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JOHN WHELAND

# OREGON HUNTER

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## OHA's many partnerships prove key to victories for our mission

**O**HA came out of the 2024 legislative session with one of the most meaningful wins for Oregon's wildlife: additional funding to increase monitoring and testing for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). The funding allocated \$1.9 million to the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory located at Oregon State University for increased lab capacity and the establishment of in-state testing for CWD samples. In addition, ODFW received \$795,000 for increased personnel capacity in the Wildlife Laboratory and the hiring of several seasonal positions to increase sample collection.

CWD, which is contagious and 100-percent fatal to deer and elk, has been found in Idaho deer very close to the Oregon border.

CWD, which is contagious and 100-percent fatal to deer and elk, has been found in Idaho deer very close to the Oregon border.

Securing this funding was a two-year process. In 2023, we authored HB 2532, which originated the CWD funding request. That bill passed unanimously out of its policy committee but died in Ways & Means when it did not rise to the top of the list for necessary funding. With a legislature focused on housing, homelessness, and addiction, getting their attention on wildlife is an uphill battle.

This multi-year process is a great example of the constant work needed to maintain OHA's legislative presence. Much of the foundational work is done during the interim time between legislative sessions: working with legislators and their staff to develop legislation, participating in collaboratives to develop concepts, and building relationships in and out of the Capitol.

OHA's 2023 victory with HB 3086, which changed the regional selection for the ODFW Commission, was due in part to the relationships formed with our Tribal partners. The full force of the environmental coalition was brought against that bill and, frankly, the sportsmen's community would not have prevailed if it had not been for Tribal leadership weighing in on the importance of ODFW's Commission being represented by more regions of the state outside the Portland metro area.

When HB 2532 died at the end of the 2023 session, it was OHA's relationships with legislators that afforded us the opportunity to bring it back to life in 2024 in HB 4148. And when HB 4148 also died, it was OHA's tenacity and willingness to work across the aisle that secured the funding for CWD in the final budget bill of the session.

OHA is already looking ahead to the 2025 session and working with decision makers to bring our future legislative concepts to life. In the legislature, as in sports, the off-season is fundamentally important. No athlete steps onto the ice for the first time at the season opener; there's months of skating, training, and conditioning before the puck drops. Likewise, for OHA, the off-season, or rather the off-session, is where we put in the work to build the relationships, collaboratives, and legislative concepts that further our mission statement to protect Oregon's wildlife, habitat, and hunting heritage. We don't stop working for our members, and for all of Oregon's sportsmen and women, at the end of legislative session, rather that's when we're just getting started.



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  - Feb. 10
  - Feb. 15
  - May 10
  - May 15
- Which must be left on an upland game bird while in the field?
  - feathered wing
  - feathered head
  - a or b
  - none of the above
- Leftover deer and elk tags go on sale when?
  - May 15
  - June 12
  - June 20
  - July 1
- Which is legal for turkey?
  - BBB shot
  - shotgun slug
  - muzzleloading rifle
  - none of the above
- Which unit has a mountain goat hunt?
  - Sumpter
  - Minam
  - Snake River
  - all of the above
- Ladd Marsh is in what county?
  - Union
  - Wallowa
  - Baker
  - none of the above
- You can take a 2nd fall bear in what region of Oregon?
  - northwest
  - southwest
  - northeast
  - all of the above
- Which will nest in trees?
  - wood ducks
  - doves
  - mergansers
  - all of the above
- Compound bows are prohibited in what archery deer hunt area?
  - Hart Mountain
  - Trout Cr. Mtns
  - N. Bank Habitat Area
  - none of the above
- An upland bird validation is required to hunt which?
  - turkey
  - dove
  - band-tailed pigeon
  - none of the above



### WHERE IN OREGON WAS THIS PHOTO TAKEN?

Identify the river in this Oregon Canyon, 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](http://oregonhunters.org), where a larger version of the photo appears. One entry per OHA member.

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### LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:

**Allen Sedey of Medford**

Allen's name was drawn from OHA members who identified Rogue Valley's Pilot Rock.

APRIL 27  
OHA chapter banquets:  
Klamath 541-884-5773  
Curry 503-351-5847  
OHA Pioneer Youth Day 503-936-4718

MAY 4  
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[www.oregonhunters.org](http://www.oregonhunters.org);  
OHA Tillamook Chapter banquet,  
503-801-3779;  
OHA Tioga Chapter Youth Day,  
541-267-2577

MAY 15  
Controlled hunt application deadline

MAY 18-19  
OHA Hart Mtn. project, 541-591-9700

MAY 31  
Turkey, spring bear seasons close

JUNE 1  
OHA Klamath Chapter forest  
cleanup, 541-281-2224;  
OHA youth & family events:  
Bend 541-480-7323  
Tillamook 503-842-7153  
Tualatin Valley 503-290-6143  
Josephine County 541-218-2836

JUNE 2  
OHA Tualatin Valley Chapter youth and  
family Event, 503-290-6143

JUNE 7-9  
White River weekend project,  
503-706-7481

JUNE 12  
Controlled hunt results available

JUNE 14-16  
OHA Pioneer Chapter weekend  
guzzler campout, 503-932-7202

JUNE 28-30  
All Hands All Brands for Public Lands  
weekend project, 541-647-0424

JUNE 29  
OHA Lake County Chapter Youth & Family  
Day, 541-417-2983

JOHN DAY RIVER CANYON/COURTESY BROOKE WATSON

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



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## OREGON AFIELD

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

# Look for burns to find Smokey

**O**regon offers some of the best spring bear hunting out West with solid success rates based on hunter participation – and persistence. Most successful hunters put in more than a weekend in the woods.

The season runs from April 1 to May 31 and encompasses several western units as well as a good number of units throughout the Cascade Range and in the northeast corner of the state. Oregon is home to an estimated 30,000 bears, and the numbers have steadily grown over the last couple decades. With recent wildfires across Oregon, bear habitat has improved in many locations. During the spring, bears will frequent clearcuts or areas replanted with re-prod to graze for fresh food, mainly

grasses, sword ferns, early berries and other fresh salad.

Old burns also provide logs and burned-out trees full of insects, grubs and other tasty morsels that bears need to fatten up after a long winter nap. Visit [oregon.gov/odf/fire/pages/firestats.aspx](http://oregon.gov/odf/fire/pages/firestats.aspx) for information on recent fire activity.

Regional harvest rates have trended to be highest in the southwest region hovering around 20 percent, while northwest units are a close second with an overall harvest average of around 17 percent. Western Oregon hunters put in more days afield than northeast hunters, in part due to earlier access to higher elevations and in part because more hunters there live closer to their hunt area.



*NO NEED TO GIVE 'PAWS' – With the weather already warming up, bears will be active below the snow line throughout their ranges on both sides of the Cascades this spring.*

On the west side, you will find bears roaming about a bit earlier in the season because snow pack is usually less and bears here don't always go into full hibernation. However, hunting the receding Cascade snowlines and Coast range hills, I have had very good success on grassy openings and drainages using fawn- and calf-in-distress calls. Bears here will also use grassy closed roads to travel and look for other bears as the breeding season approaches.

On Oregon's east side, the country is vast and good optics to glass are the best way to locate bruins emerging from their dens below the snowlines. Spot-and-stalk is one of the best tactics in the Blue Mountains and Snake River country.

—TROY RODAKOWSKI

# Turkey hunting is about to heat up

**O**ver the past six seasons of turkey hunting in the foothills of the Cascade Range near my home up the McKenzie River Valley, I've had more toms show up in the final two weeks than I can ever recall. This is for two reasons.

First, a lot of hens move to higher elevations to nest in secluded forests. It's nothing for a hen to travel 15 miles to nest in thick cover, and she'll return to the same spot every spring. With hens spread out in the hills, toms cover a lot of ground in search of them for breeding. This is when new toms arrive, too.

Second, predator numbers have been through the roof in this area. I routinely catch bobcats, coyotes and gray foxes on trail cameras, hunting for turkeys. Last spring, they wiped out seven broods I'd been watching. This created a breeding frenzy the last two weeks of the turkey

season. Toms were gobbling and strutting like it was March, hens were active, and hunting was great.

