



Momentum continues to grow for protecting the Owyhee Canyonlands, including a new grassroots group based in eastern Oregon. Photo © Chad Case

## A **BIG** YEAR AHEAD FOR THE OWYHEE CANYONLANDS

By **Corie Harlan**  
Owyhee Coordinator

The Owyhee Canyonlands is big in every sense of the word. Its 2.1 million acres of undulating plateaus, rushing rivers and plunging canyons represent the largest unprotected stretch of the lower 48. Filled with recreation opportunities, this diverse expanse is also a big hitter when it comes to supporting struggling rural economies in southeastern Oregon and providing a home for over 200 species, including the imperiled Greater sage-grouse. Protecting the Owyhee's wild lands, water and wildlife would be an unprecedented big win for Oregon, for desert ecosystems and for conservation.

So it seems only fitting that with your help and support, we believe 2015 will be one of the biggest years ever for the Owyhee Canyonlands. Here's what we're working on for the year.

A new group called Friends of the Owyhee is launching in Malheur County. This group will lead a number of activities within the southeastern Oregon community to create a strong, organized local voice for permanent protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands. This home-grown effort is critical to making a wild Owyhee happen! To support this group and follow its efforts, please email [owyheefriends@gmail.com](mailto:owyheefriends@gmail.com) and like the Friends of the Owyhee Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/FriendsoftheOwyhee](http://www.facebook.com/FriendsoftheOwyhee).

Meanwhile, conservation organizations and businesses throughout the state are coming together as the Owyhee Coalition. The Owyhee Coalition this year will pool resources and activate strong advocate networks to help protect Oregon's Grand Canyon for generations to come.

We're doing more to monitor potential threats

Owyhee Canyonlands, continued on Page 3

## Uncertain times for the Greater sage-grouse

By **Dan Morse**  
Conservation Director

The fate of the Greater sage-grouse throughout the West has always rested on whether or not large, intact expanses of sagebrush steppe habitat will continue to exist and be permanently protected.

The range of this large bird, known for its flamboyant mating display, once spanned across the sagebrush steppe, the most widespread habitat of the Intermountain West. Dependent on this habitat for its life cycle, the sage-grouse has long been considered an umbrella species for the health of the sagebrush ecosystem as a whole. Today, however, the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the sage-grouse inhabits just 44 percent of its original range.

The on-the-ground threats to the remaining sagebrush habitat are many – including invasive plant species, wildfire, inappropriate livestock grazing, energy development and the impacts of

Sage-grouse, continued on Page 3

Sign up for an ONDA field trip in 2015

– PAGE 6



### INSIDE DESERT RAMBLINGS:

**Protect:** Hiking the John Day reveals the 'why' behind a wilderness campaign. Page 4.

**Defend:** ONDA takes Steens wind energy case to the appeals court. Page 5.

**Members:** A dedicated desert lover explains why it's so hard to pick a favorite spot. Page 7.

# ONDA survey reveals passion, commitment

By Brent Fenty, Executive Director



Brent Fenty

ONDA's 4,500 members and supporters are brought together by a shared love of place: Oregon's amazing high desert. Whether you live on the verdant wet side of the Cascades or in central and eastern Oregon among the sagebrush and seemingly infinite vistas, you feel blessed that Oregon still has vast and truly wild places.

Our recent survey of members and supporters highlights the passion for this area and a commitment to seeing it protected. Whether you spend your time in Oregon's high desert backpacking or car camping, watching wildlife or hunting and fishing, you appreciate the wide-open spaces and natural beauty that graces the region. The survey, conducted in December and January, was an effort to make sure ONDA is doing the best job possible to protect, defend and restore Oregon's high desert. By hearing directly from those who make ONDA's work possible, we aimed to learn what matters most to you and whether we're communicating about our efforts effectively.

I'm happy to report that we had amazing participation! More than 600 ONDA members and supporters responded to the survey. In reading through the data recently, I felt inspired in so many ways by what was shared.

Our supporters' love of place is spread across Oregon's high desert, with particular affection shown for places like the Owyhee Canyonlands, the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region and Steens Mountain. Recreation is important to you, but conserving the high desert's solitude and wildlife habitat is critical. You appreciate ONDA's laser-like focus on this region, which remains lesser-known and underappreciated when compared to the forested half of Oregon.



