

Ramblings

DESERT RAMBLINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 2010 EDITION • VOLUME 23, NO. 2

THE LOWER OWYHEE

Spectacular Wilderness Potential!



PHOTO: DAVID W. KESNER

Owyhee Canyonlands contain 16 Wilderness Study Areas spanning over a million acres.

By Chris Hansen, *Owyhee Coordinator*

The Owyhee Canyonlands represent the largest stretch of contiguous unprotected wilderness left in the lower 48 states. Over the last three decades, ONDA inventory efforts have identified 2.1 million acres of wilderness-quality land in this ecoregion – more land than the state of New Jersey. And while eastern states may boast large capital cities, highways and commerce, the Owyhee offers a simple and beautiful contrast: unobstructed wild open space.

Although this area mirrors the vast Great Basin landscape in many ways, the Owyhee's unique geology, hydrology and fauna define this area as a separate ecoregion. Unlike Steens Mountain, the Canyonlands do not exhibit the extensive faulting and huge upthrusts and downthrusts.

see **OWYHEE** page 4

FROM THE OUTBACK

Wolves in Oregon – More Bark Than Bite?

By Brent Fenty
ONDA Executive Director

Oregon's Wolf Management Plan is currently under a 5-year review to determine the future of wolf populations. Over the past century, the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) has borne the brunt of man's attempt to dominate the wild west. For example, wolves were extirpated in Oregon in 1946 after decades of over-hunting fueled by State-paid bounties for every wolf hide.

Over the past several decades, Americans have grown to understand that the recovery of wolves is essential to ecosystem health and to restoring our wildlands. As Aldo Leopold once commented, "Harmony with the land is like harmony with a friend. You cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say you cannot have game and hate predators. The land is one organism." As such, the gray wolf was put on the federal Endangered Species List in 1974, and since then efforts to re-establish wolf populations have led to wolves now being found in Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Idaho and, recently, Oregon.

As you may recall, the first known gray wolf to return to Oregon was a female that migrated from Idaho in 1999 but she was quickly returned to Idaho by the Oregon Department of Wildlife (ODFW). In 2002, ONDA successfully petitioned the ODFW to comply with State law and create a state Wolf Management Plan. This plan was completed in 2005, and set a goal of 5–7 breeding pairs in the State before the

see **FROM THE OUTBACK** page 12

Court Rules Grazing Damages Public Lands

A federal judge ruled that livestock grazing has degraded steelhead streams in the Malheur National Forest. It's another victory in the campaign to protect our public lands. Page 9

Save the Dates

ONDA wants to put four events on your calendar – Desert Conference XXV, the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival, Wilderness Day and an ONDA calendar photo exhibit. Page 11



Board Works to Support ONDA's Mission

By Helen Harbin
President



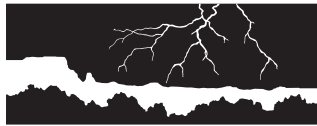
FROM THE DEN

Lately I have been feeling a lot of appreciation for ONDA's Board of Directors. The basic legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the governing board continue to be fulfilled at a high standard. But what delights me is the willingness of board members to contribute in ways that are outside the formal function of the Board.

Geographically, most of our board members are split between the Portland area and Central Oregon, with one based in Seattle and another in Eastern Oregon – it's a long lonesome drive to meetings! ONDA is able to draw from a wide variety of professional experience including conservation work, law, architecture, public utilities, medical technology, marketing, retail, veterinary medicine, and outdoor products. With interests ranging from ranching to rock climbing, we have a variety of perspectives on issues and events facing Oregon's High Desert.

Board members with managerial experience have participated in interviewing prospective employees and reviewing personnel policies and making recommendations on employee benefits. The financial experts within the group have helped support staff on budgeting and cash flow forecasting, and members with financial and business background have assisted staff with the development of internal accounting and investment processes. Board members with legal and conservation expertise have been an invaluable source of ideas and sage advice on the continual development of ONDA's strategic plan, and helping determine what activities do or don't fit with our mission. Finally, the folks with marketing and communication backgrounds have worked with staff to create messaging that moves people to action and do it economically.

Every member of the ONDA Board has been a huge contributor to its success, and I that is why I am pleased to be part of such a great group!



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**ONDA exists
to protect, defend,
and restore the
health of Oregon's
native deserts for
present and future
generations.**



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Barksdale Brown, *Editor*
Thomas Osborne, *Designer*



PHOTOS: BARKSDALE BROWN

Young ONDA members pull barbed wire fence at the annual meeting: William (left), William, Lily, Colin and Madison (right), and William, Lily and Riley (below).

ONDA's Annual Meeting

A record crowd of 92 ONDA members ages four to seventy-five gathered for a weekend of education, hard work, a salmon bake provided by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Spring, and great music at the ONDA annual meeting at the Hancock Field Station near Clarno. Volunteer teams pulled three miles of fence that has long hampered elk and deer movements within the Pine Creek Conservation Area. The three and four strand barbed-wire fence was a particular challenge as it crossed deep and steep canyons, and ran along scenic ridge-tops. This was the fourth consecutive annual meeting for many of the family participants.



