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OREGON AFIELD
Grousing & sniping, and the facts on public vs. private land big game harvest

BOW & BLACKPOWDER
When a blackpowder cat crosses your path... Plus a deer & elk combo bow hunt

GAME BIRD FORECAST
Oregon's game bird outlook is a mix of factors from weather to wildfire

ROOSY-COLORED MEMORIES
From joy & jubilation to failure & frustration, we keep coming back

MULEY HIDES
Here are the four places mule deer bed to give Oregon rifle hunters the slip during the season

BLACKTAILS OR BUST
Will you be one of the 25% who will bag a buck this fall, or the 75% who will not?

TROY RODAKOWSKI

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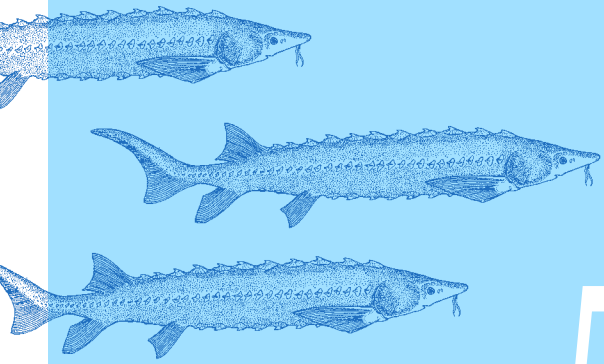
Cover: *Tillamook blacktail photographed by Ryan Hoeft*



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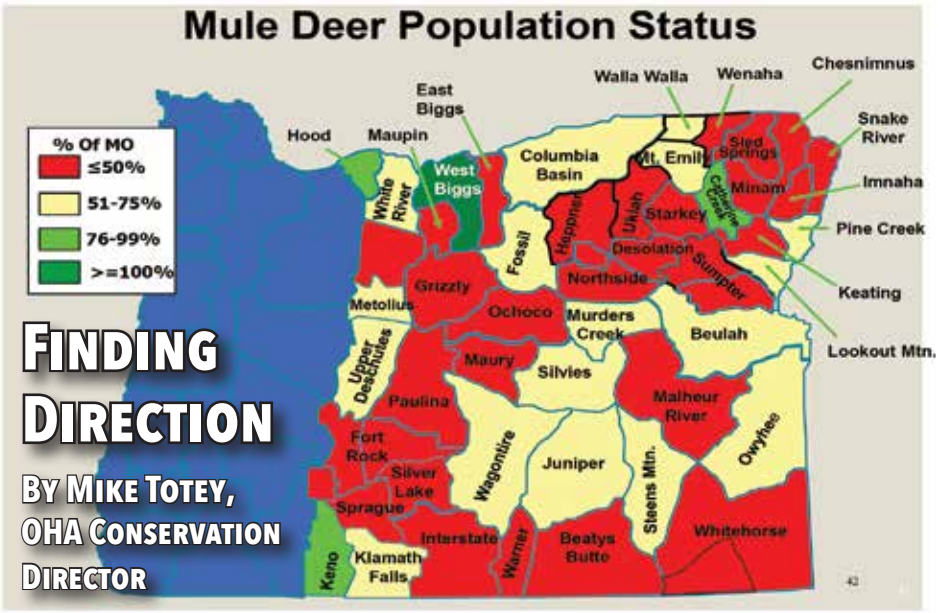

There's not always a win-win solution

OHA is an advocate for wildlife and the habitat it needs. We always want to have our cake, and eat it, too, but in the real world, that's often difficult. Oregon has a long and proud history of communities and livelihoods grounded in the use of land and natural resources, including timber harvesting, farming and ranching. Oregon's strong legacy of conservation and protection of resources, including wildlife, for the benefit of future generations is reflected in the state's land use protections. When we can't protect the land or habitat, we try to minimize impacts or do mitigation work in some way. ODFW's habitat mitigation plan is frequently relied on in these situations. But even this represents a compromise for wildlife.

At the forefront of this are mule deer. Those who are fans of mule deer, whether you're a hunter or not, have been tracking the decline of mule deer populations across the West, including Oregon. While there are multiple factors causing this decline, some of those factors are directly tied to habitat degradation and loss. The situation may be getting worse. Recent planning and decision-making processes ranging from the likely expansion of the BLM Western Solar Plan, to legislation to expedite solar farms, are all factors that can and will affect mule deer populations, and not in a good way.

Oregon has clean energy mandates that we must meet, and the clock is ticking. This creates pressure to expand renewable energy production in our state. Companies trying to invest in and develop these facilities are working through everything from land use planning, to leasing agreements, to finding investors for capital. They are faced with massive costs and complicated processes. With our current limits on energy transmission lines and capacity, they are confined to areas where that infrastructure exists and is available. All of this while trying to supply "clean energy" at a cost to customers that is relatively close to the rate that currently exists. How do you reduce costs for these developments? Streamline or curtail permitting processes. Allow development in the cheapest locations. Create a working environment with less competition between energy development companies (supply and demand).

Legislators, county officials, and agency decision makers are working to do this, because we want clean, renewable energy. But at what cost? Is it really "clean energy" if there are significant and permanent losses of critical habitat?

In many of these situations, there is little opportunity for a "win – win" solution. This results in tradeoffs. Tradeoffs need clear communication. At least so those making the choices (county planners, landowners, developers, agencies, elected officials) understand the tradeoffs and more importantly the impacts that come from their decisions. With good communication we can at least try to avoid a scenario where someone realizes, after the fact, the consequences of their decision. In the end, we need to realize that in some cases, we are really trading deer for development.

OREGON HUNTER

OHA State Office:
(541) 772-7313 oha@oregonhunters.org
Editor & State Coordinator
Duane Dungannon DD@oregonhunters.org
Editorial Assistants
Michelle Duer, Bret Moore
State Officers
President: Steve Hagan (503) 551-8645
Vice President: Cindy Rooney (541) 430-4722
Secretary: Renee Walasavage (541) 705-5762
Treasurer: Mike Vallery (503) 538-8232
OHA Board of Directors
Chair: Fred Walasavage (541) 296-6124
Northwest: John Putman (503) 842-7733
Northwest: Eric Strand (503) 750-8271
Midwest: Paul Donheffner (503) 399-1993
Southwest: Bob Webber (541) 332-0886
Southwest: Kelly Forney (541) 580-7056
Northeast: Jim Akenson (541) 398-2636
Southeast: Craig Foster (541) 219-9202
Southeast: Mary Jo Hedrick (541) 576-4006
Youth Liaison: Garrett Clark (971) 777-0066
Policy Director
Amy Patrick (503) 949-9785
Field Director
Bryan Cook (971) 270-7035
Conservation Director
Mike Totey (541) 974-4084
Conservation Coordinator
Tyler Dungannon (541) 778-1976

OHA

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WORK SHARP OREGON HUNTING QUIZ

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1. Which is a key fall stop for snow geese?
a) Waldo Lake c) Siltcoos Lake
b) Wallowa Lake d) Summer Lake

2. Spruce grouse inhabit what area of Oregon?
a) northwest c) northeast
b) southwest d) southeast

3. Which Canada goose is called a honker?
a) Aleutian c) cackling
b) western d) all of the above

4. Which predator was found to kill the most whitetail fawns at the North Bank Habitat Area in Douglas County?
a) bear c) cougar
b) bobcat d) coyote

5. Which puddle duck is most commonly taken at Tillamook Bay?
a) wigeon c) teal
b) pintail d) gadwall

6. Which westside unit is mostly private land?
a) Alsea c) Rogue
b) Applegate d) Wilson

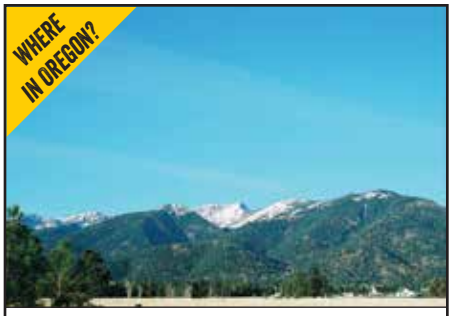
7. Which eastside unit is mostly public land?
a) Sumpter c) Silver Lake
b) Ukiah d) Walla Walla

8. Which wildlife area is closed to deer hunting?
a) E.E. Wilson c) Denman
b) Fern Ridge d) Klamath

9. The head of which animal must be checked in after harvest?
a) bighorn c) mountain goat
b) bear d) all of the above

10. You're most likely to see dusky Canada geese in which part of the state?
a) Klamath Basin c) Willamette Valley
b) south coast d) Columbia Basin

ANSWERS: 1-d; 2-c; 3-b; 4-b; 5-a; 6-a; 7-c; 8-d; 9-b; 10-c.



WHERE IN OREGON
WAS THIS PHOTO TAKEN?

Identify these aptly named mountains, be drawn from all correct entries, and win a Work Sharp Original Knife and Tool Sharpener! Send your guess to Oregon Hunting Quiz, OHA, P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501, or submit your guess at oregonhunters.org, where a larger version of the photo appears. One entry per OHA member.

ENTRY DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:

Karl Adams, Hermiston

Karl's name was drawn from among the OHA members who identified the lower Deschutes River.

OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

SEPT 1
Openers for forest grouse, mourning dove, W. Oregon quail; Bow tag sale deadline

SEPT 2
General bow season opens

SEPT 16-17
OHA Pioneer Chapter Sight-In Days, Canby Rod & Gun Club, 503-710-1233

SEPT 23-24
OHA Pioneer Chapter Sight-In Days, Canby Rod & Gun Club, 503-710-1233

OCT 1
General bow season ends

OCT 6
Deadline to buy tags for any legal weapon deer, bear & cougar

OCT 7
Deer season opens for any legal weapon

OCT 14
Openers for chukar, pheasant, E. Oregon quail, Hungarian partridge and fall turkey

OCT 15
Fox season opens

OCT 21
OHA Klamath Chapter Youth Chukar hunt, 541-643-7077; Bend Chapter Youth Bird Hunt, 541-480-7323; OHA Lake County duck and Goose boxes, 541-417-1750

OCT 22
OHA Klamath Chapter Youth Chukar Hunt, 541-643-7077

OCT 28
OHA Lake County guzzler project 541-417-2983

NOV 1
Rocky Mountain Elk 1st season opens

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Grousing & Sniping

The Grouse is Always Greener on the Other Side of the Calapooyas

GARY LEWIS OUTDOORS

Author Gary Lewis enjoys the moment after taking a ruffed grouse he surprised on the edge of a grown-over two-track.

In early December, Troy Rodakowski and I needed one more excuse to go a-hunting, having exhausted all of our other reasons. Today it was ruffed grouse and chanterelles. Just when we thought we were going to get within range of some mature chanterelles, they crossed over the fence onto private land.

Up on a logging road we turned loose the dogs, my pudelpointer Liesl, and Porter, Troy's German shorthair.

On a long straight stretch of gravel, the dogs crept and stopped and lunged and scrambled up vertical banks and mewled and moaned. It could only mean one thing: mountain quail. And there was nothing to do but put the dogs back in the truck and leave. A mountain quail is like a Sasquatch. You're either going to see him or you're not. Mostly not.

You know how when we hunt deer all quiet and start to think about bears, grouse surprise us, exploding out beneath our feet.

This time we surprised the grouse, just out of a patch of madrone, on a trail above a swamp. Liesl made the retrieve and appeared quite satisfied with an easy victory after the close call with the mountain quail.

Sept. 1 to Jan. 31 marks the season for ruffed and blue grouse. With a daily limit of three of each species, a hunter is probably not going to shoot a limit, but it's worth trying.

In Coos County, a good place to start is somewhere south or north of Remote, betwixt Bancroft and Bone Mountain, or between Sitkum and Sugarloaf.

Douglas County is also a good bet for ruffeds and blues, from the Calapooya Divide over to Elephant Mountain. Look for ruffeds in the canyons and blues on the ridge tops.

For more about grouse hunting in Oregon, visit https://myodfw.com/game-bird-hunting/species/grouse

Be ready for anything. You could surprise a covey of mountain quail back from a raid. Or even a herd of chanterelles out in the open. —*Gary Lewis*

Hunting Oregon's Own Version of the Bogsucker

GARY LEWIS OUTDOORS

Snipe are almost forgotten here in the West. It's a sporting bird in its own right. But make sure it's a snipe and not a protected shorebird.

On the east coast, legions of outdoor scribes wax poetic about the glories of the timberdoodle, the hokumpoke, the night partridge – the American woodcock.

Yah. We don't have woodcock. We got snipe. Wilson's snipe (*scolopax gallinago delicata*) to be exact, which is almost as big as a woodcock and sporting enough in its own right. I would be willing to bet this is the first snipe hunting article you have ever seen. Chances are you didn't even think snipe was a thing. That's because the word snipe can be used as both noun and verb and refers to lots of things like used cigarettes. And the term snipe hunt is used to describe a type of prank wherein the novice hunter holds the bag and makes snipe sounds while another hunter goes off into the swamp to beat the snipe to them.

Let's talk real snipe hunting. The Oregon bogsucker is robin-sized and heavier-bodied than a killdeer, with buff and brown stripes and a long bill. Snipe make a living probing muddy ground and inhabit edges of muddy ponds, damp fields and low vegetation. We find them most often on a waterfowl hunt when a snipe shoot breaks out.

Oregon's rules for Wilson's snipe vary, but seasons are long with an October start in Zone 2 and a November start in Zone 1, wrapping up in late January and late February. Daily limit is 8.

Don't get caught holding the bag. It's a thrill to flush a bird in the marsh and divine the zigs and zags for a good shot. The best way to be ready for snipe is to carry No. 7 steel.

For more about snipe hunting, visit https://myodfw.com/articles/how-snipe-hunt-oregon

I don't always hunt ducks, but when I do, I am really looking for snipe.

—*Gary Lewis*

Public vs. Private Oregon big game harvest revealed

ROGUE VALLEY/RANDY SHIPLEY

OHA believes the public/private harvest statistics will benefit both hunters and wildlife managers.