## Survey winner

And the winner is ... Diane Rangaard. She won the drawing of two free nights at the Hart Mountain Cabin in Plush for participating in ONDA's survey. A Central Oregon resident, Diane joined ONDA five years ago. Way to go, Diane, and many thanks to the Hart Mountain Cabin ([www.hartmountain-cabin.com](http://www.hartmountain-cabin.com)) for the generous donation.

In addition, the vast majority of you are on Facebook and a good portion of you read blogs; that said, the newsletter remains a significant and important way for you to keep up-to-speed on ONDA efforts. And, not surprisingly, you love ONDA's Wild Desert Calendar that shows up in your mailbox every November.

Every day at ONDA, we put great energy and care into engaging with our members and supporters. With every Facebook post, petition request, public event and one-on-one chat, we aim to both empower high desert conservation efforts and to foster a positive community that people enjoy and are proud to support. So now that you've spoken, we want to answer. For instance, one theme that emerged in survey comments was a desire for more activities on Oregon's west side. We're working right now on an effort to do just that: Thanks in large part to the incredible support of a Portland-based member, we will soon hire an Outreach Coordinator in Portland who will focus on offering more ways for members and supporters to get involved.

In the coming months, we will continue analyzing survey data and looking for more ways to improve what we do. As ONDA works hard to protect the vast and wild place that is Oregon's high desert, we never want to lose sight of the fact that our strength rests in the commitment and connection of our members. Thank you for being at the heart of ONDA's efforts.

## YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK IN OREGON'S HIGH DESERT

Thanks to you...

**58,000 acres of high desert wild lands at Sutton Mountain** have now received pivotal wilderness proposal endorsements from the city of Mitchell and Wheeler County. Back wilderness for Sutton at [ONDA.org/take-action](http://ONDA.org/take-action).

**1 new Visitors Guide** published on ONDA's website now offers a resource for exploring public lands in the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region and for inspiring actions to protect the region's wildlife. Check out the guide at [ONDA.org/VisitHartSheldon](http://ONDA.org/VisitHartSheldon).

**More than 900 attendees** learned about ONDA's work through the 2014 Desert Conference, Wild & Scenic Film Festival and WilderFest Block Party. Keep up with ONDA events by signing up for our e-newsletter at [ONDA.org/email-signup](http://ONDA.org/email-signup).

**More than 400 new members in 2014** helped swell ONDA's ranks by 13 percent, helping grow our voice across Oregon. Give the gift of ONDA membership at [ONDA.org/donate](http://ONDA.org/donate).

...and so much more, all made possible because of you!



### STAFF

**Jeremy Austin**  
Oregon Desert Trail Coordinator

**Barksdale Brown**  
General Manager

**Allison Crotty**  
Development Director

**Elisa Davis**  
Membership Coordinator

**Brent Fenty**  
Executive Director

**Sam Frank**  
Stewardship Coordinator

**Gena Goodman-Campbell**  
Central Oregon Coordinator

**Ben Gordon**  
John Day Coordinator

**Heidi Hagemeyer**  
Communications Coordinator

**Corie Harlan**  
Owyhee Coordinator

**Jefferson Jacobs**  
Stewardship Coordinator

**Lindsay Jones**  
Development Assistant

**Mac Lacy**  
Senior Attorney

**Dan Morse**  
Conservation Director

### AT LARGE

**Craig Miller**  
GIS Specialist

**Bill Marlett**  
Senior Conservation Advisor

**Dana Nehl**  
Bookkeeper

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Helen Harbin** (Bend), President

**John Sterling** (Bend), Vice President

**Jeff Frank** (Santa Barbara), Treasurer

**Gilly Lyons** (Portland), Secretary

**Ray Hartwell** (Bend)

**Teague Hatfield** (Bend)

**Alan Hickenbottom** (Portland)

**Durlin Hickok** (Tumalo and Seattle)

**Allison Mace** (Portland)

**Ken Rait** (Portland)

**Kirk Richardson** (Portland)

**Chris Van Dyke** (Tumalo)

**Julie Weikel** (Princeton)

### OFFICES

50 SW Bond Street, Suite #4  
Bend, OR 97702  
541.330.2638  
FAX: 541.389.5056

917 SW Oak Street, Suite 419  
Portland, OR 97205  
503.525.0193

**Desert Ramblings** is published three times annually (spring, summer and fall/winter) by the Oregon Natural Desert Association.