Late season is also a time when grasses are tall and offer both food and cover. Where I hunt river bottoms between Corvallis and Monroe, a lot of turkeys are in tall grass fields much of the day. Calling these toms out of the grass, into nearby trees and brush, is especially productive on hot days when shade offers a break from direct sunlight.

Mid-day can be prime for calling in the flatlands, as turkeys have had a chance to feast on grass seeds and are looking for shade and a breeze from the river to cool them down.

Don't let late season toms fool you. If you're patient, hunt smart, and are willing to work, the final days can be some of the best of the entire season. —SCOTT HAUGEN



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

*The author called this tom out of a field, into cover near a river bottom just south of Corvallis.*

# Seeds of Discontent

*Seed numbers drawn on May 28 may give an early hint of tag draw results*

**A**s Oregon hunters have become savvier about the controlled hunt process, there has been a growing interest in the announcement of seed numbers for each controlled hunt series between the application deadline and the drawing results.

But what are these seed numbers and what can they tell you? If you know how to read into them, they can tell you that you haven't a prayer, or they can get you excited – possibly with false hope.

Once hunters have applied for a hunt, a random application number is assigned to each application. To determine hunt tag winners, a “seed number” is created for each hunt that serves as a base point for choosing successful applicants.

To get a seed number to plug into the computer without any bias, ODFW invites members of the public to come to its Salem office to draw a series of 7 numbered balls from a drawing machine. The combined numbers make up the seed numbers that are used for determining controlled hunt tag winners. A different seed number is drawn for each hunt series.

Applicants that have enough preference points whose lottery numbers are the same as or above and closest to the seed number are awarded their first-choice hunts for the first 75 percent of tags available. The remaining 25 percent are awarded among all first-choice applicants (e.g. not based on preference points) to those hunters with application numbers closest to the seed number.

The process then repeats for second-choice hunts, continuing for all hunts until there are no more tags remaining.

To find your application number, see your hunt application.

Seed numbers will be drawn at 1:30 p.m. on May 28. It will live-streamed at <https://myodfw.com/articles/big-game-affle-and-auction-hunts>



ODFW

Members of the public draw the seed numbers.

Numbers will appear on the ODFW controlled hunts site later.

Remember, you want your application number to be close, but above the seed number. One number below the seed number is as far away as you can be. And the fewer tags, the fewer hunters it takes to undercut you. Crude math says if your drawing odds are 50 percent with your number of points, you don't want to be more than 50 percent above the seed number. This is where the false hope comes into play.

For more details on understanding the process go to <https://myodfw.com/articles/how-check-controlled-hunt-draw-report>

—JIM YUSKAVITCH

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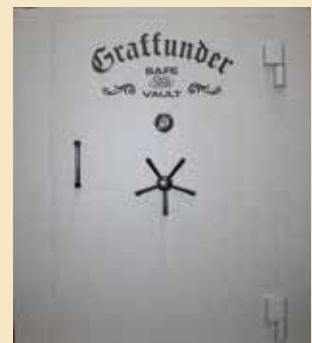
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# OHA engages in search for ODFW's next director

## New director selection scheduled for May 10

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director  
[Amy@oregonhunters.org](mailto:Amy@oregonhunters.org)

ODFW is on the cusp of a new era with the retirement of current Director Curt Melcher.

Effective April 1, Director Melcher is retired, and the current ODFW Commission is tasked with the selection of the new agency leader.

The Commission and Governor Kotek are at the helm of the selection process with the Governor's office facilitating the recruitment and selection process and the

Commission making the final selection from the winnowed list of applicants.

Selection of a new director is scheduled for the May 10 Commission meeting.

OHA has been engaged with Commission members, as well as decision-makers in the Governor's office, to express our concerns and advocate for a director who can effectively lead the agency through a hotbed of social topics while remaining focused on science-based wildlife management.

An extensive background in wildlife management, as well as a strong understanding and belief in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, are crucial attributes OHA has put forth to deci-

sion-makers. Additionally, a knowledge of the principles of wildlife research and how to apply those in an unbiased manner is another key characteristic a successful director should possess.

Another important attribute is fiscal responsibility for the agency and to the rate-paying stakeholders made up of hunters, anglers and trappers. Understanding and appreciating that these stakeholders contribute 47 percent of the agency's budget is key to managing and conserving wildlife.

OHA will continue to work with the Commission members, as well as the Governor's office, to express the views and needs of the sportsmen and women in Oregon.

# OHA scores big win to fund fight against CWD spread

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director  
[Amy@oregonhunters.org](mailto:Amy@oregonhunters.org)

After a two-year process, OHA has successfully secured funding for increased Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) monitoring, detection, and testing in Oregon.

In the spring of 2022, OHA was concerned that CWD funding was not included in the proposed ODFW budget. As such, OHA authored and championed a bill for the 2023 legislative session that would appropriate funding from the State's General Fund to both ODFW and the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) at Oregon State University. That bill, HB 2532, died at the end of the session.

Because of OHA's relationships in the Capitol, the CWD funding package was brought back in the 2024 session, reincarnated as part of HB 4148, the wildlife omnibus bill. HB 4148 contained CWD funding, appropriations for the Invasive Species Council, funding for a new program to reduce human-wildlife conflict,

and important policy language specific to wildlife crossings. While the bill itself died in Ways & Means, the funding portions for the CWD work and the Invasive Species Council made it into the end-of-session budget bill.

**Currently, all of the samples are shipped to Colorado State University, taking in excess of 7 weeks for results.**

ODFW will now receive \$795,000 to increase capacity in the Wildlife Laboratory and seasonal positions to assist with much-needed sample collection. Additionally, the successful program that pays taxidermists and meat processors for samples will receive a portion of those funds. Increased sample collection is vital to monitoring and potentially detecting CWD, should it be found in Oregon's ungulate populations.

The OVDL was appropriated \$1.9 million to increase laboratory capacity for zoonotic disease research and to establish in-state testing for CWD. Currently, all samples are shipped to Colorado State University, taking in excess of seven weeks for results, by which time meat is already processed, and heads and spines



Oregon hunters who check animals in for CWD sampling can now expect faster results.

are deposited who knows where. In-state testing will provide fast, reliable results to Oregon's hunters and position the state in a more proactive stance to process the needed increase in sample testing.

Securing this funding is a big win, not just for OHA and Oregon hunters, but most importantly, for Oregon's wildlife.





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## Two years on, controlled bowhunts taking shape

**T**wo years following the implementation of controlled hunts and a cap on non-resident tag allocations for Oregon’s archery elk season in most of northeast Oregon, the landscape of elk hunting in the state has undergone a notable transformation. With these regulations now in place, both hunters and ODFW have had the opportunity to experience and evaluate the impacts of these changes.

Some of the initial resistance from hunters has given way to a period of adaptation and reflection, informed by ODFW’s collection of data on population dynamics and hunter success rates.

This backdrop sets the stage for an exploration of the current state of archery elk hunting in Oregon, delving into the experiences of hunters under the new system, the conservation outcomes observed, and strategies for navigating the revised regulations to maximize hunting experiences.

The recent changes to Oregon’s archery elk season reflect a significant evolution in the state’s approach to wildlife management. Specifically, the transition to controlled hunts in certain areas, such as northeast Oregon, is designed to more effectively manage elk populations and the impacts of hunting. This shift away from a general tag system aims to address concerns over the sustainability of elk herds and the quality of hunting experiences. Alongside, the introduction of a 5-percent cap on non-resident tag allocations is intended to address the needs and apportion opportunities between resident and non-resident hunters. These changes underscore a broader strategy of wildlife conservation, aiming to ensure the long-term viability of elk hunting traditions in Oregon, while safeguarding the ecological integrity of their habitats.

Predictably, reactions among hunters have been varied. While some commend the conservation efforts, lamenting wound loss and over-pressure, others have voiced frustrations that the new restrictions are limiting – not to mention the painful position for those hunters building a healthy accumulation of points. Additionally, the previously cherished flexibility of hunting across diverse regions, balancing local excursions with trips to more bountiful

hunting grounds, now presents a strategic challenge. This sentiment reflects a broader dialogue on hunting’s evolving nature, balancing tradition with ecological stewardship.