PHOTO: BOB DE NOUDEN

Volunteers Log 1,600 Hours of Service

By Jefferson Jacobs, Outreach Coordinator

As of June 1, ONDA volunteers had participated in 14 scheduled trips and contributed over 1,600 hours to improving habitat, monitoring wildlife, and protecting Wilderness across eastern Oregon. The tally of volunteer successes never ceases to amaze me, as we have already planted over 2,100 trees, pulled three miles of very inconveniently located fence, monitored almost 30 sage grouse leks and dozens of raptor territories for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, removed trash from Wilderness, mapped miles of more fence for removal, monitored backcountry vegetation photo-points, protected plantings from beaver and deer, surveyed more than 30,000 acres of proposed wilderness, and finished re-vegetating some major sections of the proposed Whychus-Deschutes wilderness. All that, and we're just getting warmed up! ONDA still has eight more major volunteer trips left this year. Most are filled, but if you are interested check out our website or send me an e-mail at jjacobs@onda.org.

Bill to Protect Horse Heaven, Cathedral Rock Advances in U.S. Senate

By Aaron Killgore
John Day Coordinator

The Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven Act of 2010 has reached another important milestone in the U.S. Senate after receiving favorable testimony from the Obama administration. In April, the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands heard testimony from agencies and stakeholders involved in the bill. The U.S. Interior Department commented positively on the consolidation of a checkerboard of public and private lands in northeast Jefferson and southern Wasco counties, and offered a few minor changes to the bill.

Chairman of the subcommittee and co-sponsor of the bill, Senator Ron Wyden, spoke of its diverse and widespread support in Central Oregon, which includes county governments, hunting groups and conservation interests, including the Oregon Natural Desert Association.

"We put the proposal together the Oregon way, lots of folks at the local level developing the proposal from the ground up," Wyden said.

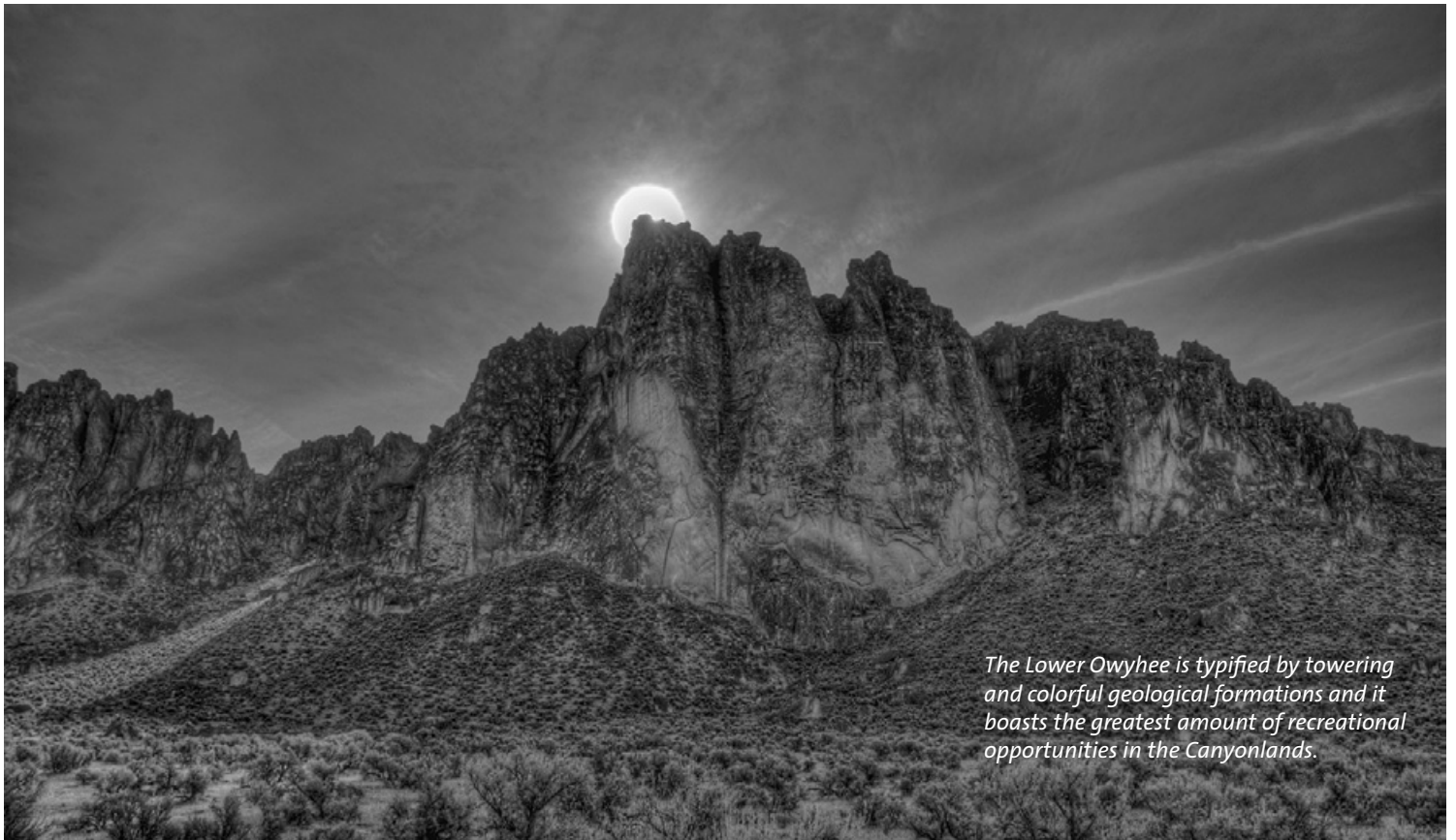
Forrest Reinhardt, a consultant for Young Life, spoke on behalf of ONDA and the adjacent landowners in the testimony hearing. He also presented a proposal to increase the Horse Heaven proposed wilderness area by over 1,500 acres, while consolidating additional fragmented BLM lands in the nearby Antone Ranch. BLM Assistant Director Ed Roberson said his agency is examining the proposed changes, and would be happy to work with the delegation to facilitate the additions.