Member of **EarthShare Oregon** ONDA is a member of EarthShare of Oregon, which brings support to environmental endeavors in local communities, across Oregon and around the world.



Oregon will be important in efforts to safeguard the Greater sage-grouse. In a recent memo, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region and the Owyhee Canyonlands as some of the best remaining sage-grouse habitat in the West. Photo © Michelle Alvarado

## SAGE-GROUSE

Continued from Page 1

other human uses like roads and recreation uses. The challenges in the social and political realm are equally complex, including concerns about sustaining rural economies, preventing wildfires and allowing for the possibility of development without undue impacts to the bird.

During 2015, we will begin to see the culmination of many years of conservation efforts for the sage-grouse. Whether or not the species needs to be listed under the Endangered Species Act will rest on if those efforts have been enough.

Late last year Congress included last-minute provisions in legislation that put limits on the process of evaluating Greater sage-grouse for listing as an endangered species. Despite this legislative rider, wildlife and land management agencies are still working on conservation efforts and studying the status of the bird. And the Fish and Wildlife Service has stated that it will still come to an informal conclusion about the status of the bird by the fall of 2015 even if a formal listing determination is barred.

Meanwhile the Fish and Wildlife Service has continued to urge land managers to

develop and adopt the strongest possible protections for sage-grouse habitat.

In October 2014, the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service sent a memo to the heads of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service identifying six of the most important sage-grouse regions in the West and suggesting that the strongest conservation measures need to be applied in these regions. Two of those important areas are here in Oregon and well-known to ONDA members and supporters – the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region and the Owyhee Canyonlands. ONDA has long known the importance of these places for sage-grouse, and we continue to urge for their protection.

The BLM will address the Fish and Wildlife Service input and other issues when it releases a final sage-grouse habitat management plan early this year. ONDA has vigorously advocated that the BLM include strong conservation measures in that plan and will be reviewing it carefully to ensure the highest level of sage-grouse habitat protection is put in place. At the same time as the BLM's planning effort, the state of Oregon has been working on a state-level plan for sage-grouse, and that effort is also coming to conclusion. A draft state plan for sage-grouse should be complete very shortly and stakeholder groups, including ONDA, will review and provide input on how well it protects the species.

Through all of these efforts ONDA's goals remain unchanged – we must protect sage-grouse habitat so the population can stabilize and ultimately begin to recover and increase. We will continue to work in 2015 to ensure that happens.

**Support saving the Greater sage-grouse** by advocating for sound land management in the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region and permanent protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands. Act now at [ONDA.org/take-action](http://ONDA.org/take-action)

## OWYHEE CANYONLANDS

Continued from Page 1

to the Owyhee Canyonlands. Damage from irresponsible ATV use is already here. Now, oil and gas development and mining are clawing at this landscape more aggressively than ever before. In a Bureau of Land Management report touting near-record numbers of oil and gas leases and drilling permits on public land in the West in 2014, nearly 170,000 acres of active oil and gas leases were identified in the BLM's Vale District. ONDA is working with BLM staff to identify and monitor which leases could impact the Owyhee Canyonlands area. Also, a proposed gold and silver mining operation in the northern Owyhee Canyonlands continues to move forward. We're watching this development, as well.

Given the Owyhee's incredible natural values and the looming threats to this landscape, one thing is clear. The time to protect the Owyhee's clear rivers, diverse wildlife and untrammeled beauty for future generations is **now**. We're riding a growing, state-wide wave of awareness and appreciation for Oregon's Grand Canyon. We'll continue to grow this support this year, taking advantage of this unique moment in time to demonstrate the foresight and will to protect the Owyhee's most special places before destructive forces take hold.



## OWYHEE: TAKE ACTION

Photo © Jim Davis

If each one of you reading this article takes just one of these actions, the Owyhee Canyonlands will be that much closer to permanent protection, today.