### Applying for Tags:

Navigating the new application process for controlled hunts demands strategic consideration. For the purposes of this article, we’re focusing on the new controlled units in northeast Oregon. For simplicity, we’re looking at 246R-272R in the Controlled Elk Tables from ODFW, acknowledging that several of these units were already controlled.

As it turns out, ODFW’s initial assessment held true; the number of tags available in 2023 exceeded the number of first-choice applicants. Put simply, archers looking to hunt the Hells Canyon Breaks, Eagle Caps or the eastern aspects of the Blue Mountains, can do so, provided they are willing to put all their eggs in one basket.

There is also some space to continue to cultivate points for premier hunts while still hunting a desirable unit. These opportunities are particularly favorable to traditional archers. There are at least four units a hunter can apply for as a second choice and draw with relative certainty: Heppner #2, North Fork John Day Traditional, Eagle Cap Traditional, and Snake River. Other second-choice opportunities do exist, but they’re far from guaranteed.

Ron Wold’s estimates on oregontags.com predict that Northside, Murderers Creek, Ukiah #2, Silvies and Eagle Cap Zone offer better than 50/50 odds on second choice. According to Wold’s projections, only Heppner #2, Snake River and Eagle Cap Traditional offer a decent chance on third choice.

Wold also points out that previous odds are not the same as predictive odds. These hunts are so new they’re particularly vulnerable to volatility. If 100 fewer people applied for a hunt in 2023 than in 2022, is that a trend that will continue, or a result of hunters seeing poor odds last year and applying elsewhere – a pendulum that may swing back this year when they see fewer people applied last year? It’s just too early to tell.

| Hunt Number | Unit  | 2023 Tags | 2022 First Choice | 1st choice odds | (resident 2nd choi | resident 3rd choi | resident 4th choice odds |
|-------------|---|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 246R        | Murderers Cr Unit Bow                             | 1,030     | 400               | 100%            | 51%                |                   |                          |
| 247R        | Northside Unit Bow                                | 1,055     | 373               | 100%            | 75%                |                   |                          |
| 248R2       | Heppner Unit Bow No. 2                            | 1,600     | 497               | 100%            | 100%               | 47%               |                          |
| 249R2       | Ukiah Unit Bow No. 2                              | 1,300     | 364               | 100%            | 89%                |                   |                          |
| 250R1       | Desolation Unit Bow                               | 1,085     | 544               | 100%            | 43%                |                   |                          |
| 250R2       | N Fork Traditional Bow* (Traditional Bow Only)    | 110       | 41                | 100%            | 100%               | 0%                |                          |
| 251R        | N Sumpter Bow*                                    | 530       | 354               | 100%            | 25%                |                   |                          |
| 252R        | Starkey Bow*                                      | 1,300     | 737               | 100%            | 28%                |                   |                          |
| 253R1       | Eagle Cap Zone*                                   | 1,795     | 884               | 100%            | 60%                |                   |                          |
| 253R2       | Eagle Cap Traditional Bow* (Traditional Bow Only) | 200       | 21                | 100%            | 100%               | 100%              | 50%                      |
| 259R        | Snake Rvr Unit Bow                                | 270       | 74                | 100%            | 100%               | 26%               |                          |
| 265R        | W Beulah Bow*                                     | 500       | 232               | 100%            | 34%                | 0%                |                          |
| 266R        | N Malheur Rvr Bow*                                | 450       | 273               | 100%            | 10%                |                   |                          |
| 272R        | Silvies Unit Bow                                  | 855       | 298               | 100%            | 80%                |                   |                          |

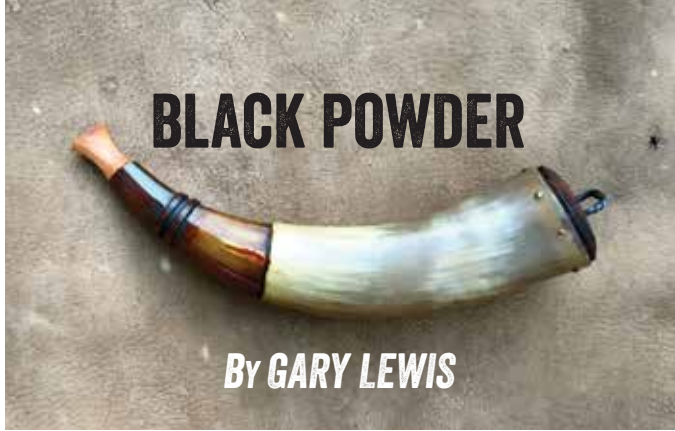
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# Second-Choice Deer

*Puff some smoke in the Year of the Wood Dragon*

**A** lot of us have names for our guns. Daniel Boone burned powder with a gun called Old Tick Licker. Davey Crockett caressed a squirrel gun called Ol' Betsy. Buffalo Bill called his Springfield 1866 Lucrezia Borgia. I have a gun named Old Crowe.

If you haven't named your muzzleloader yet, you might call it the Wood Dragon. You see, according to the Chinese zodiac, 2024 is the Year of the Wood Dragon. And the Chinese invented black powder, so they should know. If 2024 is the year of the wood dragon, let's make sure you draw a muzzleloader deer tag.

Let's get it. Please stand and let's all turn to page 40 in the hymnal. You got choices to make. If you choose not to decide you still have made a choice. Five blank spaces stand out on the controlled hunt application for choices 1 through 5. As if.

As if you really have a chance at any hunts if you don't have the preference points for them and the odds don't fall your way. The good news is in this game you do have a chance in the 2nd Choice category. Let's take a look at the latest statistics and predictive odds coming from the overworked and under-appreciated servers at [Oregontags.com](http://Oregontags.com). Please leave a donation at the door.

There are a half dozen options in the 100-series muzzleloader deer menu that are what might be described as under-subscribed or under-utilized. These are hunt offerings in which there are more tags than first-choice applicants.

## WHAT YOU DON'T DO

What you don't do is pick a 2nd choice that won't play. Let's say you have five points, which is enough to draw the 141M Hood-N. White River Muzzleloader with 94-percent odds, and you look over the options and say, well, if I don't draw 141M, I want to hunt the Metolius Unit. Nope. Doesn't work that way.

Instead, pick a hunt like the 123M1 Melrose, which had 132 tags last year and 83 first-choice applicants. Chances of drawing that one 2nd choice are 16 percent. And 16 percent is better than a big fat ZERO. Of course, zero, would mean being back in the pool of hunters which can still buy a general season (any legal weapon) or bow tag. So you don't have to be a loser, which was the good news I shared with one of my daughter's suitors a long time ago. The muzzleloader hunter has no hope in 3rd, 4th and 5th choice. This is just smoke and mirrors for wishful thinkers. But you do have a chance at 2nd choice if you play it right.

## HOW TO PLAY IT

The thing to consider is whether you roll the dice on first choice and apply for the easier draw 2nd choice that's 16 percent (as 2nd choice) or go with the near 100 percent. How bad do you want to hunt? Or are you willing to put off black powder dreams another season? Ever heard of point creep? It's real. I used to hunt with that guy.

According to Ron Wold's [Oregontags.com](http://Oregontags.com) website, the best options for a 2nd choice draw this year are the 114M Trask, 123M1 Melrose, 125M Sixes, 127M Chetco, 152M Grande Ronde and 157M Sled Springs. These are all great hunts, but public land access varies. That 123M1 Melrose tag looks great until you realize there is only 16-percent public land and someone else got there before you. The 114M Trask hunt checks in with 42 percent public lands which might sound like a lot until the season is on and you keep driving past No Trespassing signs, and an early dump of snow in the Coast Range pushed all the bucks down. Do I sound bitter?

What these five hunts have in common is they can all be drawn 100 percent (in theory) with 0 preference points.

## THE MEAT POLE DOTY SAG

Because no discussion of this type should conclude without talk of deer hanging on meat poles, let's go to the ODFW totals from 2022 (the last year for which the data was available). In the year of the tiger, the 114M Trask tallied 29-percent success while in the Umpqua watershed, the 123M1 Melrose maintained 44-percent harvest success. Down south, the 125M Sixes stamped out a 30-percent return and the 127M Chetco churned 23-percent harvest.

