOD, LONG TIME GEOLOGIST** with the Deschutes National Forest, died unexpectedly of natural causes on January 4, 2008. His passion and enthusiasm for the unique geology of Oregon’s High Desert was contagious. He was an advocate of protecting Oregon’s wild areas and was instrumental in the designation of Newberry Volcano as a National Monument. Larry was a pioneer in describing the special volcanic features of the Badlands – an area he would have liked to have seen protected as Wilderness. He was an endless source of knowledge to the community, to ONDA staff, and to visiting research geologists. He will be missed by desert enthusiasts and scientists alike.



## MARKETPLACE



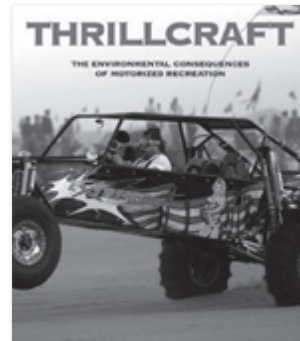
**Western Turf Wars** tells the stories of the real heroes of the Wild West in their own words – penetrating the media fictions of the past to reveal the stories of ordinary people who stand up for our environmental laws even when doing so subjects them to political coercion in the workplace or persecution in the communities where they live.

Mike Hudak, PhD, founded the nonprofit project Public Lands Without Livestock to increase awareness of the environmental damage caused by livestock production in the American West. From 1998 until mid 2000 his presentations throughout twenty states brought the issue to the attention of the Sierra Club. Subsequently, Dr. Hudak participated in negotiations that resulted in significantly strengthening that organization's livestock grazing policy. Since that time, he has continued speaking throughout the United States at a variety of organizations, universities, and national conferences. His website now brings his articles, photo essays, and videos about public lands ranching to an even broader audience. *Western Turf Wars* provides a unique contribution to our understanding of public lands management from the 1950s through the early years of the twenty-first century.

To learn how to purchase the book, contact [dbatley@onda.org](mailto:dbatley@onda.org) or call (541) 330-2638.



ONDA is pleased to offer **Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy**, edited by ONDA advisory board member George Wuerthner. This book is free to ONDA members (including shipping). For your copy please contact [dbatley@onda.org](mailto:dbatley@onda.org) or call (541) 330-2638.



ONDA is distributing **Thrillcraft: The Environmental Consequences of Motorized Recreation**. The book is available free of charge, with no charge for shipping. For your free copy, contact [dbatley@onda.org](mailto:dbatley@onda.org) or call (541) 330-2638.

The ONDA Market Place is pleased to offer ONDA T-shirts in white, sage and natural. When ordering, specify size.

Women's short sleeve (S, M, L) \$15

Men's short sleeve (M, L, XL) \$15

Long sleeve (M, L, XL) \$18

Long-sleeve shirts are not available in sage.



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# JOIN ONDA

Help defend Oregon's wild places by becoming a member of ONDA. To join, use the membership envelope inside this newsletter. You can also contact our office at 541.330.2638 or visit [www.onda.org](http://www.onda.org).

## New volunteer projects slated for upcoming seasons

**IS THERE LIFE BEYOND** fence line pulls? You bet! Fence pulls have long been an effective and important staple of ONDA's volunteer restoration efforts in eastern Oregon and will continue to be a big part of what we do for years to come. ONDA and other organizations have already helped pull down all but the last 12 miles of fence in Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, but many miles of fence still need to be pulled out of the Steens Mountain Wilderness, the Badlands Wilderness Study Area and at the Pine Creek Conservation Area. Fence pulls free up habitat, allow animals to move unhindered, reduce wildlife mortality and remove the sign of human development in Wilderness areas.

However, there is a lot of diverse, additional work to be done out there in the shrubsteppe, and ONDA is expanding its role, its impact and its influence. One new project you may have noticed is the Steens Mountain Vegetation Monitoring trip on the weekend of July 12th. This trip represents the beginning of a partnership between BLM's Burns District and ONDA. With BLM personnel's assistance, ONDA volunteers will become field botanists for a weekend, learning how to quantify plant-cover by species as part of an annual program monitoring vegetation in relation to juniper management. Another continuing project in the same vein is ONDA's annual assistance with Sage Grouse lek monitoring at Hart Mountain. These projects mark the beginning of ONDA's "citizen science" effort. Through this program, volunteers will monitor, quantify and report on the ecological state of Oregon's High Desert. Future projects may involve monitoring water quality monitoring and annual photo monitoring of remote habitats.

If you are interested in becoming an ONDA "citizen scientist" please let us know and we will keep you updated as additional programs develop. Give the office a call, or e-mail Jefferson at [jjacobs@onda.org](mailto:jjacobs@onda.org). Citizen science: just one more way ONDA is helping protect and restore Oregon's High Desert.



**Oregon Natural Desert Association**  
37 1/2 NW Irving Avenue  
Bend, Oregon 97701

tel 541.330.2638  
[www.onda.org](http://www.onda.org)

Oregon Natural Desert Association

## RIMROCK SOCIETY

By joining ONDA's Rimrock Society, Legacy Group, you are helping ensure ONDA's long-term sustainability and the future of desert wildlands in Oregon.

- ☐ Yes, I want to learn more about how I can leave an enduring legacy to ONDA.
- ☐ I have already established a planned gift for ONDA. Please enroll me in the Rimrock Society, Legacy Group.

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