Public versus private harvest data that OHA has sought for years is finally available. Results are not what we've all heard (i.e., 80% of the harvest comes from 20% of the hunters on private land).

OHA wanted the question added to harvest surveys to give hunters and wildlife managers a better idea where the animals in the units are being taken, and perhaps demonstrate the importance of private land access programs and efforts to redistribute elk from private to public lands.

Find public and private harvest links under big game stats on MyODFW.com.

A significant percentage of deer and elk taken last year were on public land or "private land with public access." This varies by hunt and hunt unit. The elk harvest was, perhaps, more private, but not troublesome.

Looking for a second-choice elk hunt? While the harvest numbers show the late Walla Walla spike hunt produced twice the number of animals as the early hunt, this new information will show you that 73% of the early season elk were taken on public, while only 15% were taken on public in the late hunt. That's good to know.

Looking at leftover elk tags? Know that in 2022 all of the elk taken in the Sprague Unit were taken on public land, while not a single elk was reported tagged on public land in the Klamath Falls Unit. Ouch.

What we still don't know are the success rates for public and private. We may know there were 100 tags and overall success was 45%, and we know 1/3 of the critters (15) were taken on public and 2/3 (30) on private, but we don't know if twice as many hunted on private and both therefore enjoyed 45% success, or if 40 hunters went 75% on private land, while 60 toiled to take half as many on public land for 25%.

Units with high percentages of public land recorded high public land harvest. Go figure. That's anywhere there's green or yellow on the map. Whitehorse is 90% public. Trout Creek harvest was 89% public, E. Whitehorse was 74% and NE Whitehorse muzzy was 100%. Murderers Creek showed 454 bucks taken, 87% on public.

Fossil is 16% public. Buck hunters took 70% on private land during the first period in October, but the opposite (67% public) during the second (Nov-Dec). Both are "red-letter" hunts.

Klamath Falls is 35% public. Private land deer kill was upper 50s-60s, but public land deer harvest was upper 30s-40s. For elk, Tioga (35% public) recorded 327 elk harvested during five hunts with relatively even public/private split. Even the sixth hunt (Tioga Private) reported 18% publicly accessible harvest. Trask is 42% public. There are eight controlled cow hunts with a healthy mix of public/private harvest, except for Central Trask No. 2 where all 14 elk were harvested on public.

There were five hunts with over 200 elk harvested. Saddle Mountain. No. 1 reported 68% bull harvest on publicly accessible land. Columbia Plateau is a red-letter, cow/either-sex hunt that recorded 309 elk harvested on 88% private lands.

Hunters took 213 bulls during Heppner Bow No. 2 with 82% on public. Eagle Cap Zone showed 201 bulls, 82% public.

All encouraging in terms of opportunity, but also hunter distribution. Not everyone was crammed on available public lands. —*JASON HALEY*

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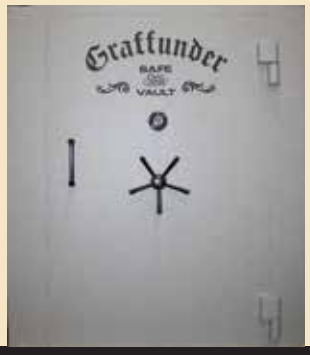

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Federal court upholds Measure 114, more challenges pending

A federal court ruled in July that gun control Measure 114′s prohibition on the sale or manufacture of "large-capacity" magazines and requirements to take a class that does not exist and pay for a permit to purchase guns are constitutional.

U.S. District Judge Karin J. Immergut determined that the Second Amendment does not protect firearm magazines that hold more than 10 rounds.

Meanwhile, Measure 114 remains on hold.

The U.S. District Court for Portland heard final closing arguments on the several lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of Measure 114 on June 9. OHA filed an Amicus brief in support of overturning 114. The State of Oregon has spent $2 million of your state taxes hiring private lawyers to defend this measure.

Paul Donheffner, OHA's Legislative Committee Chair, attended the court session and reported that the legal team fighting for us did an outstanding job. Matt Rowen, the attorney who wrapped up the plaintiffs' case, gave a very eloquent and persuasive argument.

While this decision is not what OHA would have preferred, this outcome was not unexpected and only leads to the next step of an appeal at the 9th circuit court.

This ruling does not have an impact on the current court ruling from Harney County that has stayed Measure 114 and its components. That case is expected to be heard in September.

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Legislative session ends with major victories for sportsmen

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director
Amy@oregonhunters.org

The 2023 Legislative session ended on June 25, and while unsuccessful in securing a ballot referendum to constitutionally protect the right to fish, hunt, harvest, and gather, sportsmen scored several major victories.

Commission Restructure Passes

HB 3086, the bill to restructure the map by which ODFW Commissioners are selected, passed with a unanimous vote in the House and a nearly unanimous Senate vote. After working all session to keep this bill alive, the passage of this bill is notable and should be considered a substantial milestone for the bill supporters.

The Commission was previously aligned to congressional districts, plus two at-large positions, one eastside and one westside. The new statute bases all positions in the river basin regions with two commissioners each from the Northwest and West Central Regions, and one commissioner each from the Southwest, North Central and Eastern Regions. This provides greater representation to the eastern portion of the state and ensures we will no longer have three or more commissioners in the Portland area.

The bill had two public hearings in which sportsmen and women around the state submitted more than 1,000 pieces of written testimony in support, and Howl For Wildlife's action alert garnered more than 3,000 interactions and generated nearly 51,000 individual emails to legislators over the course of the session.

OHA partnered with other sportsmen's organizations, natural resource organizations, and livestock producers to build a united front of stakeholders supporting the bill. A huge factor in its passage were the six federally recognized Tribes in support.

The river basin map provides better geographic representation on the ODFW Commission.

OHA's bill for new funding for in-state testing for chronic wasting disease was not included in the final budget bill of the session, but there were other financial wins for wildlife and rural Oregonians. In addition to the $5 million appropriated for further investments in wildlife crossings, the Minam River Wildlife Area Acquisition Phase II funding was approved, and the Mule Deer Coordinator position was funded in a permanent status.

OHA Helps Defeat Bad Bills

Defeating a bad bill is a victory in itself. From further restrictions on hunting with hounds and criminalizing fur sales, to restrictions of managing predatory animals, the engagement of sportsmen and women around the state was instrumental in defeating or modifying five bills that would have had detrimental outcomes.

The two major gun bills were negotiated when Senate Republicans returned to the Capitol. HB 2005, which would have restricted so-called "ghost guns," instituted a restriction on firearms ownership and possession, and restricted concealed carry abilities, was reduced to restrictions on homemade firearms. SB 348, which would have instituted all provisions of Measure 114, was effectively shelved.

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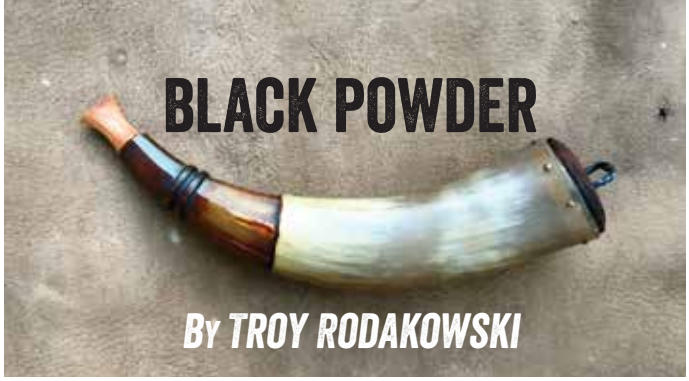

By TROY RODAKOWSKI

When a Black Powder Cat Crosses Your Path

I have always purchased a cougar tag just in case I had the opportunity to harvest a big cat while hunting other game. I buy my tag in early spring prior to turkey season, because we hunt birds in areas with high lion numbers, and it's not uncommon to see tracks or even a glimpse of a cat. There have been a couple occasions during late spring and summer when we have tried calling cats, but without any luck. Now was my first chance in more than 30 years in the outdoors, and I'd have to make my shot count because I was hunting with my muzzleloader for deer.

A mountain lion was looking for that pretty little doe I was pretending to be.

I was estrus bleating and rattling. It was shortly after 7 a.m. when I caught some movement from the corner of my eye. I slowly turned my head but didn't immediately recognize what my eyes were seeing. Was it a goat or cow or maybe a stray sheep? From time to time ranchers run livestock in the area, so my brain wasn't registering what my eyes were actually seeing. I took a triple-take as I eased the safety of my muzzleloader into firing position. A mountain lion was looking for that pretty little doe I was pretending to be. The cat was nearly 40 yards away and did not know I was there. It was quiet, walking ever so slowly through the frosty grass.

There were a couple of small oak trees between us, and I made up my mind that when the lion went behind them, I'd raise my gun and fire when it reappeared. I could feel my heart pounding, but I was surprisingly calm and steady. I took a deep breath, and gently squeezed the trigger. Click! I couldn't believe it. The lion perked up and took a good look at me sitting up against that large boulder. You know, one of those, "What the heck is that?" kind of looks. Now was the time for the big cat to run off into the freezing fog and disappear forever. I fiddled with my safety, wondering why my cap didn't snap to ignite the powder charge in my gun. In those few seconds the lion did not retreat but went into full stalk mode and began to come at me. "Hurry up, I'm now the one being hunted here," I thought as I frantically threw my safety back and forth quickly and raised my rifle again for another try. The approaching lion had moved from 40 yards to about 25 in just a few seconds. I squeezed the trigger again and – click!

I was about out of options and the lion was now at about only 20 paces. I re-racked the bolt on the Knight Disc Series .50-caliber muzzleloader, threw the safety forward, took a deep breath, leveled the buckhorn and squeezed.

The cat weighed in at over 100 pounds. The stealthy animal was looking for a fresh venison dinner when it happened to cross the author's path.

Boom! Wheeew, finally we had ignition, as I let out a huge sigh.

The smell of fresh burnt black powder hung in the cold 20-degree November air for what seemed like a very long time before dispersing into the hillside. I saw the flick of a tail and no more as the hungry animal lay motionless in the frosty grass. I began to pour powder down my barrel and realized I wasn't even shaking, which surprised me as I reloaded my rifle. For years I had envisioned harvesting a cat, but never had I imagined that it would turn out quite like this.

As I waited for Dad to hike back up the ridge to my location, I stood over the lion in amazement. The teeth and claws were sharp and made for tearing at flesh. I was very glad that I didn't have to find that out first hand.

The mature female had a magnificent coat without any flaws, and I was a blessed man to have had the experience as well as the opportunity. I honestly don't think Dad believed me until he walked up the hill and saw the great cat lying on the frosty ground. His eyes got big and he said, "You weren't kidding! I can't believe it!"

ODFW lists the state's cougar population at around 7,000. Population densities are highest throughout the Blue Mountains in the northeastern part of the state and in the southwestern Cascade Mountains. Cougar season runs year-long until zone harvest quotas are met.

Be sure to have your cougar tag in pocket this fall, so when your opportunity arises, you don't let the cat out of the bag.

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By SCOTT HAUGEN

Bowhunting Deer & Elk as a Combo

With September comes the opportunity to arrow a deer and an elk on the same hunt. Doing so comes down to understanding animal behavior, food sources, water availability, and being in the right place.

In September, elk are rutting. Find herds of cows, and bulls won't be far. As the month progresses, the power of the rut increases. You'll find big bulls with harems and younger bulls on the fringes, as well as traveling between cow herds, just hoping for a chance to breed. Calling offers a solid chance here, usually early and later in the day.

In September, deer are concentrating on feeding. Early in the month – soon after shedding their velvet – bucks will still follow their summer routine of feeding in certain places and bedding at specific times. However, as the month progresses, the trails mature bucks travel often change, as do their times of movement. This is because soon after velvet is stripped, testosterone levels begin to rise, and bucks actually transform into a pre-rut condition.

To arrow an elk and a deer in September, learn the habits and habitats they share in common.

Hunting trails early in the season is effective, with spot-and-stalk being productive, too.

The food elk and deer eat greatly varies across the state. Blacktails in the Coast Range travel very little, as a variety of food is concentrated. They also get much of the water they need in the food they eat. Blacktails at higher elevations in the Cascades, and mule deer throughout their range, can have food sources drying up in September. Because of this, these deer may have to move considerable distances to locate nutritious food.

You might be calling elk in the morning, sitting in a treestand in the afternoon, then hunting from a ground blind for deer in the evening.

Water could be lumped in with food when it comes to understanding deer and elk behavior this time of year. While deer can get a lot of moisture in their food, some will have to find water to drink from every day in regions where it's dry. This can change from season to season, even throughout the month, depending on moisture levels.

Dry regions, especially at higher elevations, find more deer routinely hitting water holes than places where moisture is readily available. Cascade blacktails will often travel to waterholes or creeks to drink. Coast Range and valley floor bucks have access to water in many forms, so are less predictable to hunt over water sources. Mule deer will regularly travel to drink in dry habitats this time of year. Both Roosevelt and Rocky Mountain elk require a lot of water due to their size. Many deer and elk will also seek minerals this time of year.

Knowing these behaviors, how do you fill a deer and elk tag on the same hunt? Obviously, you have to be in the right place. Scouting is the best way to achieve this. Look for animals, tracks, droppings, elk rubs, and trails both deer and elk are using. Setting out trail cameras is a great way to learn a lot, fast.

In dry habitats, hunting from treestands along trails and near waterholes provides a solid opportunity at killing a deer and an elk. Treestands offer a commanding view and get your scent off the ground. Be willing to sit all day, especially for elk, because as the rut intensifies, both cows and bulls move more and need more water. Elk and deer may come to a waterhole anytime on a hot September day.

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

Hunting over waterholes provides a solid opportunity to kill a deer and an elk.

Spotting and stalking both deer and elk is possible, but not easy in hot, dry conditions. If hunting in habitats and at elevations where moisture contents are high, especially early in the morning, this helps dampen your sounds. Hunting into high winds also helps mask your scent and movement.