Over east, the 152M Grande Ronde rounded up to 51-percent success and the 157M Sled Springs spurred over the finish line with a stunning 56 percent.

This is where your financial planner would remind you past performance is not a predictor of future results. But man, it sure gives you a good feeling when you see the sun coming up on opening day and there is a mountain rifle newly dubbed the Wood Dragon or Ol' Firebreather in hand with 100 grains of powder beneath your favorite projectile and a sharp flint over the frizzen.



*Listen to Gary's podcast - Ballistic Chronicles - on Spotify, iTunes, Apple Podcasts and other podcast platforms. Or visit [www.GaryLewisOutdoors.com](http://www.GaryLewisOutdoors.com).*



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# RIVER *of* DREAMS

*A once-in-a-lifetime hunt should be the hunt of a lifetime. By Brooke Watson*

I started hunting big game at 9 years old in Oregon's Mentored Youth Hunter Program. Following an exciting and emotional antelope hunt, I was hooked and knew hunting would always be a part of my life. Years later, finding out I drew a sheep tag for the John Day River canyon was so shocking, I could hardly believe it.

When Nov. 18 finally rolled around, I was as prepared as I could be. It was an early wake-up in our motel room in Condon. I glanced out the window and couldn't see 10 feet, as giant plumes of fog surrounded the area, and concern immediately set in; the fog would make it nearly impossible to glass.

Out of the hotel room, we grouped up. My dad and I were accompanied by our good family friend Tyler, our friend Terrance, who is a cameraman with Best of the West, as well as John, an outfitter friend of ours, and Chanse, one of John's scouts. With high hopes that the weather would improve, we loaded the buggies, and were off to find some sheep.

The morning was rough, considering the below-freezing temperatures, but we were warm with excitement and ready to see what the land had to offer. Glassing was slow at first, but it wasn't long before we started to see groups of ewes with two or three rams in each. They were miles away, but just to see them on the hoof was encouraging.



*The delayed sound of their head-on collision carried across the canyon.*

Around mid-morning, the buggy stopped abruptly, and all the guys got out and pulled out their bins. There were three rams, two of which were staring each other down. Then suddenly, both were on their hind legs with cocked necks ready to clash horns. When they collided, I could hear the hit, but it was delayed in the canyon. I couldn't believe how loud it was! I tried to convince all the guys to stay for a while, because I wanted to watch them all day, but I knew we had lots of ground to cover.

Following many walks and a ton of glassing, we located a big herd and posted up to watch as they spilled out from below us. The ewes were feeding but didn't appreciate us being above them; three rams fed out from behind the ewes, and our excitement rose. After looking at each one, we realized all of them were younger rams.

I heard the guys starting to devise a new game plan, but amid the conversation, I heard my dad say, "Guys, there's one more!" Chanse quickly said, "That's a big ram." With him still covered up by brush, we began to get set up for a shot. The area was covered with rocks, so to get my cheek on the stock required all kinds of contorting, and it was not comfortable.

With all the commotion, the sheep began to get anxious, and the herd started to pick up speed until they were sprinting down the ridge. After their jaunt, they had gone from 300 yards



*The author watched a pair of rams sparring in the John Day River canyon.*



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Author Brooke Watson's trophy ram proved bigger than judged at a distance, green-scoring 182 2/8.

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to almost 1,000. We had to make a move to get a closer shot. Knowing it would be difficult for all of us to go together, Chanse and Terrance took off with me, while my dad, Tyler, and John stayed behind to watch from the top.

Sheep make traversing shale slopes and rocky cliffs look like nothing. As we worked our way down, we were sliding on our bums and rolling ankles all the way. The long trek required many stops to recalculate. When we finally made it to a small flat spot, I started to set up the gun. Chanse was calling out ranges as the sheep

continued to feed farther away. The last yardage called was 650; I turned my turret to match up, focused my scope, and started to ease my breathing. As I was checking my level, the big ram paused to feed as the others pressed forward, leaving him broad-side and alone. With an exhale, I squeezed the trigger and he instantly dropped.

I heard cheers and whoops, and I got high fives as we looked down at the ram. Soon, he began to get his front legs underneath him, but his back legs were paralyzed – I had spined him.

I was shaking from excitement from

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SCAN FOR TICKETS



*The only thing harder than drawing a tag for a bighorn is packing a ram out. The horns are like solid stone. The author's sheep required a 4.25-mile pack out of the dark river canyon..*

my first shot, so I knew a second shot might be difficult. As the sheep continued to drag, I began to feel a rush of emotion. For me, watching them die is never easy, and I always pride myself on making a one-shot kill.

My eyes filled up with tears, and Terrence noticed. He said to me, "Brooke, look around and just take it in." The clouds had parted, and the sun was shining through, touching the ridges with golden rays. The fog had almost dissipated, but small plumes were still nestled between the draws. The river in the distance was bright, and I could hear the water flowing through the rocks. Sometimes, these are the kinds of moments you miss amid all the excitement; I felt such peace.

I laid back down, set up my shot, and "Wham!" I heard the hit, and he dropped his head. More tears streamed down my cheeks as I realized what had just happened – I'd just killed a bighorn sheep. My adrenaline was pumping as I took in an incredible accomplishment.

Looking up the ridge, we knew we couldn't pack the ram out of the top. The others would have to go across the top and hike in from a different direction; we figured that would take 3 to 4 hours. They started their hike out and around as we began the intense descent down to the ram. As we made our way down, I thanked God for the wonderful animals we're so lucky to hunt.

Coming up on that ram was like a dream. He looked fake because his horns were so impressive. It's hard to believe they carry that heavy load all their lives

with such ease. All of us stood in wonder as we discussed how big this ram really was. Our original guess was around 174 when we had seen him from a distance, but he green-scored 182 2/8 total.

We started to take photos, and I felt another wave of emotion, realizing my husband wasn't there for such a special moment because of military service. In the dark, we loaded the pack frames and began the 4.25-mile hike out. We shared funny stories trying to get our minds off the weight on our backs. As we spotted the trucks, we nearly sprinted to the tailgates to shed our packs. It was time to head to the only tavern in Condon!

With a big dinner in our bellies, we drove back to the hotel exhausted. Despite a long day, my dad and I couldn't sleep to save our lives; the two of us lay awake in our beds recounting the day's events.

The first thing I did in the morning was go to the truck to make sure the ram was there, because everything felt so unreal. Bringing the head home to the family was so fun, as everyone gawked at the size of the horns. We had a big dinner that night with our family and cooked up some tenderloins for everyone to try. As everyone laughed, ate, and told stories, I was again reminded how much I love hunting.

I can never fully explain its importance in giving me so many memories, shared meals, and truly the most incredible experiences. My husband and I hope to pass down all we know of the sport to our children someday and teach them the truth about its legacy. Hunting has my heart, and always will.



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# OREGON BIGHORNS:

## THE WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART

BY GARY LEWIS

**A** lot of people panic. Troy Boyd didn't want to do that. There is a lot of pressure on the hunter. They panic because they can't find the sheep. They don't know where to start. They're not in shape when they draw the tag. Or the season starts and they didn't sight their gun in. Or they have to get back to school on Monday. That wasn't going to be Troy Boyd, who had applied for this tag since he got out of the Marine Corps in 1982.

He started scouting on the 20th of July and he didn't back off till opening day, Sept. 15. Boyd scouted an honest 25 days before the season started. "I was there on the hill early in the morning and back on the hill in the afternoon."

Boyd told me in August the hardest thing was going to be keeping from shooting the first bighorn ram he saw on opening day.

"I think I'm going to have someone else keep my bullets in their pockets," he said.

If there was one person I wanted to see draw a bighorn sheep tag in 2023, it was my friend Troy Boyd.

We met a long time ago at a monthly meeting of the OHA Bend Chapter. Over the years, I've noticed he is always the first person to help someone else. I have seen him give away fly rods and fishing gear to kids just getting into the sport, and I have seen him volunteer as a Hunter Education instructor and help out at youth events. And he is always ready to help someone else on their first or last hunt. I noticed a lot of my friends mentioned his name when they told me who was there helping when they needed a hand.