- Sign the petition to protect the Owyhee Canyonlands at [www.wildowyhee.org](http://www.wildowyhee.org)
- Send a letter to Senator Ron Wyden and Rep. Greg Walden telling them you support a wild Owyhee ([ONDA.org/TakeActionOwyhee](http://ONDA.org/TakeActionOwyhee)).
- Contact ONDA to share your story about the Owyhee or connections you have in southeastern Oregon ([corie@onda.org](mailto:corie@onda.org))

# LOOKING AHEAD, AND BACK, IN JOHN DAY WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

By Ben Gordon  
John Day Coordinator

As I watch the sunset from the top of Sutton Mountain, my whole being smiles. My body is tired from a day of off-trail hiking and my mind is transfixed by winter's soft light blanketing the surrounding landscape, which includes Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven, the John Day River, and a vast sea of mountains that define the ruggedly beautiful John Day basin. From this vantage I imagine the day when Congress signs into law permanent protection for the places across this region that ONDA supporters care so deeply about. While I dream of such a day, I know that wilderness is only the start to caring for a place deserving of this designation.

Wilderness campaigns are long-term propositions that take patience.

In the John Day basin, ONDA has been working on campaigns to protect Sutton Mountain, Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven for more than a decade. While today these proposals have strong local support and the prospect of them becoming wilderness seems on track, it is important to appreciate how far they have come.

## Focusing on the region's most special natural areas

When ONDA first considered wilderness campaigns in the John Day basin, it was after a great deal of vetting that the organization decided on the specific locations. We looked at the basin as a whole, all 8,100 square miles, and targeted the places that offer the greatest opportunities for wildlife conservation and primitive recreation.

Each of our focus areas offers unique opportunities from both standpoints. Sutton Mountain is a plateau dotted with 40 million years of geologic history, wildflowers found few other



*Wheeler County Judge Chris Perry takes in the view from atop Sutton Mountain on Jan. 2. The Wheeler County Court has backed a wilderness proposal for Sutton Mountain, feeling it could bring the area an economic boost. Photo © Ben Gordon*

places on Earth, and 36 sensitive and threatened wildlife species. Whether you are a day hiker, naturalist or endurance athlete, Sutton Mountain has an adventure in store.

Cathedral Rock, which looms above the John Day River, offers tremendous camping and hiking opportunities from the river. It opens 4 miles of river frontage to the public and consolidates thousands of acres to make them more usable for the public and for the herds of antelope, elk and deer that depend on them. And Horse Heaven offers hikers see-forever views, steep canyons with ephemeral springs and remnant old growth pine forests, something found in very few places in the high desert.

Once we were clear as an organization that we had identified the best and most logical places to work towards protecting, we began to engage with local stakeholders to ensure that their interests were taken into consideration. Inevitably this process resulted in the need to alter the proposals. Through literally years of listening and being willing to find solutions that work for conservation, the public and local communities, Sutton Mountain, Cathedral Rock

and Horse Heaven emerged as stakeholder-approved, the gold standard for any viable conservation proposal.

Now that local and statewide stakeholders have decided on the details of the proposals, we need the help of Congress to see that these special places become protected. In order for Oregon's delegation to be willing to introduce legislation and shepherd it through Congress, they need to hear from their constituents that Sutton, Horse Heaven and Cathedral Rock matter. For this reason, personal letters and petition signatures sent to our elected officials raise the profile of these places and showcase the importance of protecting them.

## The work of wilderness

After an area is protected as wilderness, the next step is the creation of a wilderness management plan tailored specifically to that area. The plan, which is written by the agency responsible for managing the land, defines how the land will be cared for after it is designated as wilderness. In the case of ONDA's John Day campaigns the agency responsible for managing the proposed wilderness lands is the Bureau of Land Management

(BLM). The BLM will engage with the public to determine how to balance wilderness values with human interests such as visitor access, existing grazing, fire management, and noxious weed control. Once the wilderness management plan is finalized the BLM has an ongoing responsibility to ensure that the wilderness values of these areas remain protected.

Because the BLM has ever increasing responsibilities and diminishing resources to deal with them, volunteer stewardship is essential to protecting the values that make our campaign areas suitable for wilderness designation. For this reason, the work that ONDA volunteers do makes a world of difference for the places we love and in the eyes of the BLM.

Only through long-term passion and focus will we achieve wilderness for Cathedral Rock, Horse Heaven and Sutton Mountain. I invite you to be a part of the efforts to protect the John Day basin's most important conservation and recreation strongholds.