When stalking elk, always check the wind, for their noses are powerful and will not be fooled. If an elk sees or hears you, you have a chance. If they smell you, it's over. If a deer sees or hears you, it's almost always game over, at least for the day.

Calling deer is possible this time of year. Doe and fawn bleats often attract concerned does, and bucks sometimes follow. Spotting and stalking deer is an option when they're bedded, or early and late in the day, when up feeding.

You might find yourself hunting multiple ways, like calling elk in the morning, sitting in a treestand during the middle of the day, then hunting from a ground blind for deer in the evening. Success comes down to knowing what the deer and elk are doing in the area you're hunting, and adapting your approach accordingly.

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EYE in the SKY

Oregon's 2023 Game Bird forecast is a mixed bag of factors from weather to wildfire.

By Jim Yuskavitch

Every upland game bird and waterfowl hunter knows the main force that affects hunting prospects from season to season — the weather. How harsh the previous winter was that affects overwinter survival, how cold and wet spring conditions were that can suppress the hatch, and how strong the spring green-up is that provides food for young birds. And for migrating waterfowl, the weather, as well – if nesting conditions were favorable in Oregon or up north, and when the winter storms come that drive the migrants south.

But there are other big-picture and long-term factors that play a key role in the health of Oregon's game bird populations and how upland bird and waterfowl hunting opportunities will fare over time. Ongoing harvest success rates, climate and weather patterns, and wildfire are just some of the factors to be considered. The following takes a look at these indicators, based on the most recent data provided to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to offer insights to the longer trends for Oregon's game bird populations and hunting success.

UPLAND BIRDS

Hunting success for a season is largely dependent on spring weather conditions, because most upland birds harvested were hatched that year. A cold, wet spring subjects young upland game bird broods to increased risk of hypothermia, while a spring just wet enough to produce a strong green-up will produce abundant food for the chicks, increasing their survival and growth rate. However, even after poor years, upland birds tend to bounce back quickly, and when hunting for a certain game bird species is poor, hunting pressure tends to drop, which also helps the population recover.

The U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service recorded Oregon rainfall in May and June – the peak upland bird nesting season – at a little below the historical median. Some southeast Oregon counties were an exception with rainfall above median. However, that may end up being good, as it could possibly break the long-standing drought that part of the state has been experiencing – at least temporarily. Earlier this spring, Hines-based ODFW wildlife biologist Lee Foster noted that the High Desert region was wetter than it has been in some time.

Some historical data prove interesting insights. Oregon upland game bird numbers hit a high in 2005, then began to drop in 2007, mostly due to drought, with valley quail and chukar taking the biggest hits. The following near-decade of drought along with a hard winter in 2016-17 knocked down populations even more. Hunter harvest of all upland game birds during that period dropped from around 650,000 to about 200,000 most recently.

Oregon's 2022-23 upland bird harvest increased from the five-year average – with a couple of exceptions.

According to the most recent ODFW data, the 2022-23 upland bird harvest increased from the five-year average – with a couple of exceptions. At 29,237, the ruffed grouse harvest for 2022-23 was down 7 percent from the five-year average of 31,363. The ringed-necked pheasant harvest was down 25 percent from the five-year average with just 9,773 birds harvested.

Once arguably Oregon's premier upland game bird, ring-necked pheasants have been the victim of human growth and development, especially in their former Willamette Valley stronghold, along with more efficient farming methods. Even in some of Oregon's remaining wild pheasant regions, such as the Vale-Nyssa area of Malheur County, local ODFW District Wildlife Biologist Phillip Milburn notes that modern farming practices that leave less edge habitat and less winter stubble are taking a toll on the birds. Currently, private pheasant preserves and the ODFW fee pheasant hunts that are held at Fern Ridge, Sauvie Island, Denman and E.E. Wilson wildlife areas offer long-tail hunters the best bet these days.

However, there are plenty of positive indicators for Oregon upland game bird long-term trends. Harvest of sooty grouse, mountain quail, valley quail, chukar and Hungarian partridge were all above the five-year average – some substantially. Mountain quail was 130 percent above the five-year average, 56 percent for valley quail, 21 percent for sooty grouse, 199 percent for Hungarian partridge and 92 percent for chukar. At 64,359, chukar was the most harvested bird during Oregon's 2022-23 season, followed by valley quail at 40,906. These were the two species hardest hit during the overall decline of Oregon upland birds beginning in 2008, perhaps indicating a slow but steady comeback. Wild turkey spring hunt tags were down by 39 percent but up 129 percent for the fall hunt. Total turkeys harvested for the spring 2022 and fall 2022-23 was 5,811.

Due to the sensitivity of the population, greater sage-grouse are monitored by ODFW and other government agencies more closely than other upland game birds. In 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that sage grouse were not warranted for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act because of the extensive conservation efforts across its range.

The most recent survey data shows that Oregon's sage-grouse spring breeding population has increased by nearly 10 percent to about 17,508. Their numbers are up by 6.3 percent in the Prineville BLM District, up 1.8 percent in the Burns District, up 36.1 percent in the Vale District, but down 9.5 percent in the Lakeview District. While the overall increase is good news, it is still the seventh lowest population level counted since 1980, and

Baker County/Duane Dungannon

Oregon's chukar harvest for last year was 92 percent above the five-year average, while Hungarian partridge was up nearly 200 percent.

well below the 1990 high of about 45,000.

For this reason, sage-grouse hunting is carefully controlled. The 2022 harvest was 370 birds. ODFW limits the harvest of sage-grouse to less than 5 percent of the fall population, which has no negative impact on their long-term numbers.

Wildfire

Increasing wildfires have become a fact of life in Oregon, and while very hot-burning fires that sterilize the soil can be highly detrimental to game birds, as some big High Desert fires have been for sage-grouse, they are a form of environmental disturbance that is beneficial over the long-term. Research has shown that, like deer and elk, game birds and other bird species also benefit from the grasses, shrubs and small trees that sprout after a wildfire, or a clearcut.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Doves & Band-Tailed Pigeons

To help estimate mourning dove populations, ODFW has been banding them since 2008, with 701 doves banded statewide last year. The total mourning dove population estimate by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Western Management Unit (California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and Utah) was 45,756,145 in August 2021 – up 43 percent from the previous year. Band-tail pigeon populations continue to hold steady over recent years.

Ducks & Geese

ODFW conducts resident breeding waterfowl surveys each year, concentrating on Oregon's major breeding habitat locations. These include the Willamette Valley, and wetland areas in the Malheur Lake/Burns area, Warner and Catlow valleys, the Klamath region and a few other eastern Oregon locations.

The most recently compiled data shows Oregon's breeding duck population up 32 percent at 344,558, with mallards, at 79,388, being the most common nesters in the state. The Oregon mallard breeding population is up 4 percent, but down 12 percent for the long-term average. The most recent recorded high for Oregon breeding ducks was in 1997 with a little over 350,000 estimated. So current numbers are approaching that former high. The lowest count was in 2011 at just a little over 150,000.

The 2021-22 mallard harvest was 135,613, a 9-percent increase over the five-year average. The next most harvested duck was American wigeon at 78,223, a 23-percent increase from the five-year average, followed by green-winged teal at 59,434, representing a 13-percent increase from the five-year average. The total duck harvest for that season is estimated at 385,101 – which includes migrants.

Northern pintails have continued to decline. The estimated northern pintail population for the entire continent is 1,782,800 – down 21 percent from 2019 and 54 percent from the long-term average. Pintail numbers have been declining since the 1950s. Much of this can be attributed to long-term drought conditions in the Canadian prairie provinces. Northern pintails

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Southern Oregon teal/Randy Shipley

Due to the late deer season opener, Oregon's duck season will open on Oct. 14 statewide.

are also known to move further north in search of better nesting habitat as drought conditions worsen, and some waterfowl managers have theorized that the birds could be moving out of established survey areas and may be undercounted. However, for now that's an unproven hypothesis.

For the 2023 breeding season, Ducks Unlimited's report for western Canada is favorable in most of British Columbia, with a near-average snowpack to replenish wetlands, while the Canadian prairie "pothole" provinces were a little dryer than normal. Most of Oregon's fall migrant ducks come from Alberta, British Columbia and Alaska. Alaska tends to be a regular strong provider of fall migrants.

Oregon has several species of geese, although only the Pacific western Canada goose species nests here. In 2021, Pacific western Canada goose numbers were 53,795, a 13-percent increase from 2019. Along the Pacific Flyway, the Pacific western goose population is estimated to be 347,000 – well above the 119,000 management objective. Based on surveys in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim delta, Pacific white-fronted geese breeding populations are at highs, while minima cackling geese are below management objectives. Dusky Canada geese surveyed in Alaska's Copper River Delta were also down, but close to the long-term average. Recent snow goose counts on Wrangell Island put their numbers at a record high of 706,068, also well above the objective of 200,000.

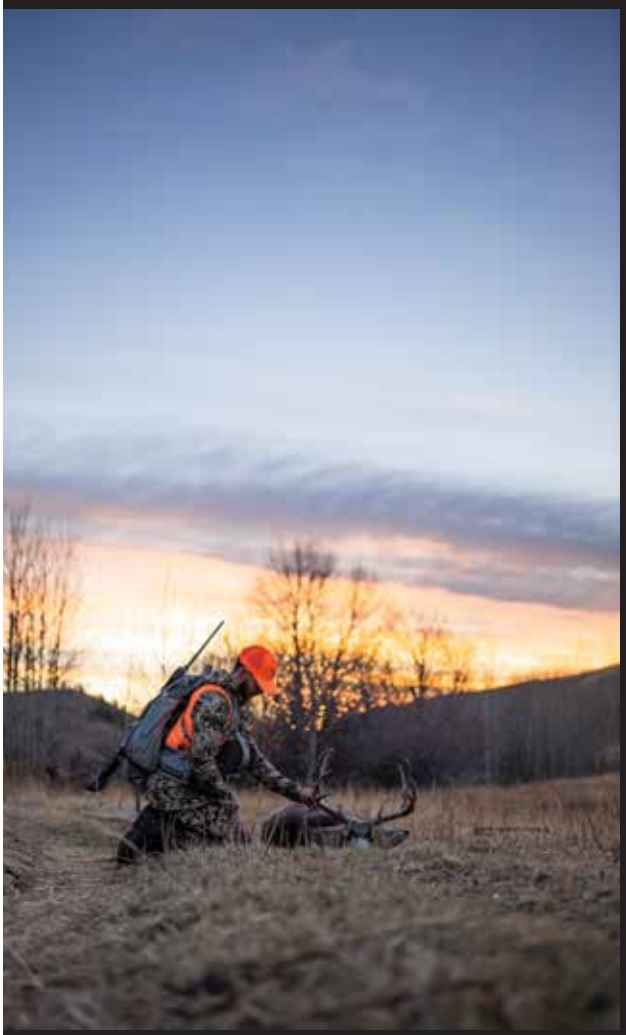
A total of 63,069 geese were harvested during the 2021-22 Oregon goose season, including 49,179 Canada geese, up 9 percent from the long-term average, and 7,438 snow geese, up 47 percent.

Duck Season Date Changes

The 2023-24 duck season will be affected by changes in the big game seasons. According to the ODFW big game management framework, the any-legal-weapon buck season begins on the first Saturday of October. It's a key season opening date because other season starts are coordinated to this opener. This year, when the first Saturday of October falls on the 7th, which is the latest possible opening date for this hunt under the framework, the opening day jumps a week later. Then the opener for this and most other big game seasons will be a day earlier each year until it is time to reset once again.

Federal migratory waterfowl hunting rules limit the duck hunting season to 107 days between the Saturday closest to Sept. 24, and ending by Jan. 31. Taking into account special hunt days for youth, veterans and military personnel, the general duck season will run for 104 days. Typically the Zone 2 duck season opens and closes a week earlier than the Zone 1 season to allow eastern Oregon hunters more freeze-free days of hunting. Because the duck opener is timed to the week after the buck deer opener, both Zone 1 and Zone 2 will open and close at the same time – Oct. 14 to Jan. 28 – to maintain the full allowable hunting days in each zone.

Check fire restrictions before heading afield. Prevent your campfires, smoking materials, equipment and off-road vehicles from sparking the next wildfire.