David Jones, Jeff Jones, Lynn Bruno, Brad Thorstad and Boyd's son Scott decided they would be there for Troy like he has been there for them. Another friend, Cain Robinson, couldn't be on the hunt but he did accompany Boyd on a lot of the scouting trips. I was leaving for Alaska or I would have been glad to hold his bullets for him.

Boyd also got a lot of help from ODFW biologist Zac Kendall and retired bio Craig Foster out of Lakeview. Their input helped Boyd narrow down where he would scout for sheep.

Throughout the summer, Boyd found the sheep up and feeding

and going to water in the heat of the day. "Some said the sheep didn't care about shade, but what we found is that they gravitated toward shade," Boyd observed.

The bigger rams did not associate with the ewes and the lambs. Boyd said they seemed to stay about a mile apart.

Boyd, who has spent a lot of time observing antelope in similar habitat, was surprised to learn the sheep filled up on water and did not seem to have to drink every day.

In 25 days of scouting, Boyd saw a lot of other things besides sheep. One day he saw a black bear in the desert. He saw a few coyotes and lots of chukar.

He found three shed mule deer antlers, which he took home, and a couple of partial arrowheads and two old sheep skulls, which he did not.

Smoke from the fires in southwest Oregon blanketed the desert some days, but when the season started, the curtain of smoke seemed to part.

The September temperatures, which had been in the low 90s, dropped down into the 80s.

Opening day dawned clear and calm. The rams were hard to find, but by the end of the afternoon the party had counted 22 rams. Several stalks did not pay off, and the party backed off to regroup and try again.

The early season sheep hunters had opted to hunt other areas, so Boyd knew he would have the ground he had scouted to himself. What surprised

him, he said, was that sheep hunters from past seasons were traveling out in the desert, too, watching the sheep. And he talked to a sheriff's deputy who had a list of the names of the people with tags and knew who was supposed to be there.

On day two, Boyd elected to sit at a waterhole while the Jones brothers and Bruno glassed a different herd.

When the sun had moved past its zenith, a lone ram moved down toward the water.

This was one of those moments in a hunter's life where he draws on his experience and his philosophy. Boyd's philosophy has always been to shoot the first legal animal to present a shot. And this one looked to be doing just that.

The range to the opposite side of the pond was 222 yards, and there the ram stopped and began to drink.

*Troy Boyd used  
this 165-grain  
Nosler  
AccuBond  
recovered  
from the  
ram.*





This is California bighorn country on the east shore of Abert Lake off Highway 395, not far from where Troy Boyd took his Oregon bighorn ram.

When the ram turned broadside, Boyd centered the crosshair behind the ram's shoulder and squeezed the trigger, sending a Nosler AccuBond across the pond.

Forty years of applying for the tag, 25 days of scouting and two days of the season had come down to this moment. He walked around the pond and knelt beside the ram.

For Boyd, part of the satisfaction of the hunt is spending that time in the desert with friends, and in this case, with his son Scott.

There is a particular satisfaction in cutting the meat himself, Boyd admits. And both he and his wife Donna agree, the steaks from the California bighorn are even better than mule deer. They are going to enjoy it while it lasts, because this is the only bighorn ram they're ever going to have in their freezer.

Taxidermist Tim McLagan estimated the sheep at 4-1/2 years old while biologist Jon Muir said it was 6-1/2 years old. Taxidermist and hunting guide Dave Jarschke split the difference at 5-1/2 years.

"We have a healthy sheep population. It's a fun, high quality hunt," Boyd said. "There's nothing easy about it, but then again, it's not all that hard."

"The waiting is the hardest part," Tom Petty said. Troy Boyd agrees. Most hunters will never draw a sheep tag. But someone is going to.

"Don't give up," Troy Boyd would tell you. "Forty years go by in a blink. Now that it's over, I am glad I didn't get the tag when I was young – when time would have been an enemy."



Gary Lewis is the host of *Frontier Unlimited TV* and author of *Fishing Central Oregon*, *Fishing Mount Hood Country* and other titles. Contact Gary at [garylewisoutdoors.com](http://garylewisoutdoors.com)



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## BEST OUT-OF-STATE BETS TO BAG A BIGHORN TAG

Sheep hunting got fashionable in the '40s and '50s when it was easy to buy or beg the chance. These days, a would-be sheep hunter must put in a lot of money, time and effort for the chance to bag a tag. Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Texas, Washington and Wyoming all hold lottery drawings and/or raffles for bighorn tags.

All the sheep states have raffle systems, and the few permits available come with odds as stacked as 1 in 1,000. If you want to hunt sheep, you need a plan.

• **A 15-YEAR PLAN:** Some states allow a hunter to build preference points; in others, it's luck of the draw. The odds are decent a resident Oregon hunter could draw a sheep hunt once. Raffle tags can raise a person's chances, but it is still like gambling. When making a 15-year plan, a hunter should apply in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Montana and Nevada, to accumulate points. Another option is to move to Alberta or Alaska, where you can hunt sheep on a budget. But you may be required to hire a guide.

The average cost for an out-of-state application is \$200. Apply in five states for 15 years and the tab could run upwards of \$15,000 before the first hunt. One analyst put the temporary expenditures (unsuccessful applicants can get license money back) at \$8,000 while real costs run north of \$600 each year.

For desert sheep, the best opportunities are Arizona and Nevada. Mexico is an option. Colorado has desert bighorns, but only issues permits to residents.

People may come to hunting (or money) later in life, and chances of going for a sheep at all are slim unless they raise their cards in an auction. Got an extra \$40,000-\$150,000?

• **HOW MUCH TIME YOU GOT?** Best thing in the sheep hunting game is to be rich, young and unknown. If that's you, apply in all the states for a 15- to 20-year payoff. People in the 40-plus age category should get into the application process ASAP and play the odds for off-the-radar options. Hunters who are getting up in age should not put in for the harder-to-draw, more desirable units unless they have points already. Instead, apply for hunts in tougher terrain like Idaho's Salmon River country.

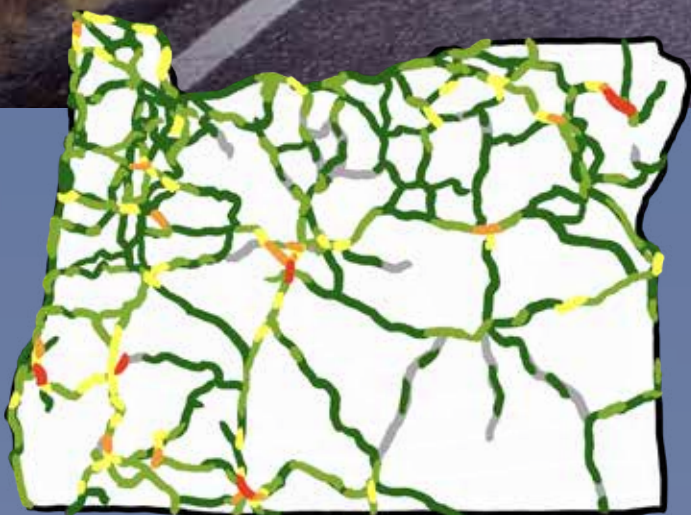
Services like The Draw, Epic Outdoors, Huntin' Fool, Worldwide Trophy Adventures, DrawScout, Virostko Hunts and Outdoors International can help a hunter navigate the maze of state applications and eventually draw a tag or three.

If the goal is to make alpine hunts, a mountain goat tag may be an easier draw alternative. Many of the states and provinces that have bighorns also have mountain goats.

Other alpine options include Spain, Turkey and New Zealand for ibex, chamois or tahr. These hunts are far less expensive than applying for decades and hoping to get drawn in other states.

• **HOW TOUGH ARE YOU?** There is another option. Hunt Montana's rugged unlimited bighorn areas (districts 300, 303, 500, 501 and 502), just for the cost of the tag. The app deadline is May 1. The catch? Unlimited bighorn tags have harvest quotas and the district can close on 48-hour notice. But it is the only place in the lower 48 where you can go sheep hunting every year until you kill one. But if it were easy, everyone would be doing it. —GARY LEWIS

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# SHOOTING SHEEP

PHOTO ESSAY BY DAVID BRANT

**"T**here they are!" I whispered. Four nice rams just below that tall rock wall, maybe 80 yards away. My wife and I had been searching for sheep several hours since first light of the morning. If we can just work around this one rock outcrop, we will have a clear shot. A few minutes later I was aimed and focused on the biggest of four rams, the one on the far right. What a ram! Taking a deep breath and steadily holding the barrel with my left hand, I gently depressed my right index finger. My loaded Canon just went "click." That is what it is supposed to do. Yes, I was here to shoot Oregon's rutting bighorn sheep with my camera.