The bill is now waiting for a markup and full committee hearing prior to being ready for a Senate floor vote.

Please help move this effort along by contacting your Congressional Representatives today. For more information visit our website and check out the John Day section or contact me at AKillgore@onda.org.

For information about ONDA's volunteer work, please visit the website:
<http://onda.org/get-involved/volunteer>





The Lower Owyhee is typified by towering and colorful geological formations and it boasts the greatest amount of recreational opportunities in the Canyonlands.

PHOTO: DAVID W. KESNER

Lower Owyhee: Spectacular Wilderness Potential

OWYHEE from page 1

The entire region is a gentle north-sloping basin cut by the Owyhee River drainage, which drains into the Columbia River system via the Snake River. Substantial rhyolite deposits, welded tuffs and basalt layers occur throughout much of the area, and extensive beds of unconsolidated ash create a unique habitat for the evolution of endemic plant species. It has been estimated that as much as 1% of the flora within the area is found nowhere else in the world.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has identified 16 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) that span the Oregon Owyhee Canyonlands. While it is often difficult to make a clear distinction between the various WSAs, the area can be divided into three distinct geographic regions: the Owyhee Uplands, the Owyhee River Canyon, and the Lower Owyhee. Each region contains a classic sagebrush steppe ecosystem dominated by various shrubs including Wyoming big sagebrush, mountain big sagebrush and bitterbrush and understory bunchgrasses like bluebunch

wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, and Sandberg's bluegrass. You can find Mountain mahogany and western juniper dotting the upland areas. At present the lowlands and the river canyon are dressed in full color: the lavenders and soft azures of lupine, the delicate crimsons of Indian paintbrush, the golds and yellows of Arrowleaf balsam root.

While each geographic region deserves separate mention, this newsletter will focus on the Lower Owyhee and future articles will detail the attributes of the Owyhee Uplands and the Owyhee River Canyon regions. The Lower Owyhee consists of smaller individual Wilderness Study Areas in the northern part of the Owyhee River drainage, bordering both sides of the Owyhee Reservoir below the Historic Birch Creek Ranch. Established Wilderness Study Areas include: Dry Creek, Dry Buttes, Wild Horse Basin, Honeycombs, Slocum Creek WSA, Upper Leslie Gulch and Jordan Craters.

The Lower Owyhee is typified by towering and colorful geological formations, and it boasts the greatest amount of recreational opportunities in the Canyonlands. Wind, water, and time have created the

spectacular panoramas of conical towers, honeycombed pinnacles and intricate multiple-layered spirals enjoyed by hikers, hunters and campers alike. There are few established trails in the area, so hikers and backpackers will find plenty of opportunity for self-guided adventure. Follow the bottom of ravines in Upper Leslie, Slocum, or Juniper Gulch and look closely for one of the 28 endemic vascular plant species that grow in the ash-bed substrate communities. Annuals like Packard's blazing star and perennials like the Owyhee clover delicately carve out niches depending on the soil, terrain and position of the slope. Scramble up a short rock slope in Dago or Runaway Gulch to find a California bighorn sheep wandering the maze-like structures of this area (the largest remaining herd in the US call the lower canyon home). Search the ground for Owyhee jasper, agates, and thunder-eggs. Have a soak in the Echo Rock Hot Springs two miles down from Slocum Creek Campground and listen to the call of the meadowlark and the lonely howl of the coyote. Or head north from Leslie Gulch by foot or boat to the unparalleled landscape

see **OWYHEE** page 5



OWYHEE from page 4

of the Honeycombs (see description, Page 5).

The last 30 years of work by ONDA members and volunteers in this spectacular region have confirmed that this vast stretch of unfragmented wildness demands permanent protection. To that end, ONDA has intensified its Owyhee campaign through the creation of a field office in Ontario Oregon. Our permanent presence in Malheur County provides ONDA with a stronger position to shape the future of public lands management in this region. No other environmental organization has a representative on the ground, living and working in the community. Meetings with local landowners, livestock operators, and BLM employees have established first time relationships and strengthened old ties. Presentations for the public about the differences between Wilderness Study Areas, National Monuments, and Wilderness have helped to begin a local dialogue about conservation. Outreach to county officials, sportsman's groups like the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, and educational institutions like Treasure Valley Community College have created positive dialog on how to properly manage the Owyhee for future generations.

Interestingly, the beauty and scale of the Owyhee Canyonlands has been generating Federal attention. In a memo leaked this March, the Department of the Interior (DOI) listed the Owyhee Desert as a candidate for National Monument designation. Citing the Owyhee as "one of the most remote areas in the continental United States" and "home to the world's largest herd of California bighorn sheep, elk, deer, cougar, Redband trout, sage grouse and raptors" the DOI's inclusion of the Owyhee on its short list confirmed what so many desert enthusiasts already knew: this is a place unlike any other.

What about the Owyhee Canyonlands enlivens each one of us? What is it that drives each of us to set out in this vast, remotely beautiful place looking for sage grouse leks, conducting wilderness inventories, running the Wild and Scenic river? Simply put, the Owyhee is a landscape without peer.