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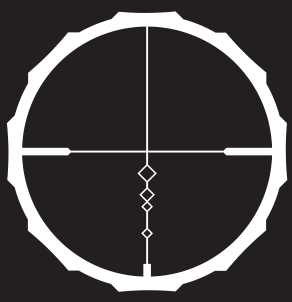

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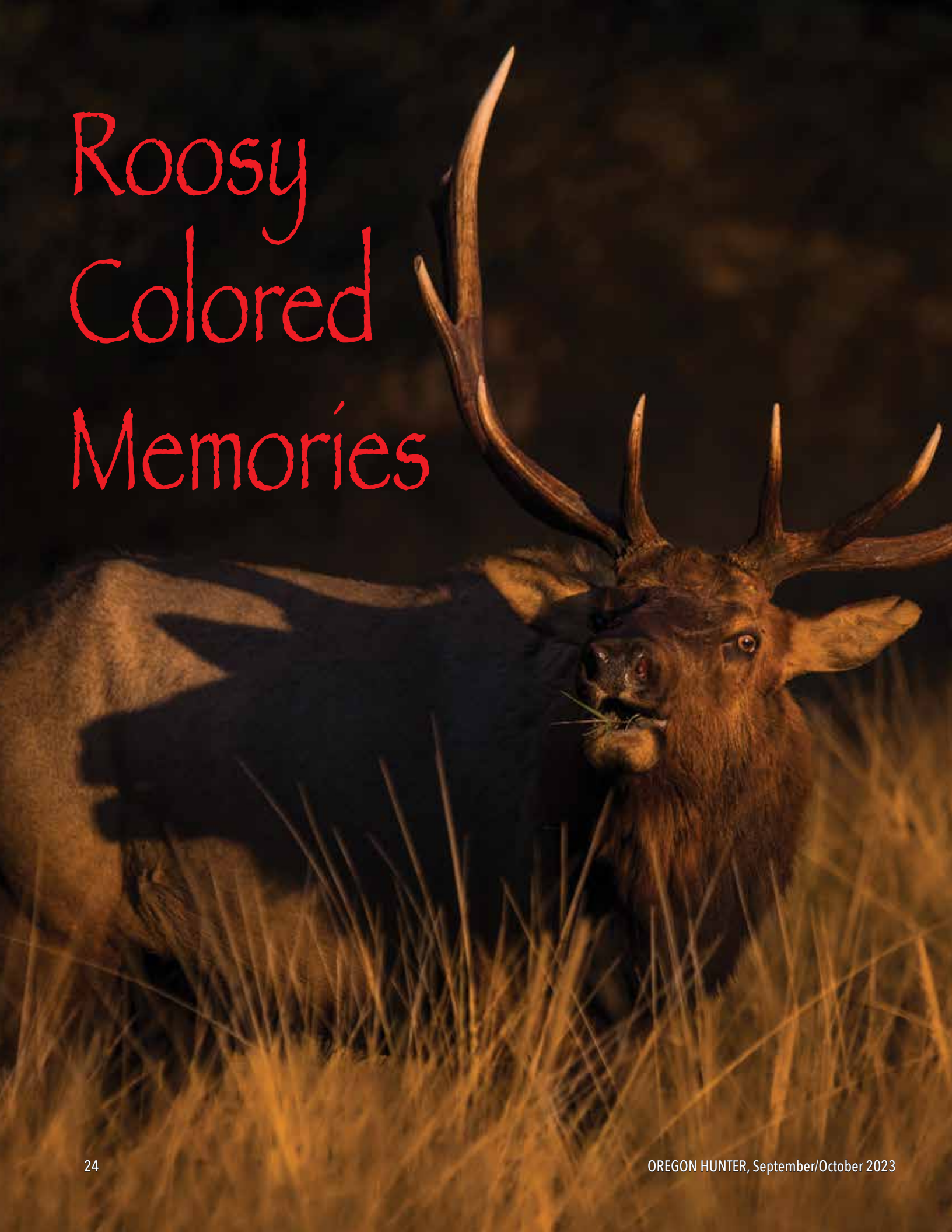

By Scott Haugen

I saw a massive 6x6 bull with a small harem at first light. The cows fed in a small clearing, then slithered into some nearby timber. The bull followed. Setting up atop a ridge in the Coast Range, south of Reedsport, I let out a series of cow calls. It was the third week of September, and the Roosevelt elk rut was hitting high gear. This was my fifth setup of the morning. When a bull bugled back to my calls, I nocked an arrow and ranged multiple points where it might emerge. I called again, and then a bull replied with a sharp, short bugle.

How it made its way up the trail surrounded by thick brush and trees without me hearing it, I'll never know. But there the bull stood, just over 30 yards away. I let out a soft mew with a diaphragm call. The bull bugled, tossed its rack against its back and strutted into an opening like it owned the place.

When it hit 15 yards, the bull turned sideways, stopped and let out another bugle. Slowly, I let off my bow and just watched. It was a 6x6 bull, but not the big bull I'd been after. In fact, it was the fifth time that morning that the young, very small 6x6 came to my calls. I'd covered well over a mile along that ridge, hoping to pull in the big bull, but I never saw it. Every time I figured I'd put enough distance between the smaller bull and where I'd last called, I was wrong.

There are stories of jubilation, and stories of failure and frustration. But in the end, we keep coming back.

I'm not sure if it was a compliment to my calling, that the same bull would come in repeatedly over such a distance, or a slap in the face. I'd like to think the former. Regardless, the little bull walked away. I tried four more days for the big 6x6 and never saw it again. Such is the life of hunting Roosevelt elk in Oregon.

That was over 20 years ago, and it seems like yesterday. I looked for that young 6x6 in seasons that followed but never saw it again. That was going to be a good bull; it had impressive genes.

If I had a dollar for every time I saw or caught on trail camera a big bull only one time, I'd be rich. Elusive, smart, humbling and challenging to hunt, I consider consistently tagging a mature Roosevelt elk – with a bow or a rifle – to be the second-toughest hunt in North America, only behind Columbia blacktails.

When someone asks about my most memorable Roosevelt elk hunts, it's the ones that got away that first come to mind. Believe me, there are way more that got away than ended up in the freezer.

Late one September I was bowhunting with good friend Jody Smith southeast of Elkton. We'd been seeing some nice bulls. But we were after one big bull or nothing. To this day it was one of the most impressive Roosies I've seen while hunting. We saw it multiple times over the course of five days, always at a distance. Once in a while it would give a courtesy bugle to our calling, but it would never commit, never leave its harem. Then, on day six, something changed.

I'm a firm believer that the personality of a rutting elk – or any animal in the rut – can change at any given moment. Being in the right place and catching them in the right mood, is sometimes the only way to kill a mature bull. This was such a day.

We had watched the bull take its harem of more than 20 cows into a reprod thicket early in the morning. It was hot, and soon the thermals would be rising and stabilizing. So rather than follow the herd, we hiked over two miles, looped around them and dropped in from above. The brush was thick. We could smell the elk, but couldn't see them. We started calling. Immediately the bull answered back. There was no mistaking its old, raspy bugle.

I called again and the bull replied. Then we could hear snapping branches as it got closer. We were on the upper edge of the reprod the elk had fed into. Cover was sparse along the reprod fringes, so wherever the bull came out, I'd have a shot.

Coast elk/Ryan Hoeft

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

The author has been on many hunts with good friend and guide, Jody Smith (right), including this one, where their buddy, Skip, from Colorado, scored on his first Roosevelt elk.

For 15 minutes we exchanged calls. The bull was close – inside 40 yards. Then we saw it moving through the trees, coming right at us. Just as I got ready to draw, the bull spun and ran away. It didn't hear or see us. I called. Nothing. I bugled and gave loud, desperate cow calls. Again, nothing.

Then, Jody nudged me and nodded to our left. Out of the woods came a bowhunter. Arrow knocked, he moved slowly, searching the woods. Twice he looked right at us but kept moving; I guess our camo worked. He was wearing blue jeans and a big cowboy hat. Jody had a chat with the man, who had also seen the bull and decided to follow it. Not only did the wind give the hunter away, but he trespassed to get to that point. I was furious. Six days of hard work, and that's how the season ended. The guy did say he thought I was an elk, and was trying to slip in between the bull and cow. I took it as a compliment. I saw that bull one more time, in a picture taken in November. A rifle hunter in the area killed it. It scored over 320 inches. It had an unmistakable rack. At least a fellow hunter got it.

Not all Roosy hunting memories are bad. There was the hunt north of Florence, where I was alone and got on a nice bull at mid-morning. The bull stuck tight to its harem of a dozen or so cows, and wouldn't reply to any sounds I made. I offered seductive cow and young bugling sounds and got nothing. The bull was in constant motion, tidying up the harem, trying not to lose any cows.

I figured my best bet was to keep the wind in my favor, sneak close to the herd, and hopefully catch the bull as it came by in an effort to keep things under control. Then the herd eased into an open meadow and started feeding. The wind was perfect, so I used the forest shadows as cover, found a well-worn trail and moved to the edge of the meadow, ahead of the herd. Eventually they fed right by me and I got a shot at the bull. That night I was headed home with fresh meat.

A couple years ago I was onto a nice Roosevelt bull in the Cascades, up the McKenzie River. I first caught it on trail camera in July. Even then, its velvet rack looked impressive. It turned out to be a dandy 6x6. I caught it on trail camera all summer, and after it stripped its velvet. Late in September I got a video clip of it following a cow through a creek, when suddenly it stopped, turned toward the trail camera and cut loose with a resonating bugle. I saw it a few times when scouting. It survived bow season and I looked for it during rifle season, but couldn't find it. The bull moved out of the area, and on the last day of rifle season a guy I know killed it, over nine miles from where I'd last seen it.

In the early 1990s my dad shot a nice bull in the Cascades, near the little town of Leaburg. He took it in a place where the family had shot many big blacktails over the years, an area where elk were never seen. Not even my wife's side of the family – who homesteaded this part of the McKenzie River Valley and logged it for over 100 years – recalled ever seeing elk there until the late 1980s.

I run trail cameras year-round and capture a lot of Roosevelt elk. I always set trail cameras on video mode because a video clip reveals so much more than a still photo. Recently, I've gone to Browning's Dark Ops trail cameras because they have a video setting that allows clips to be captured up to two minutes in length. As long as the movement stays in frame of the camera, it will keep recording. The sights and sounds I've caught with these trail cameras has taught me things I've never seen or heard while scouting, hunting or photographing elk. If you really want to learn about these animals, from how they travel, to their level of communication, what they feed on, where they drink for how long, get one of these cameras. Heck, get a dozen of them. I have over 40 set out, and the education I receive makes it more than worth the investment.

Perhaps the most amazing thing I've learned about these elk is how far a big bull will travel during the rut. Covering seven or eight miles a night is nothing for them. I caught one bull on a camera in the late afternoon, then the next day got it 11 miles away. The country it negotiated was far from easy going.

One August, Tiffany held a damage tag for an area along the Umpqua River. She killed a nice bull in full velvet in early August. It was the finest eating bull elk we ever had.

Some of my most memorable Roosy moments were when I wasn't even hunting, just helping out. Like the time my buddy came from Utah and took his first bull. Or when my friend Skip from Colorado hunted with Jody Smith on the coast and fulfilled his lifelong dream of taking a bull; it wasn't a big one, and it didn't matter.

There are more stories. A lot more. As in all hunting, there are good stories and there are bad stories. There are stories of jubilation and stories of failure and frustration. But in the end, we keep coming back.

The more time we spend in the woods, hunting and scouting for Roosevelt elk, the more we learn about them. For me, that's what it's really about. These magnificent elk live in a magical place that we as Oregon hunters are fortunate to have the opportunity to experience. We have the elk to credit for motivating us to get outside, and when we do fill the freezer, we have these giants of the forest to thank.

Want to learn how to skin and breakdown an elk? Scott Haugen's popular DVD, Field Dressing, Skinning & Caping Big Game, *shows this and more, and is available at www.scotthaugen.com. Follow Scott's adventures on Instagram and Facebook.*

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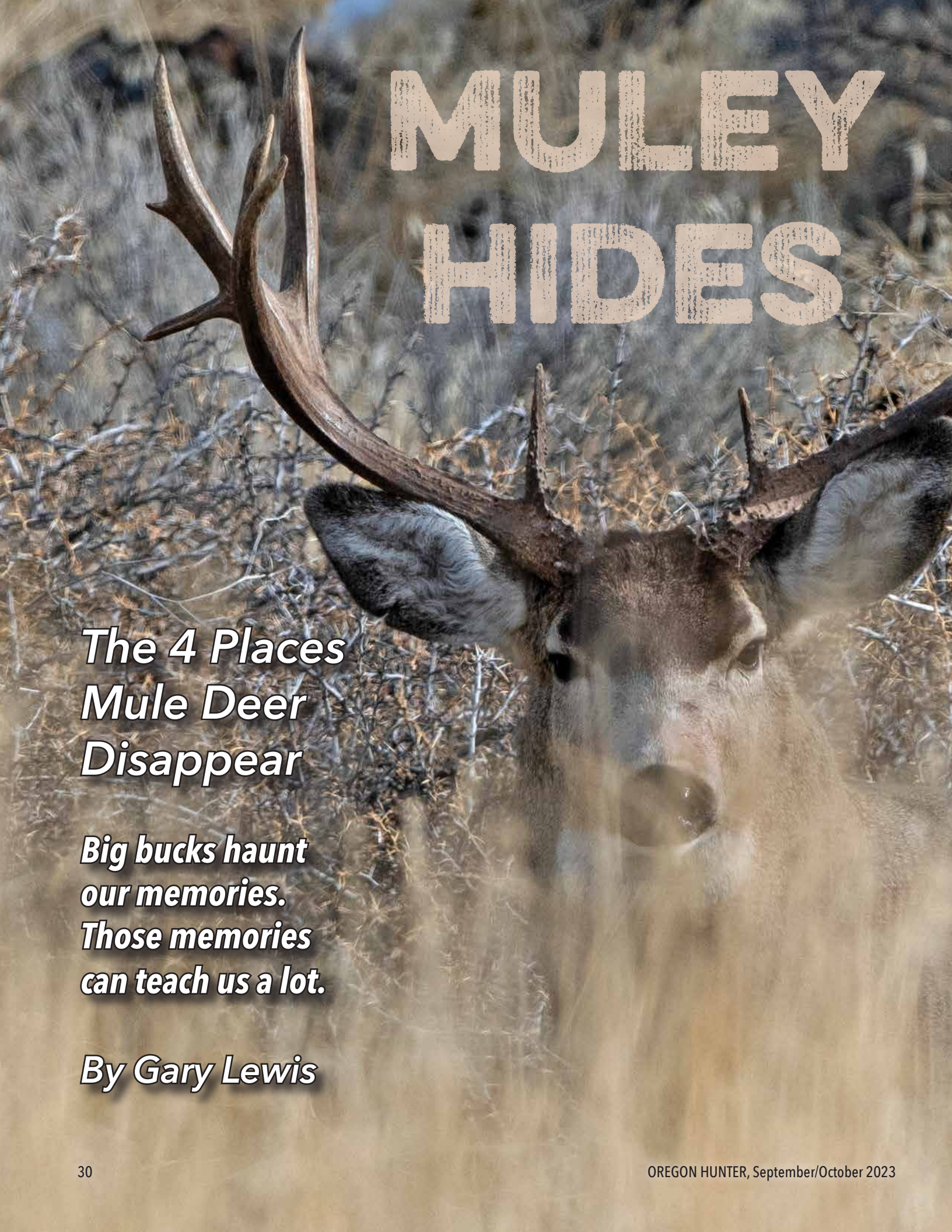

MULEY HIDES

The 4 Places Mule Deer Disappear

Big bucks haunt our memories. Those memories can teach us a lot.