Sign the petition to protect Sutton Mountain:  
[ONDA.org/take-action](https://onda.org/take-action)

## ONDA continues to defend Steens, taking wind development case to appeals court

By Mac Lacy  
Senior Attorney

The question of whether building an industrial-scale wind energy facility in core sage-grouse habitat on Steens Mountain is legal will be determined by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals after the Secretary of the Interior failed to respond to a petition asking her to withdraw her approval of the project.

ONDA filed its opening brief with the Ninth Circuit in November, and the court could hear the case as soon as this fall.

At issue is the Secretary of the Interior's decision to grant a federal right-of-way for the North Steens Transmission Line, which would connect a proposed power generation site to the electrical grid. The 104-megawatt site would be built near the top of Steens Mountain and contain up to 69 wind turbines, each with 415-foot-tall rotors. The proposed generation site is surrounded almost entirely by the federally protected Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area. To connect the site to the electrical grid, the Department of the Interior approved a right-of-way across 46 miles of federal and private lands.

Steens Mountain is part of a landscape essential to the survival of the imperiled Greater sage-grouse and lies within one of the bird's remaining habitat strongholds. The sage-grouse is in danger of extinction from loss and fragmentation of its habitat and increasing isolation of populations due to human activities, including energy development.

As required by law, the Bureau of Land Management prepared an environmental impact statement to study the effects associated with the transmission line and generating site. The BLM



The sage-grouse is a “landscape-scale” species that can require hundreds of square miles of unfragmented habitat.

*Wind turbines were proposed for this ridge on Steens Mountain, a project ONDA continues to fight in court. Presently at issue is a power transmission corridor that cuts through habitat of the imperiled Greater sage-grouse. Photo © Shawn Smallwood*

disclosed and evaluated a series of issues, including some of the project's likely effects on sage-grouse. But the agency's analysis of impacts to sage-grouse was deficient in key respects. At issue on appeal are the two most critical of those errors.

First, the BLM failed to collect and evaluate baseline information on sage-grouse winter concentration areas that would be affected by the project. The sage-grouse is a “landscape-scale” species that can require a home range of hundreds of square miles of unfragmented habitat to breed, feed and shelter in the broiling summers and frigid winters of the dry Intermountain West. The bird uses different parts of the sagebrush ecosystem during different stages of its annual life cycle. The areas the sage-grouse needs to survive over the winter are distinct from its breeding, nesting and brood-rearing habitats. The BLM, however, claimed that winter habitat was too difficult to survey and assumed without basis that no winter habitat is present in the project area. But federal and state wildlife agen-

cies, and one of the nation's leading sage-grouse scientists, unanimously disagree with the BLM's assumption.

Second, the BLM failed to evaluate the impact of the project on genetic connectivity. The project cuts across a corridor of land through which neighboring sage-grouse populations intermingle. The corridor is vital to maintaining genetic diversity among those populations — and therefore persistence of the bird on Steens Mountain and beyond. The omission ignores the Steens Act's directive that the BLM must protect “genetic interchange” on Steens Mountain and omits the fact that sage-grouse scientists know of no effective measures that can mitigate for loss of genetic connectivity.

After the project's regulatory and financial footings crumbled, ONDA petitioned the Secretary of the Interior to abandon the project. The secretary never answered ONDA's petition, and the BLM insists the project is viable. Therefore, following unsuccessful negotiations facilitated by a Ninth Circuit court mediator, ONDA filed its opening appeal

brief in November.

ONDA does not take this case lightly. We have worked hard to support responsible renewable energy projects throughout Oregon's high desert; in fact, ONDA's statewide wind report analysis (ONDA.org/Energy) has become a model used by other organizations and government agencies across the West. While recognizing the nation's need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, ONDA has been clear since the project was proposed eight years ago that the Echanis site and 46-mile transmission line are the antithesis of responsible renewable energy development. Simply put, the project puts imperiled wildlife populations at risk and would open one of America's great wild landscapes to industrial development.