Oregon bighorn ram tags are a once-in-a-lifetime draw with about 100 tags awarded each year. You can find both California bighorns and Rocky Mountain bighorns in Oregon.

Bighorns make great subjects to photograph. These are fascinatingly social and always posturing in different ways. Formations of rock and mountainous backgrounds in the areas they call home just make the shots more beautiful. There is something special about the texture of their hides and their heavy curled horns when viewed on the computer screen – or better yet – framed and mounted on the den wall.

Although there are not great numbers of sheep in the state, there are quite a few sheep localized in the steep canyons and mountains of Oregon. Look for them in steep rocky canyons with food, visibility, and of course escape terrain they need for protection. They often feed on the grassy slopes of the canyons. The Rocky Mountain sheep in Oregon (estimated at 800 individuals) are found in the northeast corner of the state in areas of Eagle Cap Wilderness, Wallowa Mountains and the Snake River canyon. California bighorns (estimated at 3,700 sheep), which are smaller than the Rockies, inhabit southeast and central Oregon, from the Columbia River to the California border. Deschutes and John Day River drainages are great spots to see California bighorns.

Sheep coloring can vary a bit from dark to light, depending on age and individual characteristics. They blend in very well to the surrounding rocks, making them difficult to spot. It may take a few times of finding them before your eye is trained to pick them out quickly.

There are good reasons to hunt sheep with a camera. First, it takes all the same skill of a hunter in searching, finding and getting close enough for a shot. There is no closed season, so you can go out anytime you want. Plus, there is no coveted draw tag needed, no license required, no issue shooting ewes, lambs or rams, and of course, no bag limit. It's much easier to carry hundreds of digital sheep photos than to pack a sheep off the mountain on your back. And a frame won't set you back what a shoulder mount will.

**NO TAGS.  
NO SEASONS.  
NO LIMITS.**



DESCHUTES RIVER CANYON

**You don't have to get extremely close to bighorns to get good photos. A more distant, wider shot can better show their habitat.**

During my bowhunting years, my average shot distance was 17 yards for deer and elk. Of course, I hunted the brushy west side of the state, where concealment wasn't difficult. Sheep country is much more open, and it can be difficult to approach sheep with their keen eyesight. But there isn't any need to get that close. With decent cameras and lens choices, you can get the shots you want from much greater distances. Sometimes an environmental shot showing the sheep in their habitat is the best story-telling shot anyway.

Where and when you find the sheep may determine how tolerant they are of your presence. Many times you can approach sheep near roads in an auto and they don't mind at all if you stay in the vehicle. Hunted sheep will be much more difficult to photograph than sheep not hunted and accustomed to people. When the rut is active, the sheep have other things on their minds, so closing the distance is much easier. I have taken some fantastic shots with a 300mm lens of tolerant sheep that did not care if I was there or not. Other times my long lens of 500mm in a crop frame camera and 1.4 teleconverter was not adequate for the shots I was after. When the opportunity comes along, take all the images you can and sort out your favorites later. We all love



BURNT RIVER CANYON

**During the rut in November, sheep may not pay much attention to you, as they have other things on their minds.**

close ups showing the massive curls and facial expressions, but don't overlook the wider group shots that show sheep living in their habitat.

My favorite time to photograph sheep is during the rut in November when the rams compete – posturing, pushing, front leg kicks and sometimes violent head-bashing. Interaction between rams and ewes is at a high point, as well. Maybe you will be lucky enough to find some snow on the ground along with a few head-bangers going at it for amazing opportunities.

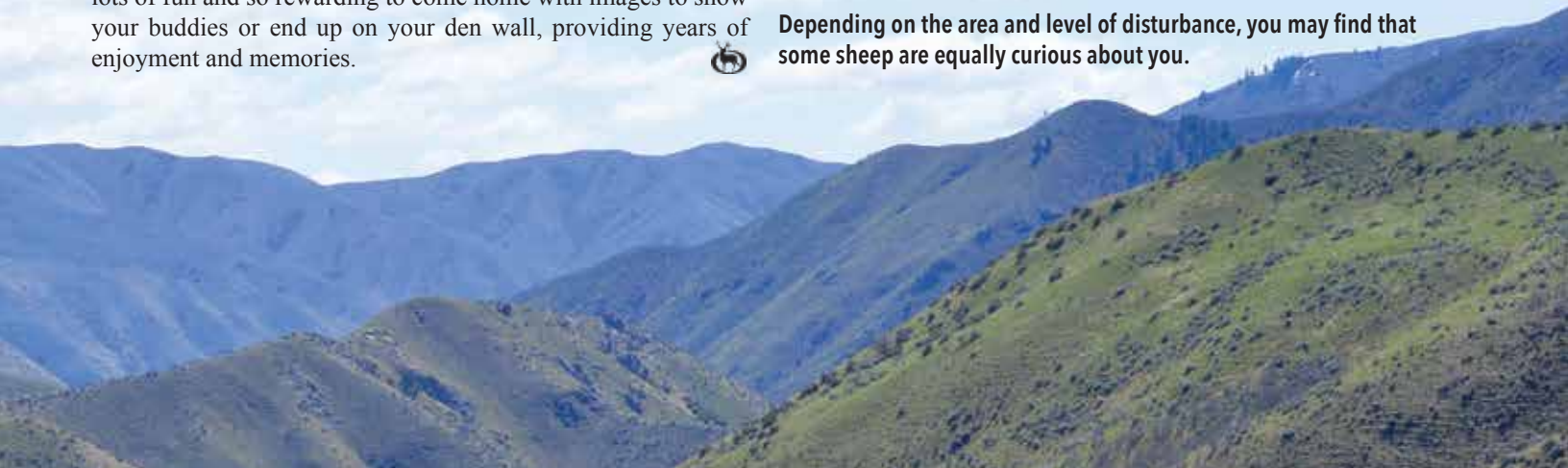
So you didn't draw that once-in-a-lifetime tag this year? Go out and enjoy the mountains and the wildlife they offer. You can drive the back roads, and camp in a tent or in the car. Scope out the hills with binoculars and spotting scopes. Plan extensive hikes and stalks. Learning new areas is always valuable. What you learn about the country and the animals may serve you well when someone in your group draws a sheep tag.

Enjoy the many other species of wildlife in the area. After a day in the field, plan a fine dinner back at camp. It is all good, lots of fun and so rewarding to come home with images to show your buddies or end up on your den wall, providing years of enjoyment and memories.



DESCHUTES RIVER CANYON

Depending on the area and level of disturbance, you may find that some sheep are equally curious about you.



DESCHUTES RIVER CANYON

HELLS CANYON/CHAD DOTSON

Before and after the November rut, you'll find bachelor bands of rams keeping to themselves.







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## You can't always fill your tags right off the bat.

By Troy Rodakowski

*"It ain't over till it's over." –Baseball legend Yogi Berra*

**I**'ve enjoyed some of my best turkey hunts during the month of May. Just as spring really heats up and time is getting short to fill my tags, I find that chasing late-season birds can be very fun and rewarding. Years ago, I use to play semi-pro baseball, and last season it felt as if I were once again trailing late in the game.

It was the bottom of the ninth on that early May morning, and I still had 3 tags in my pocket. Taking a trip out of state delayed my start to the season here in Oregon, so now I had to make up for lost time. Finally stepping into the batter's box, so to speak, I needed to get the 2023 season going in a good way. It was May 6; birds were still gobbling up a storm, especially early off the roost. I hunted hard that entire morning, working my way to a full count on hot gobblers.