By Gary Lewis

Where does a mature buck go during the season? This was in my mind as I unfolded my topo map again. This was a desert hunt, and I stabbed my finger on a tiny spot of green in back of a nearby camp.

"I'd bet those guys aren't hunting that spot," I told my hunting partner, and we worked out a plan. An hour later we were walking down a ridge when I heard a deer stomp. I pointed my partner toward the rim and said, "Run!" He ran to one edge while I ran to the other edge. I saw four does run out the bottom. The buck exited the top and my buddy missed him, shooting between the antlers of the biggest buck he ever had in his scope. Big bucks haunt our memories.

Where does a big buck feed? Where does it bed? Where does it escape to? These last two make the difference, because now we can predict where the buck will be at any given time.

TRACKS AT WATER

Even in dry country, we tend to miss some of the most important water sources.

In much of the arid West, accessibility to water defines one of the most important features of a buck's home range.

Creeks, rivers, lakes, farm ponds and cattle tanks are the most obvious water sources, but there is water that does not show up on a map. Look for seeps or small basins where water collects after a rain.

Bring a tape measure to sort through the prints left by does and fawns. In the places I hunt, the magic starts at 3 inches or bigger. Any buck with a track that measures 3 inches or more is a buck that should be looked at in a spotting scope.

THE BIG PICTURE

Lay out a topo map on the hood of the truck. Mark that water point and triangulate with other known water sources. A buck will have several.

First, look for those blue lines that indicate a dry creek bed or the low spots where water collects in the rainy season. Where are the ridges? Now look for contour lines and hilltops marked for elevation. Bucks tend to bed toward the tops of canyons and three-quarters up a slope, especially when they have overhanging rimrock or shade-giving boulders. Study the topo for clues, then turn to an aerial photo or an app. Switch back and forth and mark potential bedding spots.

THE 4 PLACES DEER BED

A buck's bed is nothing more than an oval scraped scallop in dirt, perhaps a flat spot dug in the side of a slope with a view for hundreds of yards or a hole in the brush with three ways out. It might be just downhill from the crest of a ridge, or it could be out in the flats under a scrap of sagebrush.

Bucks live or die based on their selection of bedding spots. It's easier to locate a younger buck's bedding spots, beneath a juniper tree.

But bucks live longer when they tend to use beds that are hardest to approach undetected.

Prior to the rut, look for solitary bucks in one of several places.

1 Bucks like to bed on high ridges. Only a scrap of shade is necessary, and the shade has to be right for the spot, meaning a morning bed on a west-facing slope may not be as ideal in afternoon. Glass just downhill from the crest of the ridge and try to peer into shaded spots. Glass that same ridge with the sun at a different angle and try to find the alternate spots now that the shadows have shifted. These beds allow the buck to watch other deer or even cattle below to stay alert to any threat. From a perch on a faraway ridge, the buck can watch a road or a parking spot. Threat detected, the buck rises and slips over the spine of the ridge and gone.

2 Cut banks offer shade and protection from the wind. Out in open country, where the tops of the wheat wave in the wind, bucks have ample escape cover with defined bedding options in the coulees. Down in the ditches where tumbleweeds gather, on the banks of catch dams and wherever a fold in the ground offers shelter from heat and wind, bucks will scrape out their

WILLY ONARHEIM

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

This buck muley was bedded with a nice buck, well away from the road with its back to a clay bank.

beds. And the very best beds – the most remote, the least likely to be found – are taken over by the bucks that can hold them. This is where careful examination with a topo map can pay off. If it's hard to get to, that's where the big buck is.

3 Sage brush flats offer little shade but good visibility. On a topo, or while driving or glassing, look for tilted tablelands with scattered patches of sagebrush. In the ideal, the ground is as large as four football fields squared, or bigger. The buck knows where danger is coming from, the nearest roads and trails, and by swiveling its head, it can see the approaches, but its back is to its backdoor. For this reason, do not walk in from an angle where light will wink off lenses or gun barrels. Instead, slide over rim rock and glass for that buck out in the middle somewhere.

4 Beds in manzanita or mountain mahogany are the hardest of all to penetrate. Especially when pressure ratchets up in the first four days of hunting season, bucks slink back into thickets of mountain mahogany, bellies close to the ground on trails fit for a cottontail, to put their backs to a backdoor so they can watch their back trail. They are safe in these spots because the ground cover is dried leaves and twigs that snap, crackle and pop.

Most hunters know bucks use these thickets, which can be a half acre to hundreds of acres in size, but they give up before they start because it is hard to locate animals in this thickest of cover. A tree stand might be a good option. Another way to approach it is with moccasins and the wind in your face.

SPOT OR STEALTH?

With potential bedding spots isolated, the challenge is to look into each one with the long glass. In a lot of mule deer country, this is impossible because of timber or lack of roads. Flatland sage is almost impenetrable with optics and there is usually only one way to hunt a grove of mountain mahogany and that means going low and slow with the wind in the face.

Habitat dictates the strategy, whether that means morning and afternoons behind the glass or ghosting through bedding cover with a two-man drive.

Author Gary Lewis's latest book is Bob Nosler Born Ballistic. *For a signed copy, send $30 to Gary Lewis Outdoors, P.O. Box 1364, Bend, OR 97709. Visit www.garylewisoutdoors.com*

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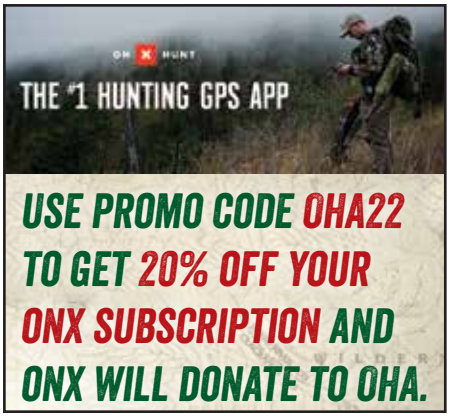

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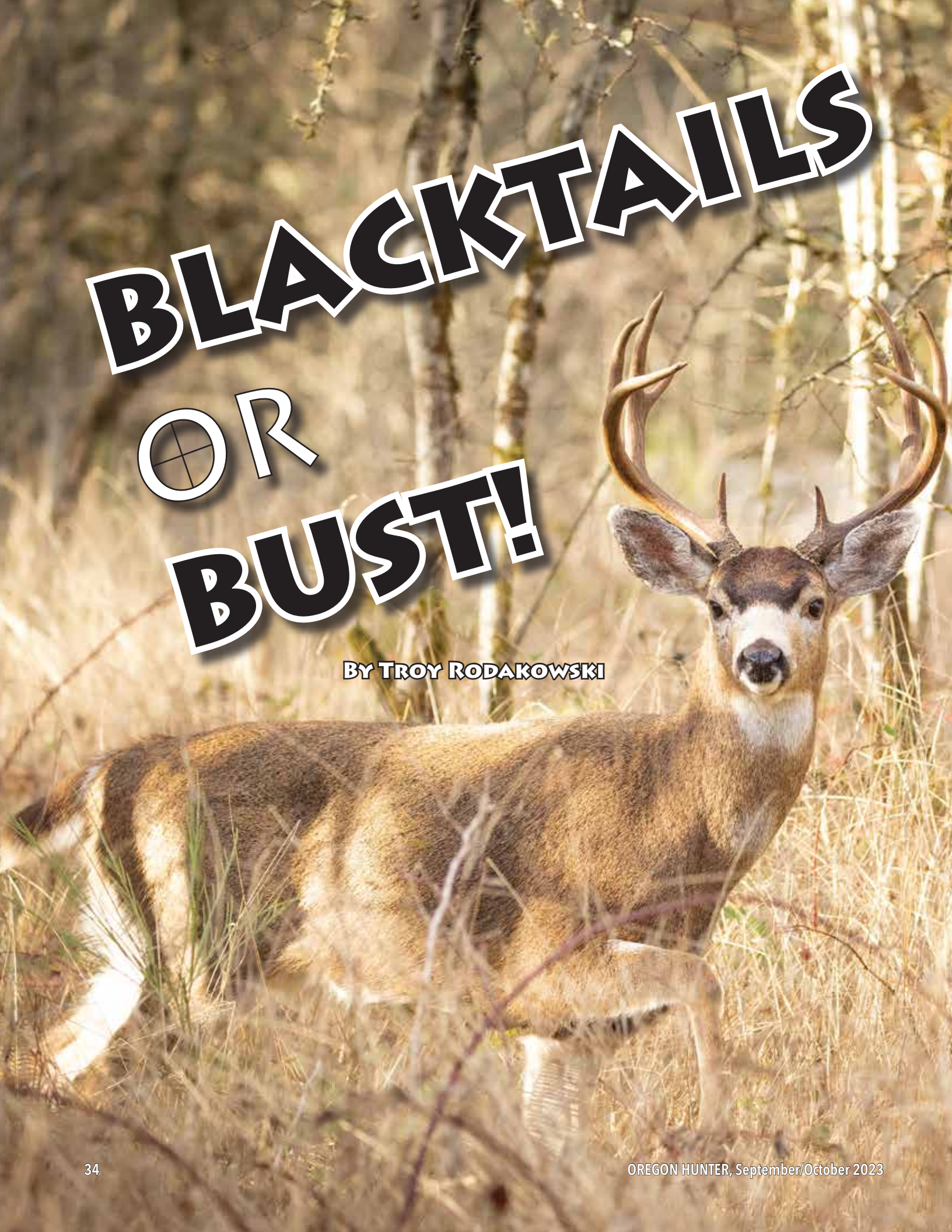
BLACKTAILS OR BUST!

By Troy Rodakowski



Recent ODFW studies have discovered that blacktail numbers – especially bucks – are higher than anyone thought.

But habitat and behavioral changes make them hard to find.

Will you be one of the 25% to find one, or the 75% that won't?

I wait all year to hunt blacktail deer here in Oregon. Sometimes, it's painful waiting several months to hit the woods, but it's always well worth it. The sweet smells of red and yellow hardwoods are now slowly turning the woods into a watercolor painting. Campfire smoke, warm perked coffee, pancakes, and bacon and eggs on the griddle waft through deer camp, luring us to grab a plate. Crisp mountain air and cold frosts on the ground refresh and reinvigorate my soul every fall.

With fewer deer forage openings these days, you may be hunting in denser cover than hunters 25 years ago.

Many hunters have already scoured the brush for a couple months scouting or archery hunting. Archery hunters will also soon be getting a second chance in November, as do late-season youth hunters, muzzleloader hunters and some folks with antlerless tags.

With general and a few controlled rifle seasons coming up in early October and running well into early November this year, it always seems as if there are some really nice deer harvested in the last week of October and November's first week. It's then that bucks begin to move and search for does in estrus. With a late season start and finish this fall, rifle hunters should be optimistic in 2023.

Some of the best units for rutting deer are the Trask, Santiam, Siuslaw, Alsea, McKenzie, Indigo, Melrose, Evans Creek, Rogue and Applegate units. Most of these units have some combination of late-season archery, centerfire and muzzleloader hunts, mostly by drawing with some general season options available. Although bucks tend to reside in thick cover, they can be found tending does in re-prod or 3- to 5-year-old burns that offer good regrowth of broadleaf plants.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

This ain't your grandfather's off-road vehicle, but it can extend your range where forest roads are closed to motorized vehicles.

"The Holiday Farm Fire perimeter and large areas within the burn had some seed bed damage in 2020," said Christopher Yee, ODFW Biologist in Springfield. By now, many areas of this burn will have good forage for animals. Early morning and late afternoons are the best times to keep a close eye on the edges of burns.

Perseverance is key. Hunters who invest time immersing themselves in quality habitat will have a greater chance of taking a nice buck, especially in late October and early November. It sometimes takes me all day to cover a couple hundred acres.

With fewer forage openings these days, you may be hunting in denser cover than hunters 25 years ago, when few blacktails hunters ever considered rattling or hunting from treestands or ground blinds.

The rut and migration will be the driving force for deer movement later in the season. Snow and cold temperatures that freeze the foliage at higher elevations will push deer to lower elevations in search of fresh browse. The does coming into their second cycle keep bucks ramped up, as well. Archery hunting the Cascades, especially in the snow, has been one of the biggest thrills of my hunting career, as Dad and I have rattled and called several mature bucks into range close enough to see the whites of their bloodshot, rut-crazed eyes.

The 2022 season brought an unusually early rut with rifle hunters seeing some really good success. It looks as if the same might be true for 2023.

A few seasons back, my dad and I hiked into an isolated canyon with big timber on one side and re-prod on the other. We had scouted the area earlier in the season and saw a good number of deer moving from one side to the other, feeding and using several trails. It was a bottleneck type of opening at the bottom of a recently logged hillside where the deer felt safe to travel through the opening. I had seen several does and yearlings within the previous few weeks and was hoping they would bring a good buck along with them during the approaching rut. It was mid-afternoon and we had only seen one doe appear to feed for a short time, then vanish into the thick re-prod.

LINN COUNTY/RYAN HOEFT

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

The authors father, Terry Rodakowski, shows off a late October blacktail buck taken in the hills of the Willamette Valley.

Patiently we waited as the sun began to set, when we suddenly heard commotion to our right in the dense thicket of trees. It was a buck grunting and chasing does. The deer were moving inside the thick brush, and we knew there was a good chance we'd see something if we stayed put long enough. Another hour passed as we blew on our estrus calls every 15 minutes or so, hoping to lure a buck out of hiding.

Sure enough, about 4 p.m. as I sat motionless on a trail, a buck appeared and approached quickly. He was less than 10 feet from me before I knew it. Unfortunately, my rifle was across my lap, pointed the opposite direction. He continued to walk toward me and stopped nearly at my feet licking a blade of grass. His antlers glistened with moisture from the damp Douglas fir thicket. I saw his bloodshot eyes and swollen neck; he was massive and an amazing trophy-class animal. My mind raced, as I needed to raise my rifle or my chance would be gone.