[www.facebook.com/  
OregonNaturalDesertAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/OregonNaturalDesertAssociation)  
[www.flickr.com/  
photos/oregonnaturaldesert](http://www.flickr.com/photos/oregonnaturaldesert)  
[www.youtube.com/  
OregonDeserts](http://www.youtube.com/OregonDeserts)

# OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUE TO GROW FOR VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

By Jefferson Jacobs  
Stewardship Coordinator

Here at ONDA we are always excited as a new field season begins. But this season, we're particularly happy about some new developments for ONDA volunteers, from great twists on our guided restoration trips to a brand new program for helping the high desert.

As usual, we have a selection of familiar volunteer group trips, including fence pulls, riparian plantings and sage-grouse lek monitoring (see box). Registration is underway for these trips, and space on some trips remains available. This year, however, these old favorites include new collaborations and sources of funding that will allow our riparian restoration efforts to operate on a much larger scale than in the past, with unprecedented impact to the habitat. 2015 will also be our second year of offering educational day-hikes in central Oregon, which were a smash-hit in 2014.

An additional enhancement this year is the creation of the Independent Stewardship Program. This entirely new program will create opportunities to complete much more stewardship work in Oregon's high desert.

The idea behind the program is to enable volunteers to become Independent Stewards, performing work in the high desert on their own.

Right now while enjoying the high desert, ONDA volunteers cover an amazing amount of ground and get to some remote locations. Let's say, however, while out there you see something you think may be of note, whether it's an old fence that could be pulled out, a wonderful untouched area of native habitat, or cows or vehicles where they might not belong.

With the Independent Stewardship Program, you will be trained to use technology on smart phones that will give you



ONDA volunteers count Greater sage-grouse as the sun rises on a 2014 lek monitoring trip at the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. Photo © Michelle Alvarado

## ONDA FIELD TRIPS 2015

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Hart Mountain Sage-Grouse Lek Monitoring	March 19-22
Steens Mountain Wildfire and Road Rehab	April 2-5
Annual General Meeting	April 17-19
Owyhee Wild & Scenic River Float	April 25-30
Owyhee Canyonlands Route Monitoring	May 7-10
Owyhee Honeycombs WSA Boat Trip	May 13-17
Geologizing in the Whychus-Deschutes Canyons	May 30
Natural History Walk in the Badlands	June 5
Tree Planting on South Fork Crooked River	June 5-7
Silvies Valley Ranch Riparian Restoration	June 19-21
Pine Creek Conservation Area Barbed Wire Rodeo	June 25-28
Wet Meadow Restoration, Hart Mountain	July 9-12
Geology Rocks! In Whychus Creek	Aug. 1
Owyhee Canyonlands Monitoring Trip	Sept. 10-13
Fence Pull at Pine Creek Conservation Area	Sept. 17-20
Fence Mapping, Cottonwood Canyon State Park	Sept. 24-27
Clarno Nursery Willow Harvest	Oct. 3
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Fence Repair	Oct. 8-11
Restoration Project on South Fork Crooked River	Oct. 22-25

View the trip list and descriptions and register at:

[ONDA.org/VolunteerTrips2015](http://ONDA.org/VolunteerTrips2015)

the tools to track locations in wilderness study areas, gather data and take photos to document observations. When you are out there these tools will give you exactly what you need to

give your adventures an additional purpose. This information gets shared back with the staff at ONDA automatically once you get into cell or Wi-Fi range. And ONDA then shares the

information through our new formal collaborations with the BLM. Both ONDA and the BLM see this as a great way to work together – providing the BLM additional information it needs to manage the lands effectively, catching small issues before they grow into big issues and sharing what is already great about our public lands.

Our hope is that this program continues to grow every year as more members become involved and the technology is refined. To this end, we hired Sam Frank as a second wilderness stewardship coordinator to head up the project. If this new opportunity sounds interesting, contact Sam at [sam@onda.org](mailto:sam@onda.org) and learn more at [ONDA.org/Stewards](http://ONDA.org/Stewards). He is already gathering names of folks that would like to be involved! If you would like a hands-on introduction to what wilderness monitoring is like, sign up for one of our group trips conducting monitoring in the Owyhee this year. It is a great way to learn the ropes. Or maybe you are interested but don't have a smart phone? If you are passing through Bend on your way east you can talk to us about checking out a ruggedized iPad to use for navigation and data collection.