*The author took the first of his three 3 turkeys last May at the end of a hunt that looked like a shutout.*

There were two birds fired up that were very interested, but immediately lost interest when the neighbor fired up an excavator. Strike one and two. The bright sun was warming the forest floor, and the hike back to the truck was mostly uphill, so I slowly worked my way out of the canyon, calling once in a while hoping for a late-morning response. As I walked the old logging road, I stopped to answer a text from a good friend and make a quick phone call as we were supposed to meet later for an afternoon hunt. I yelped one last time and swore I heard a distant gobble.

I put the phone away, set the decoy, found a good tree to set up against and yelped again. The bird answered and was a lot closer, moving quickly through the sparse timber. I gave him a few more yelps and purrs as I waited. He gobbled, now less than 60 yards and was coming fast. Steadying my gun, I waited for his red head to appear over the rise. Waiting for that fastball down the middle of the plate, I swung and delivered a solid hit, dropping the gobbler at less than 35 yards. Bird number one was now in the bag.

Hitting a two-out single in the gap was just the way I needed to start out the month of May. Now I needed to capitalize on the other opportunities I might have coming during the remaining days of the season. With a solid start, I was optimistic about filling my second tag, and this time it would be in a different arena than I had been hunting before. Birds here had been scouted and patterned prior to my arrival that cool morning. Like a good coach, I knew what it would take to beat these birds at their game. They liked to work the edges of a field, and setting the decoy 50-60 yards beyond the stand would likely draw them right past me for a good shot. I felt like a hitter waiting for that hanging curveball they would eventually throw me, if I played



*Scouting and a good game plan paid off for the second of 3 birds the author bagged last May.*

my cards just right. Of course, it would be a waiting game with very little calling.

After a couple hours and hearing no gobbles, a hunter begins to wonder if his game plan is really a good one. I have learned that sticking to the original plan is usually the best idea and, in this case, just like working a pitch count into your favor as a hitter, you had to be patient. Just as I was feeling discouraged, less than 40 yards away multiple gobbles erupted like a crowd of fans cheering. My heart rate rose with each passing second as I awaited the arrival of the approaching jelly head gang. Here comes that hanging curve I had been waiting for all morning.

With the approaching birds now right on top of me, I held my breath for a second as I saw movement out of the corner of my eye. I steadied my gun, and time began to

slow as the birds took their time. Similar to those moments when a pitcher stares you down in hope of rattling you, I waited. As the birds came into view, they stopped and realized something seemed off. I had to make a split-second decision to shoot or wait, and as they all raised their heads, I quickly picked the one closest to me, raised my 870 SPS Super Magnum and fired. The 3½ inch blended load of 4, 5 and 6's folded the back gobbler in his tracks at only 16 yards.

Bird number two for 2023 was now officially in the bag, and I was definitely on a winning streak. The date was May 20. With only 11 days remaining in the season, it was going to be really tough finding a good mature gobbler willing to play. Needless to say, they have seen and heard almost everything up to this point, and fooling one isn't easy at all, especially this late in the game.

After a couple more trips to the plate without even a sniff, it came down to the



*TOUCH 'EM ALL – Author Troy Rodakowski is down to his last strike when he belted this bird on the final day of the season last year.*

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final evening of May 31. It was now or never to get that last tag filled. I hoped I'd see something worth hitting. Being short on time, I went back to an old hillside to sit where I had taken several turkeys over the years in hope one would find his way along the grassy trail that evening.

Bagging countless birds from this exact place over the years, I was hoping for some last-minute magic and that a lonely tom would come into view. Every 20 minutes or so I'd throw out a short sequence of yelps and wait.

Before long a red head appeared about 80 yards to my left. I hadn't called in quite a while, so he was just being slow and cautious. He didn't like something, because he popped his head up like a telescope and turned straight back from where he came. Dang it, I don't like it when the pitcher steps off the mound when I'm ready and in the zone. I yelped twice, hoping the long beard would change his mind and return. Just a few seconds later he came back on a string, right into gun range and a quick dirt nap with less than an hour left in season.

A walk off!

Like diamonds in the rough, we all give it our best shot pursuing late-inning, love-crazed gobblers. Sometimes we win and sometimes we don't. Lucky for me, some ninth-inning magic was at work this time around.



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May 28, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.  
at ODFW Headquarters in Salem, Oregon.**



**FOR MORE INFO:**

**Scan the QR code or go to**

**<https://tinyurl.com/4wevpusk>**

**The event will also be livestreamed starting at 2:00 p.m. on May 28.  
Go to [www.youtube.com/user/IEODFW](https://www.youtube.com/user/IEODFW) to attend the event.**



All proceeds go to the management & research of the species, hunter access, & habitat enhancement.

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**WINNER:**  
Chris Colwell, OHA member from Imbler, is the winner of a Tactacam Reveal Trail Camera for his image of a bull elk in Union County last August.

## HONORABLE MENTION:



OHA member Tyler Otterson of Klamath Falls earns honorable mention and OHA hat for these images of an elk pool party and a bathing bear.



OHA member Chuck Hagele from Hillsboro earns an OHA hat and honorable mention for this October image of bulls brawling in Catherine Creek.



David Vangsness, OHA member from Roseburg, caught this nice blacktail buck, an OHA hat, and honorable mention from the Melrose Unit in February.

SPRINGTIME IN THE WALLOWAS/DUANE DUNNANNON

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## Five new muley hunts will score points with kids

**O**regon's youngest mule deer hunters will find five new youth hunts in the 2024 regulations. The following units are included: Beulah, Malheur River, Steens Mountain, Juniper and Silvies. These new hunts complement the existing menu of similar youth-only controlled 100-Series hunts, including Keno, Klamath Falls, Sprague, Mt. Emily,

**The hunts start a week earlier (Sept. 30) than the general season, but run through Oct. 16.**

Warner, Interstate, Silver Lake and Fort Rock, all offering 22 tags.

Why were they added? Lee Foster, ODFW District Biologist in Hines, manages four of the five units. He said these early hunts were "pioneered in the Lakeview and Klamath areas

and moved to this structure because of problems with the old late (Interstate) hunt. Kids were 17 before they could maybe draw it." Some were hunting for the first time and some not at all. The Interstate deer herd was hurting at the same time, so ODFW moved away from the rut hunt.

We chuckled when I asked about parents stashing preference points for their kids to trophy hunt. I know some that did this and ended up eating a ton of points when their kids didn't want to go freeze after years of waiting. It was about the parents more than the kids in some cases. The new structure improves opportunity without needing 20 points.

The hunts start a week earlier (Sept. 30) than the general season, but run through Oct. 16, like most controlled



TERRY SMITH

Mule deer like this buck at Steens Mountain will be fair game in five new youth hunts this fall.

100-Series hunts. That's five days before the grownups take the field. But that block starts on a Monday and runs mid-week. That's a problem for many kids, as school is underway, but locals should have some opportunity to hunt after school. "That was part of the thought process, as well," Foster explained.

Based on existing adult hunt surveys in 2022 (most recent year available), Beulah (165) had the highest harvest rate at 53 percent. Steens (169) and Malheur River (166) were next at 49 percent. Silvies (172) wasn't shabby at 44 percent, while North/South Juniper recorded 41 and 23 percent, respectively. Droughts affected herds in the public lands of South Juniper until last year, according to Foster.

Beulah also had the highest total buck harvest at 547 and Malheur was second with 465. A chunk of that harvest was spikes and forks, but a solid amount of 4-points, also. These units have the most available tags this season, by far, at over 1,400 and 1,100, respectively. There are over 800 available in Silvies.

Foster added, "10 more bucks shouldn't affect the herds."

Around 80 percent of the harvest was on public land, except for Juniper, which was heavily private in North Juniper where alfalfa is present and nearly all public in South Juniper. Total harvest was less than

50 bucks. North Juniper is a red-letter hunt. Draw odds are good, with 2023 first-choice applicants barely exceeding the 2024 tag quota. Something to keep in mind, as landowners are more likely to let a kid pop a buck under their pivots.

These early youth hunts outproduce their namesake adult hunts in terms of success. Foster confirmed this and believed the five extra days and local participation have something to do with that. There's also no time like opening day. Harvest stats for 2022 show the early Warner youth hunt at 84-percent while the Interstate early youth hunt was only 44-percent with seven deer taken. Four were does and no 4-points were taken. Warner produced 15 bucks from 21 tags and five 4-points. Both hunts changed back to "one buck" this year. The Klamath Falls youth hunt reported 67-percent kill.