Honestly, I would have been better off shooting open sights at this point, especially since being quick enough with a scoped gun was unlikely. He was a massive 4X4 and looked tired and ragged from chasing does. I was scared to make eye contact. Finally, our eyes met, and as I quickly raised my rifle, he turned, whirled and ran faster than a cheetah back to safety well before I could even raise my gun. My heart pounded my chest, and I knew the hunt was over.

That was one of the biggest blacktail bucks I have ever seen, and he beat me. I had barely managed to get the gun off safe, but not to my shoulder in time. It was a real heartbreaker, and it's burned into my brain forever, especially those eyes; I will never forget those eyes.

Harvest for rifle hunters was decent last year in the southwest, with success above 30 percent, but it was closer to 20 percent in the northwest, where more hunters took fewer bucks. The mostly private Melrose came in at 1,340 bucks, Santiam at 1,279, Rogue at 1,218, Dixon 1,060, Alsea 1,016 and Trask at 1,010. These were the top units throughout western Oregon, with the Rogue having 81 percent public land harvest of its deer, followed by Dixon at 77 percent, Trask at 51 percent, Alsea 47 percent, and Santiam 38 percent public land harvest.

Finally, don't overlook the coast units, which report impressive success rates for a smaller crowd of hunters.

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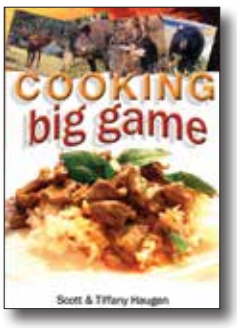
Try Bear Birria Tacos

On a recent trip to Mexico, Scott and I spent one night food-hopping backstreet taco stands. One stood out: the birria taco! We had it with beef, then goat. I was so inspired, I couldn't wait to get home and try it on all our game in the freezer.

First, I made it with wild venison and it was amazing. Then we enjoyed it with wild turkey. But when I made it with bear meat, we agreed it was the best taco we'd ever had.

Traditionally a dish prepared with goat, most local taco stands use beef in their birria tacos. Almost any cut of wild game works great for this recipe because the secret is the marinade and the cooking method. Try it with shanks and shred the meat, or a large roast and chunk it up after cooking, or slice it ahead of time and it will be ready to go right in the taco. Pressure cooking, slow-cooking or a low and slow simmer on the stovetop will produce a great result.

1.5 pounds bear meat (or any wild game)
1/3 cup melted butter or coconut oil
1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
1 7-ounce can chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
1/4 cup cider vinegar
6 cloves garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon guajillo chili powder
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon cumin
1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups beef or vegetable stock
2 cinnamon sticks
3 bay leaves
1 cup grated cheddar or jack cheese, optional
Additional butter or coconut oil for frying tortillas
20 corn tortillas
Fresh lime, chopped onion and cilantro for garnish



Trim meat and cut into chunks or strips as desired. In a sealable container or baggie, mix butter or coconut oil, chipotle peppers with sauce, vinegar, garlic, chili powder, oregano, paprika, cumin and cloves until thoroughly combined. Add meat, seal and refrigerate overnight.

When ready to cook, place meat with all the marinade in a pressure cooker, slow-cooker or Dutch oven. Add tomatoes, stock, salt, cinnamon sticks and bay leaves. Pressure cook on high pressure 55-60 minutes or slow-cook on high 4-6 hours or until meat is tender. If cooking on the stovetop or in the oven, bring all ingredients to a boil and simmer on medium-low heat until meat reaches desired tenderness. Pull meat to shreds or chop into desired size for taco filling.

To assemble birria tacos, heat a large griddle (or skillet) on medium-high heat. Coat griddle with a layer of butter or coconut oil. Dip both sides of each tortilla in birria mixture and place on the hot griddle. Place a scoop of shredded or chopped meat on 1/2 of each tortilla and fold. Sprinkle a bit of cheese onto the outer side of each taco. Once tortilla begins to brown, turn over so cheese can caramelize to the shell. Add additional cheese to the other side and flip once more before serving. Garnish with a wedge of lime, fresh cilantro and chopped onion if desired. Serve with a side of broth from the birria mixture.

Almost any cut of wild game works great for this recipe because the secret is the marinade and the cooking method.

To order signed copies of Tiffany Haugen's popular book, Cooking Big Game, *visit www.scotthaugen.com for this and other titles.*

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See rules and enter your best shots for a chance to win a great Tactacam prize at *OREGONHUNTERS.ORG*!

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Still carrying antlers on the 15th of April. OHA member Brent Wright of Bend wins a Tactacam Reveal Trail Camera for this April photo capture of Rocky Mountain elk walking out of a patch of snow in the evening light in the Heppner Unit.

HONORABLE MENTION:

SCAN HERE TO ENTER

Willamette Unit blacktails scrapping after midnight. OHA member Kelcey Stoller of Independence earns an OHA hat for this mid-October trail cam capture.

Mule deer in the morning light. OHA member Brent Wright of Bend scores an OHA hat for this trail cam image of three bucks on the edge of a meadow.

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PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

11/11 could be lucky numbers for youth deer hunt weekend

After hunting all season, the author's son was rewarded with this blacktail buck in southern Oregon. Rutting bucks come out of hiding in November and put themselves at risk.

The Western Oregon general deer season is looking rutty this year thanks to a new rule which establishes opening day on the first Saturday in October. That's Oct. 7 this year, the latest it has started in recent history. The first Saturday mimics what our neighbors to the south have been doing for decades and invokes thoughts of wet ground this year. The last day will be Nov. 10, with youth weekend taking place Nov. 11 and 12 and squarely during the blacktail rut. That weekend is an opportunity that kids with unfilled tags shouldn't miss.

Of all the luck, we drew nothing this year. I'm looking forward to numerous days in the field after sleeping in my own bed, and even some frosty mornings with my mom's old five-point rattling horns in hand. My only regret is that my hunting buddy is aged out of youth weekend and heading to college.

Our experience, over the last several seasons, is "controlled" isn't always best. There are great controlled hunts with high success rates, particularly the youth-only hunts, but nothing is easy. You get what you put into any hunt and that's a great lesson for kids. That said, the "youth-only" weekend has been a blessing for us. My youth hunter wouldn't have enjoyed much success without it. Who knows if he'd even taken an interest.

Every year is different and they're all great, of course, but the timing of the rut varies, even in sub-areas of the same region. I've learned this from comparing notes with friends who hunt a short distance from my area, but often observe totally different deer behavior. One Halloween we observed a rutty buck working his already well-used rub line from evening until after dark. He was loud! He was still there in the morning and the Euro mount my friend gifted Jacob adorns our game room now.

Another season, we rattled in two nice bucks at the same time from different directions. It was Nov. 1. Unfortunately, I stood up to leave and boogered the entire situation. Other times, we've tried rattling well into November and the woods were dead with no discernible rutting behavior, only to hear from the late-season archers that Thanksgiving was the deal.

This year's Western Oregon youth deer weekend takes place Nov. 11 and 12, squarely during the blacktail rut.

One youth weekend in early November, our hunt started in the fog and ended packing and skinning in a snowstorm. No flies. No yellowjackets or hornets. Kids love that.

Regardless, this year's general season should provide young guns with a long season, without the time crunch and pressure sometimes associated with the master-planned hunts and a bonus last-crack at bucks that last weekend.

Hit it exactly right, and any does you locate are going to have a buck in tow. Just find deer and it's like magic. Our ghostlike, nocturnal blacktails start making daylight appearances and making a few mistakes. The seemingly futile, crackling days of early October turn to dewclaws in the mud.

Kids can even get selective knowing November is coming and they seem to love knowing they are the only ones allowed to hunt that weekend. Suddenly, getting up early isn't as painful and, while nothing is a cinch, success rates have proved to be higher than the regular season. There's a good chance for frosty mornings and better-than-average rutty bucks on the move chasing does.

This opportunity is not available to Mentored Youth Hunt Program participants. Each hunter must have their own tag. Tag-sale deadline is Oct. 6. Bag limit is one buck with visible antler.

Something to consider: Late can mean great, but it can also mean too much great weather. The high country can be a "deep sleeper" in terms of late hunting action as long as it stays accessible. The low country has less public land. Plan ahead.

I've asked my wife for 30 years not to plan anything on the first weekend in October. She hasn't remembered a single time, and I've missed a ton of activities, just not opening day.

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Good and bad grasses have grown back after the fire on OHA's conservation easement. See story on the facing page.

OHA helps build beaver dam analogs to improve habitat in the Ochocos

By Tyler Dungannon & Eric Brown

OHA, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, other groups, and agency partners built 68 beaver dam analogs at various locations along Grays Prairie in the Ochoco Mountains in June.

Man-made beaver dam analogs decrease stream temperatures and elevate water levels, which can improve forage conditions for deer, elk and other wildlife. A beaver dam analog emulates the function of a natural beaver dam and can facilitate successful beaver translocations by immediately providing habitat that reduces the risk of predation.

Beaver dam analogs can improve forage conditions for deer, elk and other wildlife.

RMEF was the lead brand for the fourth All Hands All Brands for Public Lands event, and as in previous years, OHA volunteers from Bend, Capitol, and Emerald Valley chapters showed up in droves to work for wildlife.

OHA volunteers also worked to maintain 11 guzzlers on the Ochoco National Forest. In total, the project had 68 volunteers who tallied more than 1,000 volunteer hours.

OHA thanks USFS, ODFW, and our conservation partners, RMEF, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership for their continued support of the annual All Hands All Brands event.

Duane Dungannon

The expressions tell you which key holder unlocked the key gun at OHA's 40th Anniversary State Convention on May 6 at Chinook Winds Casino, where a record crowd helped OHA raise record sums.

OHA's 40th State Convention shatters records for attendance, funds raised

A spirited crowd of 560 guests toasted OHA's 40 years of conservation at OHA's 2023 State Convention May 6 at Chinook Winds Casino Resort. The event netted a record $148,000 for OHA's mission. A paddle raise collected $14,000 in additional donations to OHA's Victory Fund.

More than 70 great firearms are going to new homes, including premium firearms donated by Legacy Sports International, Sig Sauer, Coastal Farm & Ranch, Centerfire Gunworks, and Nosler. Guests took home an amazing array of optics donated by OHA Platinum Sponsors Leupold & Stevens and Sig Electro Optics. Donations were too many to list here, but included great gear from Benchmade, KUIU, Coast, Work Sharp, Langer's Family Entertainment Center, Born & Raised Outdoors, Silencer Central, Vortex, G4 Outdoors, Black Rifle Coffee Company, Ukiah, Wilderness Packs and Sportsman's Warehouse.

Awesome adventures came from 3 Queens Ranch, Broken Arrow Outfitters, Troy Rodakowski, Jody Smith Guide Service, Upfront Outfitters, Ladies Hunting Camp, Diamond A Guides, Sunriver Lodging, Cross Hollow Outfitters, Hammerhead Guide Service, Chinook Winds, Rocha's Dory, Patriot Fishing and Argentina's TGB Outfitters.

Chinook Winds sponsored complimentary 40th Anniversary campfire mugs – since OHA started at a campfire.

While many supporters contributed to making the night a success, special thanks go to OHA Pioneer and Umpqua chapters and volunteers from many chapters, auctioneer George Tavera, Shirley Pritchett, Tom Derbyshire & Capper's Frames & Prints, Cris Benitez, Leroy & Joy Miller, Connie Rodriguez, Waldron's Outdoor Sports, Century Printing, Valley Web Printing, ProntoPrint, and last but not least, our VIP Marvin Pace, Herd Bulls: Jim Thompson, Ken Williams, Doug Daniken Plumbing, Larry & Robin Goodman – CFE LLC – Electrical Contracting, David & Liam Hale – Hale Valley Holsteins, Kirk Mitchell – Mitchell Trucking; Curtis & Kelsie Nelson – Hughes Excavation, Steven Stafford – Stafford Reload Inc., Kyle Humphrys – Table Mountain Forestry, and Benefactors: Troy Aylward, James Cason, Dale Conlee, Evan Christianson, Sean Erikson – CFE LLC – Electrical Contracting, Derek Hamill, Mark & Theresa Hendrix, Travis Johnson, Michelle Kraemer, Todd & Kim Leuthold, Michael & Hannah Mills, James Morris, Ruth Payne, Lance Powlison, James Rouillard, John Russell, Randy Tysinger, Britney Young – All about Excavating & Plumbing, Inc.

Make plans to attend OHA's 2024 State Convention at Seven Feathers Casino in Canyonville on May 4!

Eric involved his three children, Elliott (7), Violet (5) and Ethan (2), in his many outdoor adventures, including OHA habitat projects.

OHA mourns tragic loss of member Eric Newman

Fund established for family

Bend Oregon Hunters Association member Eric Newman, age 40, was senselessly and tragically shot and killed at a boat ramp in Montana in July. He was an extremely dedicated father and husband who placed his family number one in his life.

Many OHA volunteers got to meet Eric and some of his kids at OHA work parties or monthly meetings.

Please visit the link below to Eric Newman's Memorial page and consider making a donation to the family. It does not matter if you did not know the family, but know that any one of us would have been proud to have him as our son or brother. He was one of the nicest people we have known. Eric leaves behind his wife Holly and three beautiful young children who are going to need a lot of assistance.

Our hearts are broken. —*Eric Brown*

https://everloved.com/life-of/eric-newman

The story of Eric's first archery bull, taken on his first hunt with his son Elliott, appeared in Oregon Hunter in 2020.

TURN IN POACHERS DIAL *OSP

SPONSORED BY OHA, OSP & ODFW

OHA pays out $2,800 in rewards in 7 cases

In the last two months, OHA issued seven reward checks to informants in seven cases totaling $2,800 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund. Charges included: Exceeding Bag Limit-Deer, Exceeding Bag Limit-Turkey, Harvesting Razor Clams out of season, 3 juveniles for Unlawful Possession of Turkeys due to no adult present, Harvesting Razor Clams with no License, Take of Fish without an Angling License and Unlawful Take of an Antlerless Elk, Lending a Big Game Tag and Counseling in a Wildlife Offense.