Eastern Oregon is big and amazing and we love it. The challenges and rewards are ever-changing, but as we and our supporters grow and develop new skills, we are able to work together to find new and better ways to protect, defend and restore these amazing places for generations to come. Join us in these efforts today.

### A new opportunity

Learn more about ONDA's Independent Stewardship Program:

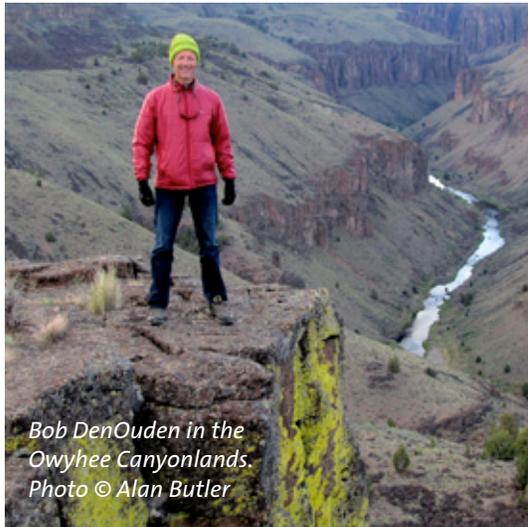
[ONDA.org/Stewards](http://ONDA.org/Stewards)

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**Bob DenOuden** of Eugene joined ONDA in 2006. He has since become a stalwart supporter, particularly of the Owyhee Canyonlands campaign.

### **Why did you first get involved with ONDA?**

Several years ago, a friend of mine in Eugene would return from weekend trips with ONDA to the high desert with stories of fence removal projects or wilderness character surveys deep within some of the most intriguing parts of Oregon. This always left me very curious about the organization. I finally decided it was time to check it out myself. I attended the Annual Meeting, where I learned more about ONDA while having a great time. In subsequent years I brought my family, and it became a favorite tradition of ours. I really love the combination of wilderness advocacy, hands-on restoration projects and the community of Oregon high desert aficionados that ONDA provides. While I contribute to numerous environmental organizations, with ONDA, I feel a much deeper sense of belonging.



Bob DenOuden in the Owyhee Canyonlands.  
Photo © Alan Butler

### **What's your favorite place in Oregon's high desert?**

That's a hard question to answer because my list is long, but I love the Owyhee Canyonlands because it is vast and wild, allowing for a true wilderness experience. I am also enamored with Mickey Basin; spend some time walking across the playa and you'll see why. However, I'd have to say that my favorite place in Oregon's high desert is the one I have yet to discover. On a rainy day in Eugene, I love nothing more than to pull out a stack of maps, or fire up the GIS, and search out intriguing places I have never visited. Inevitably, this leads to the planning of a trip into the desert, which helps me get through the Willamette Valley winter. There is a lifetime of exploration waiting.

### **What would you say to existing and future supporters about ONDA's community?**

It has been one of my greatest pleasures to watch my son, William, grow up to become a high desert lover like me. I credit much of this to ONDA, and his experiences at the group's Annual Meetings. These events give him the opportunity to make friends from all over and the rare freedom to roam and explore a really cool place. Our family has built our own community within ONDA, and we always look forward to the events. Another aspect about ONDA that I appreciate is it is simply a positive, fun organization. While it is easy to become distraught at the state of the environment, my involvement with ONDA always leaves me feeling better.

### **What would you like to see ONDA accomplish in the year ahead? Five years from now?**

The highest priority for me would be to see a large portion of the Owyhee Canyonlands receive some sort of protection, preferably as wilderness. A protected area of this scale, particularly in an area as spectacular as the Owyhee, would instantly become an iconic bookend to Oregon's other scenic treasures. A conservation act of this magnitude would be a tremendous gift for future generations.

*Are you a proud, dynamic member like Bob? Support ONDA's mission and grow our community with a gift membership to a friend or loved one. [ONDA.org/donate](http://ONDA.org/donate)*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Jeremy Austin



Jeremy Austin has joined ONDA as our new Oregon Desert Trail coordinator. He is a native Oregonian with a

degree in wildlife biology and a background in fieldwork, including with ONDA at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, where he surveyed for invasive plants and aspen for two summers. He is excited to continue exploring eastern Oregon and to connect people to this amazing landscape. Contact him at [Jeremy@onda.org](mailto:Jeremy@onda.org).