Edward Abbey encapsulated the essence of the Owyhee when he spoke of the idea of wilderness saying: "The word itself is music: [it] suggests the past and the unknown. It means something lost and something present, something remote and at the same time intimate, something buried in the blood and nerves, something beyond us and without limit."

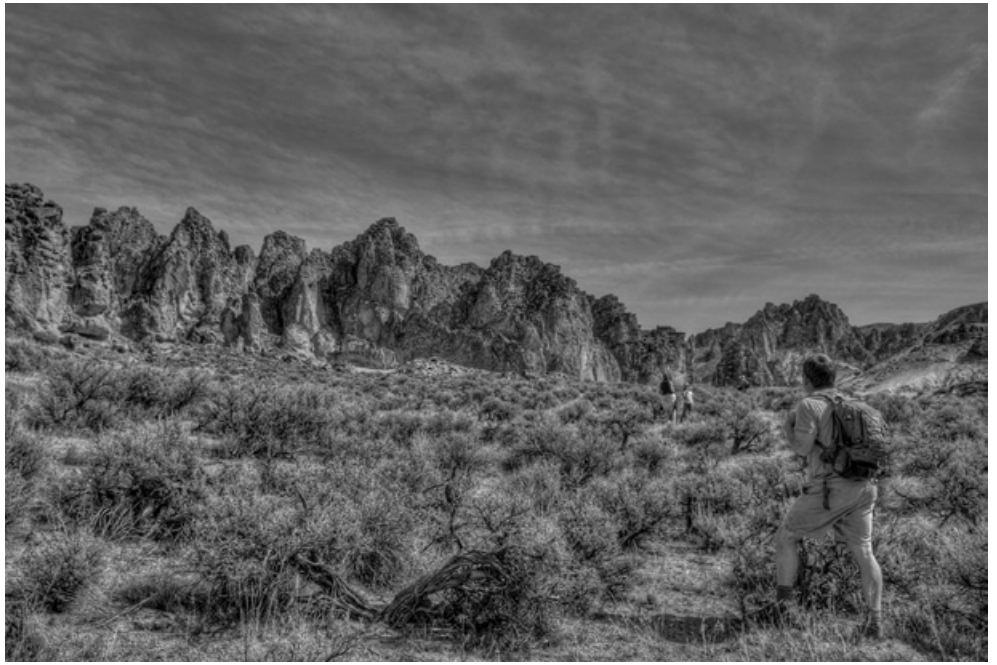


PHOTO: DAVID W. KESNER

In the Honeycombs, hikers can follow sandy ravines or scramble to the tops of rock formations.

Hiking in the Owyhee's Honeycombs

DIRECTIONS BY CAR

- From Bend, head East on Highway 20
 - At Burns, take Highway 78 towards Burns Junction
 - Turn East at Burns Junction on Highway 95 to Jordan Valley (The last chance to fill up on gas is in Jordan Valley at Jim's Shell Station)
 - Continue north on 95 for approximately 23 miles
- Turn left towards Succor Creek State Park, continue until a fork in the road for Succor Creek at a place called Negro Rock, turn left at Negro Rock
- Continue north, at the end of the road is the head of the Painted Canyon drainage, head down the drainage or follow the ridge west

DIRECTIONS BY BOAT

- Take a boat from the Owyhee Reservoir about 16 miles to a Bureau of Reclamation site called Bensley Flat and walk east up the drainages

ABOUT THE HIKE

The landscape is dominated by canyons and sculpted red, brown and tan rock formations. Intermittent streams separate drainages of volcanic tuff formations that dramatically rise hundreds of feet into the desert sky. This area has been aptly named Honeycombs WSA. Like so many areas within the Owyhee, the Honeycombs have no established hiking trails, and thankfully, the area is closed to ORV use. Adventurers have

two options: follow the sandy ravines keeping an eye out for bighorn, mule deer, or coyote sign, or keep to the ridgelines and scramble to the top of formations to scout ahead. Bring USGS maps of Three Fingers Rock and Pelican point, and a Vale District BLM map. The main gulches of Painted Canyon and Carlton Canyon are magnificent. Gain enough elevation and you can look down into an amphitheater of brilliant stone filled with delicate patches of white bitterroot, yellow balsamroot, and Indian paintbrush.

The Honeycombs are both an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and a Research Natural Area (RNA). These designations are to protect the substantial bighorn sheep population, the fragile soils and endemic plants. Birds of prey soar in haphazard ellipses: ferruginous hawks and peregrine falcons, a migrating bald eagle, kestrels and turkey vultures. The area is also a herd management area for wild horses and burros, with a trap site at the end of a dead-road near Sheepshead Basin. There are no established campsites, but it is possible to camp on Bureau of Recreation land on the east side of the Reservoir at Bensley Flat. Better yet, find a secluded grassy basin in the shadow of a dormant waterfall and pitch your tent in the oasis of green grass. Keep the rain fly off, the stars are worth staying up for.

Plan to visit the Honeycombs in the late spring and early summer months, or wait until early fall for the desert to cool.



PHOTOS: JOHN VIDITO

A group of ONDA members explored the rocks and views of the Hampton Butte Wilderness Study Area about 60 miles southeast of Bend.

Exploring Hampton Butte Wilderness Study Area

By Gena Goodman-Campbell
Wilderness Coordinator

On the evening of May 20, nine brave ONDA members ventured out to Hampton Butte to survey potential additions to our wilderness proposal for the area. Battling snow, wind and “grauple” (but no rain!), we spent two days exploring and documenting this area’s vast wilderness potential.