40th Anniversary sees OHA banquets, membership surge

Despite Measure 114 and court challenges casting a shadow over guns at fundraisers, OHA enjoyed a banner year for our 40th Anniversary. Redmond, Hoodview and Columbia County led off the charge for our fundraiser season on Feb. 25. More than half of the chapters holding events set records with their gross and/or net income.

All of these funds will be used in Oregon promoting our mission: Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage. The Bend Chapter set a new OHA chapter record of $113,921, and the Tioga Chapter netted the second-best all-time mark of $108,195.

Attendance at OHA banquets was a big reason OHA's membership surged over the 11,000 mark this year, surpassing even our pre-COVID numbers.

OHA thanks our chapters, members and sponsors for their unwavering support in the face of the challenges we've seen in recent years. —*Bryan Cook*

Get your 2024 Gun Calendar now at oregonhunters.org/store

Latest Gun Calendar winners announced

Winners of the 2023 Gun Calendar Raffle are posted each Wednesday on OHA's Facebook and website (oregonhunters.org). Here are the June and July winners:

Springfield Hellcat 9mm – Daniel Leischner, Canby
Henry Big Boy .44 Mag – Logan O'Hara, Roseburg
Tikka T3x Lite Rifle in .30-06 – Lamont Miller, Canby
Stoeger M3500 Max-5 12Ga – Cory French
Legacy Citadel 1911 45ACP – Jerry Scheffler, Eagle Point
Howa Flag 22-250 – Tony Vandecoevering, Garibaldi
Sig Cross .308 – Gene Brandow, Colton
Taurus Judge .45 – Brian Butters, Salem
Weatherby Vanguard 6.5 PRC - James Shannon, Bend

Sales of the 2024 OHA Gun Raffle Calendar are underway, so get yours for a shot at one of 52 great guns by calling the OHA state office at 541-772-7313 or visiting OHA's website at: www.oregonhunters.org/store

OHA responds to easement invaders

Since 2021 when OHA executed its first conservation easement on David and Pamela Potter's property in southern Jefferson County, part of the property burned in the Grandview Fire. OHA has done conservation work on site, and there's been some unauthorized grazing by some stray cattle.

OHA conservation staff spent a May evening with David Potter on the property, which was green, but a lot of it was cheatgrass that has invaded in areas of the Grandview Fire footprint. However, there's a fair amount of native bunchgrass coming back, as well.

The cattle were back. The landowners were told by Forest Service managers that the cattle were not supposed to be in that area. Monty Gregg, OHA Advisory Council member and Crooked River National Grasslands Wildlife Biologist, jumped on it for us by reaching out to the range manager.

The easement is located in prime big game winter range. —*Mike Totey*

JOSEPHINE COUNTY CHAPTER

ERIC BROWN

Members of several OHA chapters helped build 68 beaver dam analogs at the annual All Hands All Brands for Public Lands project in the Ochoco Mountains in June. See story on Page 42.

Chapters have fun in the sun

BAKER

CHARLIE BRINTON 541-403-0402

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Wednesday, 6 p.m., Oregon Trail Restaurant.

Update: The Baker Chapter is in need of officers. If you want to make a difference in your local chapter, please call Charlie Brinton or the State Office at 541-772-7313 for information about volunteering.

BEND

REX PARKS 541-480-0230

oregonhunters.org/bend-chapter

Chapter Meetings: Please see newsletter for date and time.

Update: Bend Chapter's Youth Upland Bird Hunt will be held on Oct. 21 at Powell Butte Vista Property. Registration is at the Bend ODFW office. Youth must have a Hunter Education Card. Call 541-480-0748. Chapter members helped at the annual All Hands All Brands for Public Lands habitat project in June.

BLUE MOUNTAIN

KEVIN MARTIN 541-969-6744

ohabluemountainchapter@gmail.com

Chapter Meetings: 4th Tuesday, The Saddle, 2200 Court St., Pendleton, 5:30 p.m. meeting, dinner and drinks available.

Update: Blue Mountain Chapter will be hosting an ODFW Pheasant Hunt Sept. 23 at the Irrigon Wildlife Area, 541-276-2344. We also helped sponsor the Duck Banding Project at Wanaket Wildlife Area and assisted ODFW in trapping and banding waterfowl.

CAPITOL

DANNY SOUTH 503-577-6033

ohacapitol.webs.com

Update: Chapter members helped at the annual All Hands All Brands for Public Lands habitat project in June. We are currently selling tickets to the 2024 fundraising banquet, which will be held on March 16. Get yours early!

CLATSOP COUNTY

TROY LAWS 503-738-6962

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., dinner 7 p.m. 4H Clubhouse, Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

Update: Get your tickets for the Coastal Farm & Ranch Raffle. We are raffling a Nosler M48 .300 Win Mag valued at $1,935. Tickets are $20, 3/$50, 7/$100. Contact Troy or Debbie Laws.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

JORDAN HICKS 949-533-7271

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m., location listed in the newsletter.

Update: Our chapter has donated $5,000 to Bushman Archers, and they will be updating some of their paper targets with new life-like animal targets.

CURRY

MATT THOMPSON 530-351-5847

mandmthompson02@yahoo.com

Chapter Meetings: 1st Wednesday, Double D's Cafe, Gold Beach, 6:30 p.m.

EMERALD VALLEY

TONY HILSENDAGER 541-729-0877

EmeraldOHA@live.com

https://ohaemeraldvalley.webs.com

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Wednesday, 7 p.m., Sizzlers on Gateway.

Update: Our Family/Youth Fundraising Event was held July 29. Lane County Hunter Ed field days will be held in September; be sure to have your classwork complete.

HOODVIEW

KELLY PARKMAN 503-706-7481

oregonhunters.org/hoodview-chapter

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

Chapter Meetings: Second Thursday, Elmer's Restaurant, Portland. No meetings July and August.

Update: Chapter members helped at the White River Blacktail Project June 10-11, building buck-and-pole fencing to protect one of two aspen stands on the wildlife area (see Page 46). ODFW Blacktail Management Plan meeting will be held Sept. 14 at Elmers in east Portland.

JOSEPHINE COUNTY

DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511

peery@charter.net

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m., dinner 6 p.m., Black Bear Diner, Grants Pass.

Update: Congratulations to our newly elected chapter president, David Downs. We know he has a fresh outlook to lead us in a new direction of growth.

KLAMATH

ALLAN WIARD 541-884-5773

ohaklamath.webs.com

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., Shasta View Community Center.

Update: We will hold the Klamath Chapter Youth Chukar Hunt on Oct. 21-22; call Jason 541-643-7077.

LAKE COUNTY

LARRY LUCAS 541-417-2983

Chapter Meetings: 1st Tuesday, 5 p.m., VFW Hall, Lakeview.

Update: Join us on Oct. 21 at Dog Lake for our annual nesting box project.

LINCOLN COUNTY

TODD THOMPSON 541-270-2393

tjaz@charter.net

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Tuesday, 6 p.m. meeting, dinner 5:30, Rogue Brewing Public House on the Bayfront, Newport.

Update: We held a pint night on June 13. Our guest speakers at our September meeting will be Leland Brown and Hannah Dinell about the benefits of non-lead ammunition and opportunities for hunters to participate in surveys and win prizes. See Page 27.

MALHEUR COUNTY

BRUCE HUNTER 208-573-5556

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 6 p.m., no host dinner 5:30, location TBA in the chapter newsletter.

Update: Thanks go out to everyone who helped and attended our chapter youth clay shoot on Aug. 12.

MID-COLUMBIA

CHUCK ASHLEY 541-993-8076

Chuckashley4120@gmail.com

Quarterly Chapter Meetings: July 13 at 6 p.m., ODFW's screen print shop on Klindt Drive, The Dalles.

Update: Chapter members helped at the White River Blacktail Project June 10-11, building buck-and-pole fencing to protect one of two aspen stands on the wildlife area (see Page 46). Get your tickets for the Coastal Farm & Ranch Rifle Raffle for a chance to win a new Howa SuperLite Kryptek 6.5.

MID-WILLAMETTE

JOHN TACKE 541-231-8165

john@visitnrc.com

https://www.facebook.com/midwillamettechapteroregonhuntersassociation

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., meeting 6 p.m., Old Armory, Albany.

Update: Our most recent monthly meeting speaker was OSP wildlife troopers for the Albany OSP-Fish & Wildlife Division speaking about laws & regulations to protect wildlife and habitat.

OCHOCO

JOHN DEHLER, III 541-815-5817

Chapter Meetings: 1st Tuesday, 7 p.m., COCC Open Campus Room 119.

Updates: The Ochoco Youth Pheasant Hunt will be held Sept. 23-24 at the Irrigon Wildlife Area.

PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 503-266-2900

oregonhunters.org/pioneer-chapter

Chapter Meetings: 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m., Canby Rod & Gun Club.

Update: We are getting a head start on our banquet to be held March 2. Get your tickets early before they sell out!

REDMOND

K. C. THRASHER 541-419-7215

OHA line 541-383-1099

oregonhunters.org/redmond-chapter

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, VFW Hall. Dinner, 5 p.m., member meeting at 6 p.m., board meeting follows.

Update: Several OHA members joined other groups on a tour of proposed sites for wildlife highway crossings in our area.

ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

Chapter Meetings: Eagles, 2nd Thursday, 6 p.m. social/dinner, 7 p.m. presentation.

Update: Pint Night Aug. 23, 6 p.m., Walkabout Brewery, prizes donated by Sportsman's Warehouse. Our 2023 banquet was held on June 3 at Ashland Hills Inn.

TILLAMOOK

JOHN PUTMAN 503-842-7733

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Monday, 7 p.m., ODFW 4907 3rd St., Tillamook.

Update: Our Youth Intro to Shooting Day was a great success.

TIOGA

MARCEY FULLERTON 541-294-7912

Chapter Meetings: 4th Tuesday, 6 p.m., Uncle Randy's Café, Coquille.

Update: The Tioga Chapter had a booth at the Coos County Fair and raffled two guns.

TUALATIN VALLEY

TONY KIND 503-290-6143

oregonhunters.org/tualatin-valley-chapter

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, dinner 6 p.m., meeting 7, Prime Time Restaurant & Sports Bar, Forest Grove.

OHA's Blue Mountain Chapter helped sponsor the recent duck banding project at Wanaket Wildlife Area. The chapter's donation helped to purchase trap construction materials (field fencing and fencing tools, etc.). Volunteers helped to construct five traps in total.

UMPQUA

TADD MOORE 541-580-5660

https://www.umpquaoha.org

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 7 p.m. Backside Brewery.

Update: Umpqua Chapter Board is working on our 2024 projects, speakers and banquet. We can't do it without you, so contact any board member if interested in lending a hand.

UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

Chapter Meetings: La Grande Library, next date TBA.

YAMHILL COUNTY

ANDY BODEEN 503-490-2489

ohayamhill.com

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m. meeting, 6 p.m. dinner, American Legion Hall, McMinnville.

Update: We held our annual youth shotgun clinic on Aug. 12. Our regular chapter meetings will resume on Sept. 12.

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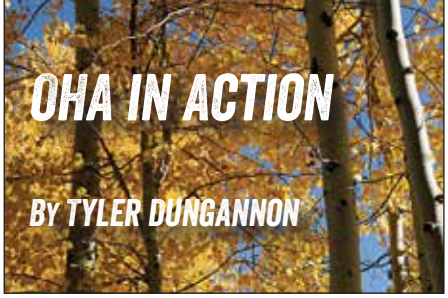


OHA protects White River aspen stand

OHA volunteers helped construct nearly 4,000 feet of buck-and-pole fence to protect an aspen stand at the White River Wildlife Area on June 10 and 11.

Throughout the west, there is concern about the loss of aspen habitats and a reduction in aspen regeneration following disturbance. In some areas in Oregon, 80 percent of aspen woodlands have been lost since the 1800s.

Aspen stands provide fawning and calving habitat, hiding and thermal cover, and desirable forage for deer and elk. Aspen and other small woody plants stimulate the microbes in a deer's rumen, which is critical for digestion.

Heavy livestock and illegal OHV use can prevent aspen recruitment, allow non-native invasive plant species to establish, and degrade understories.

In response to a recent wildfire that burned aspen stands on the White River Wildlife Area, OHA and ODFW installed nearly 4,000 feet of wildlife-friendly buck and pole fencing in two days to protect one of only two aspen stands on the wildlife area.

Buck-and-pole fencing allows the aspen stands to regenerate until they can withstand browsing from wildlife. Eventually, unlike metal fencing, the wood naturally decomposes.

The primary purpose of White River Wildlife Area is to provide winter range habitat for black-tailed deer and elk, and OHA continues to help ODFW achieve that goal.

The OHA Hoodview Chapter improves habitat on White River Wildlife Area annually, and this year the Hoodview Chapter comprised the majority of the more than 40 OHA volunteers who attended the project. Hoodview OHA covered all meals for volunteers and the great food made the camping experience one to write home about.

OHA's Mid-Columbia Chapter also played a notable role in making the project a success. State OHA, along with the Hoodview and Mid-Columbia Chapters, coordinated the event with ODFW White River Wildlife Area staff.

One lucky OHA volunteer walked away with an $1,800 Howa Carbon Fiber Rifle (donated by Legacy Sports International) and every volunteer received a great prize. Thanks to our project sponsors, Legacy Sports International, Benchmade Knife Company, Black Rifle Coffee Company, Work Sharp, Coast and Napier Outdoors, prizes totaled $3,000.

Stay tuned for future regional habitat projects led by State OHA and OHA chapters.

Oregon Trappers Association

1st Annual Fundraiser Banquet
Redmond VFW Hall • October 21, 2023

Fully catered dinner with the beef proudly donated from Painted Hills Natural Beef located in Fossil.