### Nick Dobric



After two years with ONDA as Greater Hart-Sheldon Region program manager, Nick Dobric depart-

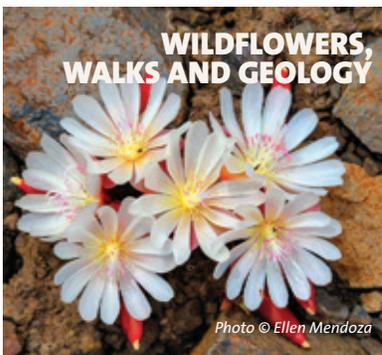
ed in February to return to Wyoming. His sharp eye for wildlife in the field and his dedication to his work in the office will be missed. We wish you the best, Nick!

### Call for Photos: Wild Desert Calendar

Calling all photographers: Use your creativity and talent to support conservation! ONDA invites you to submit your best shots of Oregon's high desert for consideration for our iconic Wild Desert Calendar. Find tips for getting a great photo and submission guidelines online:

[ONDA.org/2016CallForPhotos](http://ONDA.org/2016CallForPhotos)

## HIGH DESERT LECTURES ONDA's new High Desert Lecture Series is now in full swing! Upcoming events include:



### WILDFLOWERS, WALKS AND GEOLOGY

Photo © Ellen Mendoza

With **Stu Garrett**. A co-founder of a chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon, Stu will share the wonders of high desert blooms just in time for spring. Tuesday, April 7, 7 p.m. Register at [wildflowersandgeology.eventbrite.com](http://wildflowersandgeology.eventbrite.com)



### OWYHEE WONDERS

Photo © Dave Jensen

With **Corie Harlan**. Hot springs, petroglyphs, rugged canyons ... the Owyhee Canyonlands has it all. Learn more about exploring and protecting this area from an ONDA expert. Thursday, May 14, 7 p.m. See [ONDA.org/events](http://ONDA.org/events)



Oregon Natural Desert Association  
50 SW Bond Street, Suite #4  
Bend, Oregon 97702

## ONDA DESERT OUTING: BEATYS BUTTE

**Beatys Butte is deep in the Oregon outback** between the Hart Mountain and Sheldon national wildlife refuges and guarantees solitude among the sagebrush. The region is critical habitat for Greater sage-grouse, pronghorn antelope and numerous other species. A recent study using GPS-enabled tracking collars showed pronghorn from both refuges use the Beatys area for winter range and migration corridors. ONDA and others encourage sound land management in the region to ensure it remains a wildlife stronghold.



Beatys Butte hikers. Photo © Nick Dobric

CLOSEST TOWN	Lakeview
DRIVE TIME	1.5 hours from Lakeview
WHEN	Year-round depending on road conditions
HIKE	Beatys Butte Summit via SE ridge
DISTANCE	3 miles round trip, 1,600 foot elevation gain
DIFFICULTY	Difficult, cross-country travel over steep, rocky terrain

### DRIVING DIRECTIONS FROM LAKEVIEW

#### Note: high-clearance vehicle required

- From Lakeview, head north on Highway 395 for a few miles and take Highway 140 east.
- Twenty-six miles east of Adel, watch for the Beatys Butte Road (Road 6176) that heads north/left before Highway 140 begins to climb to the south up what is called Doherty Slide. The road is gravel and in relatively good condition for the next 21 miles or so.
- Take a right onto the two-track Road 6196 (West Gulch Road). Drive up this road for approximately 5 miles until it opens up and intersects with other roads, creating a triangle. This spot is a good access point to climb both Beatys and Mahogany buttes, however they can both be summited from any direction.
- Note: These roads aren't all visible on the Oregon Road and Recreation Atlas so more detailed maps are required, such as the Adel BLM 100k map.

### BEATYS BUTTE HIKE

- The summit and route are fully visible from the road pull-off.
- Hike cross-country heading northwest along the ridge, picking your way through sagebrush and rocky terrain.
- Keep your eye out for pronghorn, mule deer, sage-grouse, raptors and wild horses.
- Once you reach the summit, you will enjoy some of the most expansive views in southeastern Oregon.
- Another hike option starting from the same location is Mahogany Butte to the south, which gets its name from the stand of mahogany trees on its summit.