The geography of Hampton Butte provided a surprise around every turn. In some cases, this meant sketchy stream crossings and unmaintained “ways” with enough mud to (almost) take down a Suburban. As always, the hardy volunteers took these “wild” aspects of the place in stride and discovered and documented hundreds of special features that will help ONDA make the case for protecting this area as wilderness.

Highlights included four stands of quaking aspens, endless opportunities for unconfined recreation and solitude, eroded chalk cliffs and dwarf old-growth juniper, bountiful wildflowers and tons of wildlife sightings, including six species of warblers and a bobcat!

With a little help from some tasty s’mores and mugs of David Eddleston’s homemade Duke of Athol Brose (see the recipe at right), we all survived the cold nights and stormy days. We hope to return soon to Hampton Butte, and we are always looking for volunteers to come explore with us. Stay tuned for updates on ONDA’s efforts to protect this wild landscape and a potential expansion that could add more than 50,000 acres of wilderness to our proposal! For more information about the Hampton Butte Wilderness Proposal and how you can get involved, contact ONDA’s Central Oregon Wilderness Coordinator, Gena Goodman-Campbell at gena@onda.org.

Recipe for the Duke of Athol Brose

By David Eddleston
ONDA Member

The Duke of Athol Brose has been famous for just a mere few years in terms of Scottish history – since 1475 AD to be exact, when the Duke of Athol captured his enemy the Moermaer (Earl) of Ross by filling a receptacle at a well where the Ross liked to drink with this special tasty libation. The Ross drank deeply and fillingly, and was so captured by Athol.

To prepare this tasty libation:

Purchase a bottle or two of Scotch, a blended variety will do, like Duggans Dew at 86.8 proof or a Macgregor. When you have this at home, break the seal and taste in the interests of quality control or poisoning.

Put two cups of oats in a bowl, add three cups of water, and leave to soak for an hour or so.

Taste the Scotch for freshness.

Strain the oat liquid through a fine strainer into a bowl, using preferably a wooden spoon to extract the maximum amount of milky oat liquid. Have a wee dram of the Scotch, just to let it know it’s not lonely. Save the strained oats.

Whip up a small carton of double whipping cream, to which you have added a couple of teaspoonfuls of sugar, to the point of where it will flow slowly and thickly, no more.

Before warming up three or four tablespoonfuls of honey, ensure the Scotch is at the right room temperature. It might

see **ATHOL BROSE** page 7



Expanding our John Day Basin Restoration Effort

By Alexa Bontrager
Restoration Coordinator

Recently, SageNet subscribers might have noticed several short-notice messages calling for volunteers. Since last summer ONDA has expanded our restoration program to include further opportunities in the John Day Basin. Our focus is on streams that provide critical habitat to threatened fish, particularly steelhead. Although we continue the work at Bridge Creek, primarily in the planting and monitoring of riparian vegetation, this broadening of our restoration scope provides exciting new opportunities for ONDA and its members.

Besides improving the ecological function and fish habitat in these areas, a goal of these new restoration projects is to use our new partnerships to help generate even more opportunities for involvement in restoration. By expanding our on-the-ground presence in restoration, we can have an even greater impact on habitat recovery and establish new partnerships with landowners and other organizations.

One of the new areas in which we are working is the Murtha Ranch property, which will become part of Cottonwood Canyon State Park in 2013, and is currently owned by Western Rivers Conservancy. In the meantime, a restoration program is underway which includes the removal of old structures, debris, and trash left on the site; planting of riparian vegetation along Hay Creek, a tributary of the John Day; and removal of abundant fence.

This future state park is located in Sherman and Gilliam counties, between Wasco and Condon, and it will protect over 8,000 acres along the Lower John Day River creating one of Oregon's largest state parks. The two volunteer trips that ONDA has led to Murtha Ranch this spring allowed our members to take in the views of the swiftly moving river, the spectacular rocky bluffs alongside it, the abundant wildlife that call



PHOTO: CHRIS JANOWSKI

Wild steelhead on the John Day River.

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the area home, and the colorful wildflowers on the hillsides, all while helping to restore the ecological processes of watershed by planting and protecting vegetation along Hay Creek. This property promises to provide further restoration opportunities for our members, in particular, with upcoming fence-inventory and fence-pulling needs.

However, this future state park is just one of many new areas with fish-bearing

streams that we anticipate will need our attention and efforts. ONDA is collaborating with a landowner to conduct restoration on private property along Bridge Creek, and we have identified additional promising opportunities for restoration in the John Day Basin. These projects will all rely on volunteers to make our efforts successful.

As we continue to expand ONDA's restoration program, we often learn with little advance notice of volunteer opportunities. There is little doubt that short-notice calls for restoration volunteers will continue to be sent. If you would like to be involved, please subscribe to SageNet to stay in the loop about these new opportunities or contact me at Alexa@onda.org

Atholl Brose Recipe

ATHOL BROSE from page 6

take a couple of tastes to have the right temperature, but at this stage, think of Scotland, and toast the national drink.

Blend the cream and the honey mixture,

stirring the combination with a Scottish dagger or a silver spoon.

Into this ambrosia (brose) of cream, honey, sugar and soul, pour the bottle of Scotch, (first make sure the Scotch is genuine with just a wee tasting, but leaving just a golden note in the bottom of the bottle). Bagpipe music helps the blending.

Bottle the Brose. Shake. Have a wee taste so you know your friends and enemies will appreciate the passion that has gone into the making.

Having left a wee dram in the bottle, finish the bottle off with a toast to Scotland.