Auction, Games & Raffles with 10-plus Guns to give away!
(must pass and comply with state and federal laws and regulations to win).

Dinner $40 per person. Youth under 18 $15; kids under 7 free.
Please purchase tickets prior so we have a meal count at *OregonTA.org*

YOUTH COW ELK HUNT AUCTION

SPONSOR TABLES $750:
- 6 dinners
- 2 memberships
- Sponsor Gun Raffle Ticket
- Sponsor Raffle Package

Exclusive Veterans Drawing for a gun donated by Nosler!

Every child accompanied by a paying adult wins a prize, and each receives a ticket to win 1 of 2 grand prizes!

For information, call 541-325-3675 or visit OregonTA.org

WHEN IN DROUGHT FISH & WILDLIFE ARE STRESSED OUT

TIPS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION DURING DROUGHT

While parts of Oregon benefited from a wet spring and early summer, the state still remains in significant drought especially in southeast and parts of central and northeast Oregon.

Hunters and everyone recreating outdoors are asked to take steps to reduce the unintended impacts of recreation on fish, wildlife, and their habitats during drought.

GIVE WILDLIFE, LIVESTOCK ACCESS TO WATER

Please hunt ethically and give wildlife access to water. Do not camp within 300 feet of a water source to allow livestock and wildlife access to water at night. Also, consider the impact your scent or blind may have on animal use even when you are not there.

SCOUT WITH CARE

Binoculars are great way to enjoy wildlife viewing from afar, and to scout for upcoming hunting seasons as it limits the amount of disturbance to the habitat during drought. Try to limit your disturbance of animals during summer when you are scouting. Scout with optics whenever you can to avoid tromping thru habitat.

TREAD CAREFULLY

Habitat can be negatively impacted by careless use off trail. Bikers and hikers are reminded to stay on trails and limit leaving trails to only when necessary. ATV/UTV users should be mindful to avoid driving on or through streambeds (wet or dry) as it permanently damages the habitat. Remember to keep your dogs on leash and on trail to limit disturbance to wildlife sheltering nearby.

CAMPFIRES OUT

Reduce the likelihood of wildfire by completely extinguishing your campfire (embers and ashes too). Be prepared with a fire extinguisher should a fire accidentally occur from your campfire (required during fire season for ATVs; vehicles must carry extinguisher or gallon of water and shovel when not travelling on county or state roads).

Learn what you can do to help protect Oregon's fish, wildlife and habitat during drought

VISIT DROUGHTINFO.ORG

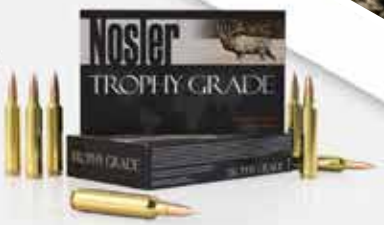
NOSLER®

2023 PHOTO CONTEST

FINALIST PRIZES

Prizes will be awarded in general and youth categories.

1ST PRIZE: Nosler Model 21 rifle
2ND PRIZE: Case (10 boxes) of Nosler Trophy Grade Ammo
3RD PRIZE: Leupold Scope
4TH PRIZE: Danner Alsea Hunting Boots
5TH PRIZE: Benchmade Altitude Hunting Knife



Each finalist will receive an OHA-engraved Coast knife, and entrants whose photos are selected to appear in Oregon Hunter will receive a Nosler hat.

Two finalists in each category will be chosen and published in each issue of Oregon Hunter, beginning with the March-April issue and ending with the November-December issue. From the 10 finalists in each category, five finalist prize winners will be chosen. These will be announced in the January-February issue of Oregon Hunter. Photos received after the entry deadline will be judged for the next issue.

ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

Go to **OHA's website at www.oregonhunters.org** Click on **OHA CONTESTS**. Read the rules, and fill in the required fields. Click **CHOOSE FILE** and attach your photo. Click SUBMIT. That's it! You will be entered for a chance to win more great prizes courtesy of Nosler, proud sponsor and OHA supporter for more than a quarter century!

PHOTO CATEGORIES

GENERAL: Any aspect of hunting, including but not limited to preparation, camping, hunting situations, game and packing.
YOUTH: Same as above, except photos must feature a person who was 18 or younger at the time the photo was taken.

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year

SCAN HERE TO ENTER

NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

YOUTH CATEGORY FINALISTS

A stroll in the blacktail woods. Anna Yarbrough of Fall Creek bags an OHA Coast knife and a spot in the finals of the 2023 Nosler Youth Photo Contest for this picture of herself and Sawyer learning the ways of the forest in Lane County.

Last day Starkey Unit spike on a November hunt. Ron Palmblad of Colton claims an OHA Coast knife and a spot in the finals of the 2023 Nosler Youth Photo Contest for this picture of 17-year-old Brandee Palmblad with her first elk. Brandee used a Remington 660 in .308 Win and a handloaded Nosler 180-grain Partition.

NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

GENERAL CATEGORY FINALISTS

OHA member Will Waddell of Springfield claims an OHA Coast knife and entry in the finals of the 2023 Nosler Photo Contest for this picture of a big Melrose tom taken with his Matthews bow and Rage broadheads in the spring 2022 season.

Austin Bersin, OHA member in Stayton, claims an OHA Coast knife and entry in the finals of the 2023 Nosler photo contest for this picture of the family on Hollie's first spring bear hunt. Hollie hunted in the Willow River area of British Columbia in May 2023 and anchored her bear with a Tikka rifle chambered for .270 WSM.

No Tellem Creek/Duane Dungannon

NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

HONORABLE MENTION

OHA member Jeff Stanton of Redmond purchased this African safari at an OHA banquet auction in 2020 and hunted in 2023. Stanton earns a Nosler hat and honorable mention for this picture of himself with an impala and hunting partners Nick Dasen and Dave Drescher.

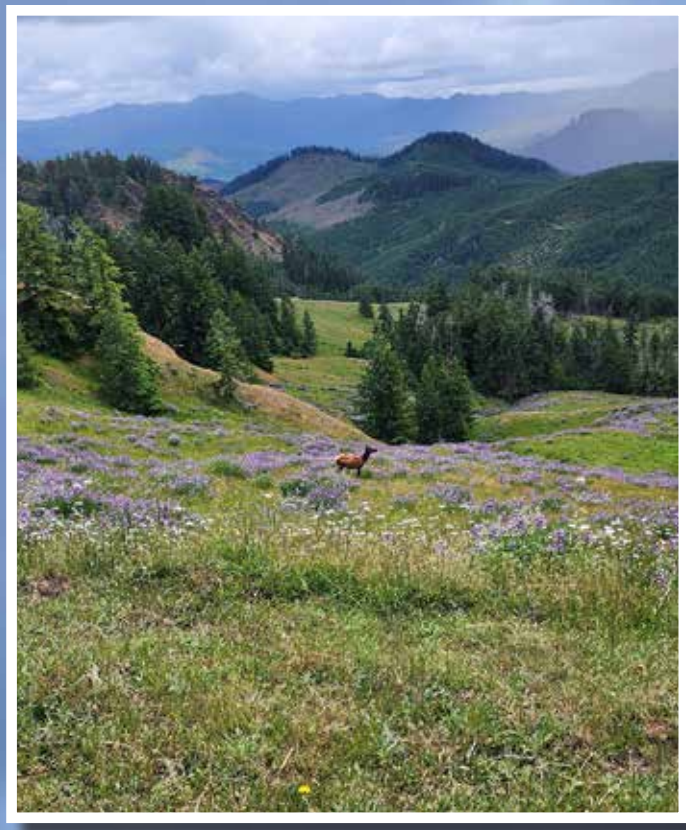
Prineville resident and OHA member Kevin Moran earns honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this nice photo of a brown-phase Hells Canyon black bear.

First turkey hunt for Lincoln Journey and Smith Asla. The boys tagged out in the McKenzie Unit. OHA member Dana Journey of The Dalles earns honorable mention and a Nosler hat for the picture.

A 260-pound boar from Tehama County, California. OHA member Richard Harding of Jacksonville earns honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this great picture from a May 2023 hunt. Nephew Jim was using a semi-custom Howa 1500 chambered in .308 Winchester.

Cascades Summer Snowstorm/Duane Dungannon

Tagged out for turkeys in Umatilla County. OHA member Greg Silbernagel of Pendleton earns a Nosler hat and honorable mention for this backlit picture of son Pat and himself with their Walla Walla Unit toms. Photo credit Heath Cokely.



Elk in the wildflowers. OHA member Aaron Bunt of Roseburg snapped this picture on June 30 in the Sixes Unit. Bunt earns a Nosler hat and honorable mention.

First turkey for Katie! OHA member Joshua Knoebel of Springfield earns a Nosler hat and honorable mention for this photo capture of wife Katie and her Indigo Unit gobbler. Katie carried a 20 gauge shotgun for this April hunt.

Josh Vail of Carlton earns a Nosler hat for this photo of Bre and Mikayla with a spring bear taken on a mentored hunt in the Powers Unit in Coos County. Bre was hunting with a .28 Nosler and Sig optics.

How a Coyote Became a Bare

WARNING: this is not breaking news: In February, a coyote bit a student on the leg at a college campus in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., which is pronounced puh-kipp-see-en-WHY. The incident happened at Marist College, whose mission is to help students develop the intellect, character, and skills required for enlightened, ethical and productive lives in the global community of the 21st century fox.

To this end, the Marist Red Foxes have qualified for the NCAA basketball tournament twice, in 1986 and 1987, losing in the first round in both instances.

The coyote apparently bit the student near Leo Hall, which houses approximately 317 freshmen, of which there are no legit 21st Century Foxes in the tradition the poet Jim Morrison sang about in the 20th Century, and whose father was commander of the U.S. Naval fleet during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.

It was not known if the coyote had rabies or held conservative viewpoints or had registered for the Selective Service, but he is currently thought to be $19,000 in debt after two semesters.

There seems to be an ongoing disagreement about just what differentiates a coyote from say, a German shepherd or a chupacabra, or a person whom a migrant can pay a fee to guide them across the southern border.

For discussion, let us examine the curious case of the unidentified critter rehabilitated by an animal shelter in Pennsylvania last February. An animal shelter in Mount Pleasant, Penn., posted a picture that might as well have been Wile E. Coyote lounging in an Acme dog crate. It had coyote eyes, a coyote nose, coyote ears and coyote feet. What it didn't have was coyote fur. Because it had…wait for it… Mange.

WARNING: COYOTES IN AREA

Report any dangerous coyote activity observed, such as:

- **Coyote carrying box marked ACME**
- **Coyote dropping anvil from balloon**
- **Coyote posting "DETOUR" signs**
- **Coyote posting "Free Bird Seed" signs**
- **Coyote painting tunnel on cliff wall**
- **Coyote in possession of dynamite, TNT, rocket, catapult or large magnet**
- **Coyote wearing roller skates**

At the shelter, they checked the mystery canine for a microchip. No microchip. What could this animal be?

I thought it would be helpful to consult Chuck Jones's rules for the coyote.

Chuck Jones was born in Spokane, Wash., in 1912, and worked in the studio that made Warner Brothers cartoons, which included Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner. He created rules to protect the Coyote from undue harm.

Rule 1. The Road Runner cannot harm the coyote except by going "beep-beep!"

Rule 2. No outside force can harm the coyote – only his own ineptitude or the failure of the Acme products.

These became especially important in the light of the unidentified critter at the animal shelter. Of course, the animal itself could not provide clues, possibly because of Rule 4. No dialogue ever, except "beep-beep!"

I contacted a well-known authority on the subject. You may have heard of him. He is my neighbor's aunt's brother-in-law.

"He grew up in the country, so he knows what he's talking about," according to my neighbor. Of course, he is a busy fellow with a deep brusque voice, so I asked him straightaway, what exactly is a coyote and how can you tell he/she/they/them from the rest of God's creatures?

He told me not to bother him unless I wanted my typewriter fingers broken off one by one. I'm going to keep his number in case I sign up for Aflac and get one of those policies that pays $10,000 for the first lost digit and $2,000 each for the next. Because everyone should have a retirement plan.

Back at the animal shelter, which I'm sure has a great retirement plan, employees posted about the mystery animal on social media. Good people took an immediate interest, including maybe your neighbor's aunt's brother-in-law.

Here are some selections from the love and good vibrations manifested with cards and letters from people the coyote didn't even know.

"If only he could talk," said Lorraine S., adding three emoji hearts. Nope, that would be in violation of Rule 4.

An online expert named Dominic said he looked, "like an African hunting dog, used for hunting large cats." And also, small cats, the coyote would have added, except that would have been a violation of the rules.

Leslie Ann G. said it must be a hybrid wolf and German shepherd and was "young and not taken care of."

A.C.M. was interested in the results because it "looks so much like my dog!"

"This looks like a dog that has never been loved!" exclaimed Kimberly G., who claimed to have seen coyotes up close.

Wendy E. wanted to bless his heart no matter what he is.

A worker at a rescue center from Houston, Texas, said "We see canines just like this all the time here in the Houston area." Of course you do.

Kristianne G. was sure the mystery dog was a whippet. Gordy S. agreed. "Whippet, greyhound breed. I have two in my home."

A few suggested the critter was a chupacabra, which taken from the Spanish renders chupa (sucks) and cabras (goats). The chupacabra is a legendary creature as you may well imagine.

Eventually, the shelter confessed in an official statement the dog was a coyote. That wasn't good enough for Eve C., who said, "I still think he's a dog."

We can't help but feel sorry for the coyote. The whole ordeal must have been humiliating, but that, too, is in accordance with the rules. Rule 9, the coyote is always more humiliated than harmed by his failures.

I grew up watching cartoons, so I know what I'm talking about.

For a signed copy of A Bear Hunter's Guide to the Universe, *send $24.95 to Gary Lewis Outdoors, P.O. Box 1364, Bend, OR 97709.*

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Cascade Lakes Brewing is a proud sponsor of:

- Oregon Hunters Association
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