Dabhid nan MacLean nan Aethelstan



Steens Mountain Wind Project Siting Update

By Liz Nysson

Climate Change Coordinator

ONDA, like many in the conservation community, often feels caught between a rock and a hard place when confronting renewable energy issues. ONDA wholeheartedly supports the need to decrease our dependence on fossil fuels and take progressive measures to address the imminent threat of climate change through energy conservation and renewable energy. I have been working with alternative energy developers and agency representatives on a number of wind and geothermal projects in an attempt to establish appropriate mitigation plans and determine seasonal restrictions for construction and site plans.

For example, the West Butte Wind Project will provide clean energy, create green jobs for Crook County, and will have comprehensive mitigation and monitoring plans and provide significant funding for sage grouse habitat protection. Yet, while we want to be proactive in our approach in working with developers, counties, and other proponents for renewable



PHOTO: GEORGE WUERTHNER

Flowers frame Big Indian Gorge,
Steens Mountain Wilderness.

an energy project in this area is considered unholy to many Steens enthusiasts. Indeed, dozens to hundreds of wind turbines dotting the northern edge would change this place, and an industrial footprint would unsettle the sage grouse, golden eagles, pronghorn and other wild residents of the area.

The initial battle to protect the Steens was hard fought and lasted decades. It culminated in 2000 with the creation of the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management Act (CMPA). This was a momentous event for the conservation community in eastern Oregon representing a collaboration of stakeholders spearheaded by then Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt. The Steens Act created the first cow-free Wilderness area, and included both public and private lands, portions of the mountain, wetlands, and rangeland.

Unfortunately, due to a technicality in State law, the Steens CMPA was omitted from a list of protected areas off limits to renewable energy development. We hoped to remedy this omission by filing a petition with the Oregon Department of Energy (ODE) to change the State law and add the CMPA to the list of protected areas. This petition was heard by the ODE's Energy Facility Siting Council on June 11th.

Regrettably, and most likely due to the opposition of Harney County, the ODE's Council denied our petition. This decision was a disappointing blow to months of work to keep Steens wild. Needless to say, it will not prevent us from continuing to work to protect Steens Mountain from any kind of development. It is fundamental to ONDA's mission to work to protect those places we love and continue to shape policies in Oregon that will facilitate responsible renewable energy development in appropriate places.

energy, we cannot condone industrial-level development on those treasured landscapes we have spent decades protecting – Steens Mountain is one of those special places.

Steens lies along the horizon of southeastern Oregon like a sleeping giant on a bed of sagebrush in the semi-arid desert. Although people often mistake it for a mountain chain, it is one contiguous monolith – the largest fault block mountain in North America. The summit rises a mile vertically, and overlooks the Alvord Desert, Wildhorse Canyon, and Donner und Blitzen River. Its dark undulating slopes and stern ridgelines can be seen for miles, and it is known as eastern Oregon's "crown jewel." Unlike the Cascades to the west, the Steens is a gem noted for its unrefined stark beauty – something wholly original in a seemingly uniform shrub sea.

Columbia Energy Partners, a Washington state based developer, is attempting to develop lands on and around Steens Mountain to harness the strong winds that blow along the north-south facing escarpment. The idea of

LITERARY CORNER

Badlands Odyssey

*The trailhead parking lot
is diesel pickups blaring
radios dropped eyeglasses junk
food wrappers crying babies lunging
dogs. I try to pretend
the bike treads in the dust
are snakes' trails.*

*We set out and walk fast
to put the sound of traffic behind us.
But gradually our pace slows*

Positive
displaces
negative

*We begin to see
the desert.*

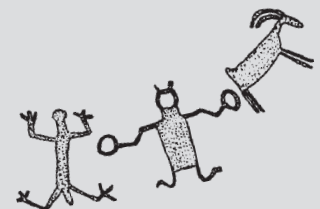
*How each proud juniper
needs its own space.
How lava flows in frozen ropes
and runs in silent ridges.
A rusted tin can – not litter,
but cowboy history.
A weathered stump – not lumbering,
but a forebear cutting firewood.*

*And finally,
we reach our destination ... the desert
state of grace.*

*There we discover
bounding rabbit tracks
dainty mouse tracks
sunning fence lizards
disheveled packrat nests
tiny lava windows
hidden moss beds*

*It took two hours
to find this magical place,
although it was really
just beyond
the parking lot.*

– Curt Johnson





LEGAL DOCKET

Judge Rules Grazing Harms Steelhead on John Day

By Mac Lacy, *Senior Attorney*
and Dave Becker, *Staff Attorney*

ONDA scored a major legal victory when a federal judge ruled that the Forest Service violated the Endangered Species Act by allowing cattle to degrade native steelhead streams on the Malheur National Forest.

Judge Ancer Haggerty found that the Forest Service's grazing plan unlawfully allowed livestock to damage critical habitat for steelhead along more than 300 miles of streams in the John Day River Basin.

The judge's June 4th ruling marks the latest in a string of successes against the agency for ONDA, the Center for Biological Diversity and Western Watersheds Project, who have been challenging Malheur forest grazing since 2003. This is the first ruling on the merits in the long-running litigation targeting pervasive damage from grazing. The steelhead, an iconic Pacific Northwest native trout, is listed under the Endangered Species Act as a "threatened" species in danger of extinction.

According to evidence compiled by ONDA, as well as the agency's own surveys, stream-side grazing permitted by the Forest Service has caused failures to meet ecological standards meant to conserve steelhead. The standards, established by the Forest Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), are meant to protect the key elements of healthy fish streams: stable stream banks and overhanging vegetation that keep streams clear and cold.

Chris Christie, a long-time ONDA member and volunteer, collected extensive photographic evidence and monitoring data over the past 10 years showing that the Forest Service's grazing program led to stream bank damage many times worse than the amount allowed under the federal standards. Linda Driskill, also an ONDA member, corroborated the extent of the damage with her photographs and field



ONDA's efforts in the courts to ensure conservation laws are enforced have been successful on several fronts.

notes. Hydrologists Jon Rhodes and Robert Beschta provided expert testimony that the damage from livestock grazing prevents natural restoration of badly degraded steelhead streams. ONDA's staff attorney, Dave Becker, argued the case before Judge Haggerty on March 30th.

Judge Haggerty's opinion criticized the Forest Service's "particularly deplorable" failure to prevent "inordinate" damage in several areas the agency admitted were particularly important to the steelhead's ability to avoid extinction. He also chastised the Forest Service for making "empty promises" about monitoring and enforcement measures by securing a decision

from NMFS that the grazing plan would not harm fish, and then not carrying out the promised monitoring and enforcement. The judge also ruled that the Forest Service failed to properly consult with the fisheries agency about the grazing plan, as required by federal law. The Forest Service failed to measure and evaluate stream conditions before authorizing grazing during the last three years.

While the parties were awaiting the judge's ruling, ONDA agreed with the Forest Service and grazing permittees to allow reduced grazing during 2010 coupled with strict protections to insure that cattle do

see **LEGAL DOCKET** page 10

Learn More on the Web

Read the entire opinion issued in the legal challenge to the Forest Service's Malheur Forest grazing plan:
[http://onda.org/enforcing-conservation-laws/Opinion and Order on Summary Judgment.pdf](http://onda.org/enforcing-conservation-laws/Opinion%20and%20Order%20on%20Summary%20Judgment.pdf)

More information on ONDA's legal accomplishments:

<http://onda.org/enforcing-conservation-laws/accomplishments>



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Board member Teague Hatfield pulls fence near Pine Creek.

Welcome New Board Member Teague Hatfield

Teague Hatfield graduated from Western Washington University with a BA in English. He opened the FootZone, a running specialty store in Bend in 1995 and bought it in 1999. Teague has worked ever since to build a healthy business, great workplace, and commitment to the Central Oregon community. He's excited to serve on the ONDA board because of ONDA's effectiveness in protecting the Oregon landscape east of the Cascades. Teague and his wife value the beauty of Oregon and recognize the necessity to protect and expand opportunities that future generations will have to interact with their natural world.

Thank you for Needed Vehicles

ONDA says thank you to several members for their recent generous donations that will help the organization work in the field:

- to members Cal and Alice Elshoff for the donation of their Jeep;
- to Anton Broms for the donation of his Land Rover; and
- to Mike Grant for his donation of his drift boat.

Member Opportunity



Mountain Khaki has partnered with ONDA to offer a 20 percent discount on select items to ONDA supporters, good until July 31st.

Please use discount code: MKONDA at the checkout.

Discount applies to Men's shorts and Women's shorts and capris.

Please visit www.mountainkhakis.com

Legal Docket

LEGAL DOCKET from page 10

not damage steelhead critical habitat. Protective measures include additional fencing to protect sensitive riparian areas, additional riders to maintain fences and herd livestock away from streams, and weekly Forest Service monitoring and updates to the court on stream conditions. Overall grazing levels will be about 10% lower than the Forest Service proposed in 2009.

Judge Haggerty's decision this year is consistent with his preliminary rulings in this case over the past two years which have resulted in significant protections for threatened steelhead. In 2008, the judge ruled that ONDA was likely to win on the merits and issued an injunction barring grazing on two allotments. That ruling protected over 90 miles of steelhead streams. In 2009, again ruling that ONDA was likely to win its case, the court authorized grazing only subject to extensive protections beyond what the Forest Service had proposed.

As a result of the 2009 injunction, grazing occurred on only about 89 of the 306 miles of steelhead critical habitat. With the additional restrictions imposed by the court, more conscientious monitoring by the Forest Service, and greater efforts by the permittees to comply with the limitations in their permits, livestock caused significantly less damage to steelhead streams in 2009 than in previous years. In anticipation of the 2010 season, Judge Haggerty urged the parties to come to agreement on protective conditions that would allow a consensus on grazing this year. The agreement among the parties avoided the need for ONDA to file a motion for a preliminary injunction yet insure that the restrictions that were in place during 2009 will continue on all allotments where grazing will impact steelhead critical habitat.

“ONDA now will ask the court for a permanent injunction requiring the Forest Service to comply with the Endangered Species Act and its own Forest Plan in managing future livestock grazing for the protection of steelhead and the streams they live in.”

In conjunction with Judge Haggerty's June 4th decision, the 2010 agreement puts the onus on the Forest Service and permittees to insure that livestock do not damage steelhead streams. ONDA now will ask the court for a permanent injunction requiring the Forest Service to comply with the Endangered Species Act and its own Forest Plan in managing future livestock grazing for the protection of steelhead and the streams they live in.

ONDA's work on steelhead protection and livestock grazing in the Malheur National Forest is an example of its mission to enforce conservation laws. More information on ONDA's legal accomplishments is available on ONDA's website at <http://onda.org/enforcing-conservation-laws/accomplishments>.





Oregon Natural Desert Association

SAVE THE DATE

Noteworthy

events

for ONDA

members

Desert Conference XXV

September 23 – 26, 2010

Commemorating 10 years of Steens Wilderness and the National Landscape Conservation System

The draft agenda for Desert Conference is now available online. Panel topics will include: Climate change and renewable energy; Protecting migration corridors and habitat connectivity; Great Basin Ecology; Protecting native fish populations; Public lands restoration, recreation and protection; Greater Sage Grouse; Resource and Travel Management planning; Wilderness campaigns – working with diverse partners. We are proud to announce that Ed Norton Sr. will be our Key Note Speaker on Saturday evening. Esteemed author and explorer, Craig Childs, will be presenting on Friday evening.

DCXXV will take place at the Washington Family Ranch near Antelope, Oregon, in the heart of the John Day Basin. From here you will have the opportunity to explore and help restore nearby wilderness and proposed wilderness areas. Pictures of the lodge and accommodations are available at:

www.onda.org/desertconference

For information and to register visit the website or call:

www.onda.org/desertconference

541-330-2638



DESERT CONFERENCE XXV
September 23-26, 2010

PHOTO: DANIEL BIGGS

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

September 16, 2010



ONDA presents: Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Thursday, September 16, 2010, 6 PM

McMenamin's Old St. Francis School, Bend

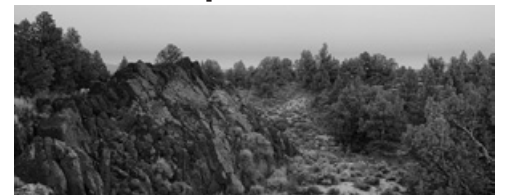
Presented with support from Patagonia, Clif Bar, Osprey Backpacks, Tom's of Maine and Sierra Nevada Brewing Company

Wilderness Day

September 18, 2010

Observe Wilderness Day on September 18

Join ONDA and Friends of the Badlands for hikes in local wilderness and proposed wilderness areas including, Badlands, Whychus Creek and Deschutes Canyon. More details coming soon.



Wild Desert Calendar Exhibit

October 7 – 30, 2010



ONDA Wild Desert Calendar Exhibit in Portland.

Opening Night: First Thursday in Portland, October 7

Exhibit at the Art of Framing, 2335A NW Savier Ave., Portland.

Opening Night: First Thursday in Portland, October 7, 5 – 8 PM

Website: www.jrollinsartofframing.com

Join us to celebrate Oregon's high deserts with beautiful images from ONDA's 2011 Wild Desert Calendar. All images will be available for purchase. Details coming soon.



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Oregon Natural Desert Association
33 NW Irving Avenue
Bend, Oregon 97701

OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION



DESERT RAMBLINGS

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.

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE/EMAIL

Clip and mail to: WendyKay Gewiss, Oregon Natural Desert Association,
33 NW Irving Ave., Bend, OR 97701

ONDA would like to acknowledge and thank the members of our Rimrock Society. Your vision and commitment will help ensure we are able to continue to protect, defend, and restore the health of Oregon's native deserts for present and future generations.

Becoming an ONDA Rimrock Society member can be as simple as including a bequest to ONDA in your will or designating ONDA as one of the beneficiaries of a retirement plan or life insurance policy. Your gift, large or small, can have a great impact on our efforts; you can help shape the future of Oregon's beautiful and vast native deserts.

We hope you will consider becoming an ONDA Rimrock Society member. Please contact me if you are interested: WendyKay Gewiss at (541) 330-3638 or wendykay@onda.org.

Wolves in Oregon – More Bark Than Bite?

FROM THE OUTBACK from page 1

population could be considered for delisting. Currently Oregon has only two documented breeding pairs which are located in the northeast corner of the State.

While polls in Oregon have shown that 70% of people are in favor of wolves returning to Oregon, there is a vocal minority objecting to the re-establishment of viable wolf populations. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association has all but declared war on wolves in Oregon, recently stating that "wolves are terrorizing eastern Oregon." The underlying argument is that wolf populations will threaten livestock. However, Oregon produces 1.5 million head of cattle annually and so far there have been only six cattle deaths from wolf predation. In response to these conflicts, ODFW recently issued kill permits for an area spanning nearly 40 square miles; such action bears an unfortunate and uncanny resemblance to Oregon's unsavory past efforts which led to the extermination of wolves.

Some conflicts between livestock grazing and native wildlife such as wolves are unavoidable particularly given the fact that the vast majority of our public lands are grazed by livestock. Conservation groups have worked to find ways to address such conflicts with wolves. For example, Defenders of Wildlife set up a fund to reimburse ranchers for livestock lost to wolf depredation, and since the establishment of this fund it has paid out \$3,900 to Oregon ranchers. Another option would be to permanently or temporarily retire grazing permits on public lands where conflicts between wolves and livestock exist. Regardless, ranchers, as outlined in the Wolf Management Plan, must take responsibility for the safety of their livestock by improving inventory, fencing and employing fladry lines or other non-lethal hazing tactics to scare wolves away from livestock. Ultimately, wolves need to be treated as native wildlife – not as unwanted predators.

A draft of the revised plan should be available by September and we have joined Hells Canyon Preservation Council in commenting on proposed revisions. A public meeting will be held in Bend on October 1st and ODFW will be making its recommendations for the Wolf Management Plan. I encourage you to attend this meeting and become involved in the protection of wolf populations in Oregon. In the meanwhile, keep an eye on your inbox for email updates on the Wolf Management Plan and please don't hesitate to contact staff for more details on how to support wolf recovery.