Draw odds for the new hunts are unknown, but Foster thought Steens might get traffic. Ron Wold's oregontags.com, says Malheur will take 2 or 3 points for adults this season. Beulah will require 3 or 4. Silvies will take 4 points. Steens will take 8 or 9. North Juniper is practically guaranteed, with or without points, and South Juniper will take 2. The existing Warner Unit Youth (172T) hunt require 9 and Interstate Youth (175T) will take 12 this season.



# OHA Helps Kids Be **OUTSTANDING** in the **FIELD**

BY GARY LEWIS



**A** fresh blanket of snow lay on Winter Rim, but down in the fields and the sagebrush around Summer Lake, we basked in warming temps beneath a blue sky with a few puffy clouds.

Sixteen-year-old Sam King thumbed rounds into the borrowed Weatherby, Mikayla loaded the CZ side-by-side, and I stoked the twin tubes of my Lefever. Sam, Paxton, Ty, Mikayla, Emmett and Gus were outfitted in state-mandated orange. This was Emmett's first hunt. Although he would not carry a gun, I put a bird vest on him.

Russ Scott's three-year-old German shorthair cast back and forth, then caught the scent of a running bird. We followed through the marsh grass and caught up when Luke locked up, on point. The painted rooster broke from the grass and Sam dropped it.

"That was awesome," Emmett shouted. Then he found out why I had assigned him to wear the vest. By the time we were finished, he was toting three pheasants.

That was in 2012. Now Sam is 28, he has his own hunting dog – an English cocker. Mikayla is 27 and has hunted in several states, has mentored other young ladies in hunting and has 15 big game animals to her credit. Ty became a champion shotgun shooter. Paxton is an electrician, a husband, a father and a bird hunter. Both Sam and Paxton have given back at OHA youth events. Gus is 19 now, and in college in Wyoming where he gets a chance to hunt ducks and pheasants now and then between classes. He has also been instrumental in recruiting other young hunters through his enthusiasm for the outdoors. And Emmett?

Well, he got several years of hunting under his belt, put blacktail deer on the table for the family, and I'm guessing he will return to hunting one day, too.

They had to start somewhere, and for many of the young hunters I have mentored over the years, their first exposure to hunting was at a youth and family event. All over the state, OHA chapters are gearing up to put on events for the youth in their communities. It's an effort that makes a difference in people's families and gives young people the disciplines and confidence to make their own way in the world.

Those of us that have a little gray in our hair now can think back and remember the people that gave us a start. It's our turn to pass it on.

OHA's youth days offer kids a chance to sharpen their outdoor skills and learn new ones. Opportunities include shooting a bow and arrow, clay target shooting, rimfire rifle shoots and wildlife identification. Many OHA youth events include food prepared by OHA chapter volunteers and drawings for prizes donated by local supporters.

Tomorrow's hunters are learning conservation today, and OHA is leading the way. To connect with a local chapter or find more information, see the contacts listed here or visit [oregonhunters.org](http://oregonhunters.org)



*Gary Lewis is the host of Frontier Unlimited TV and author of Fishing Central Oregon, Fishing Mount Hood Country and other titles. Contact Gary at [www.garylewisoutdoors.com](http://www.garylewisoutdoors.com)*

## OHA Spring & Summer YOUTH EVENTS

**APRIL 27**

Pioneer Chapter Youth Day,  
503-936-4718

**MAY 4**

Tioga Chapter Youth Day, 541-294-7912

**JUNE 1**

OHA youth & family events:  
Bend 541-480-7323  
Tillamook 503-842-7153  
Josephine County 541-218-2836

**JUNE 1-2**

Tualatin Valley Youth Event,  
503-290-6143

**JUNE 29**

Lake County Chapter Youth Day,  
541-417-2983

**AUGUST 10**

Malheur County Chapter  
Youth Shotgun Skills Day,  
208-573-5556

**AUGUST 17**

Yamhill County Chapter  
Youth Shotgun Skills Day,  
503-737-9483

# GAME ON THE GRILL

By HANNAH MABBOTT

## Jalapeño-stuffed tenderloin

This fall, a few days after the season opener, I was able to get an evening to myself and decided to try to locate a buck I had seen earlier in the year that lived between public and private ground. Right before last light, after only seeing a handful of does and passing on young bucks, I found him. One shot at 410 yards, and he went down quickly.

I was shocked at how much larger he was now that I was up close and personal. Packing him out solo and at dark was worth every ounce of effort, knowing I just tagged my largest framed buck and on public ground to boot. Once he was home and processed, I started thinking of the many ways I was going to enjoy this harvest.

Now, we are all a fan (or know someone who's a fan) of jalapeño poppers. We've seen them done with waterfowl, doves, and of course wrapped in bacon. This is a variation that is meant to be a main course more so than an appetizer (I won't try to stop you from eating it as one!). Everyone for whom I've made this loves it, even the pickiest of eaters.

The tenderloin is one of the crowd favorite cuts, and for good reason. It's tender, versatile and mild. This recipe uses a whole tenderloin from a mule deer, although you could easily replicate with elk, antelope, or any other ungulate you choose. However, if you are replicating with elk, you will want to double the ingredients.

### Filling

- 1 jalapeño (minced, seeds removed)
- 6 oz cream cheese (room temp)
- 1 tbs minced garlic
- 2 slices of cooked bacon (roughly chopped)
- 1/4 cup of shredded cheese (Cheddar, Gruyère, Parmesan or whatever is on hand)



1 tsp of onion powder, garlic powder, smoked paprika, black pepper (Or, sub these for 2 Tbs everything bagel seasoning)

Mix all of the above ingredients in a bowl and set aside. Butterfly (halve, almost all the way through) your tenderloin, and stuff the filling inside. Secure with butcher twine or toothpicks and sear in a pan on high for 90 seconds on each side. Place in the oven at 200° for 10 minutes for medium rare, or 15 minutes for a more medium/medium-well.

I like to serve this with home fried potatoes, sautéed mushrooms, and a side kale Caesar salad.

You can use other cuts of meat with this recipe, and it can also deliciously be finished on a smoker at 200° instead of an oven.

Enjoy!



See the author's blog on Instagram @hearth\_and\_horn and on Facebook @Hearth & Horn.



The tenderloin is one of the crowd favorite cuts, and for good reason. It's tender, versatile and mild.

This recipe is possibly the author's favorite way to use this cut each year, because it's simple and it's a crowd pleaser. All you need are a few staples and a trimmed tenderloin, and you're good to go.

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## CHAPTER NEWS

DUANE DUNGANNON



*Happy hunters show off their turkey target patterns at the youth turkey hunting clinic hosted by OHA and ODFW on April 6 at Denman Wildlife Area. ODFW and OHA hosted another clinic the same day at White River Wildlife Area. The events help kids learn the basics of turkey biology and hunting.*

# OHA chapters host projects, youth events

### BAKER

**CHARLIE BRINTON 541-403-0402**

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 6.

### BEND

**REX PARKS 541-480-0230**

[oregonhunters.org/bend-chapter](http://oregonhunters.org/bend-chapter)

**Chapter Meetings:** Please see newsletter for date and time.

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 9.

**Update:** The First Annual Oregon Partners in Conservation family expo was a great success. We will host our Youth & Family Day Event at Cyrus Ranch on June 1. Call Kevin for details at 541-480-7323.

### BLUE MOUNTAIN

**KEVIN MARTIN 541-969-6744**

[ohabluemountainchapter@gmail.com](mailto:ohabluemountainchapter@gmail.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 23.

**Update:** We auctioned an Oregon Access & Habitat Statewide Elk Tag for \$70,000 that will fund local habitat work, as well as public hunting access projects in Oregon.

### CAPITOL

**DANNY SOUTH 503-577-6033**

[ohacapitol.webs.com](http://ohacapitol.webs.com)

**Chapter Meetings:** No longer having in person meetings.

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 16.

**Update:** If you're attending or will attend college and are interested in applying for the Capitol Chapter Scholarship, please contact us at [capitolchapteroha@gmail.com](mailto:capitolchapteroha@gmail.com) to apply.

### CLATSOP COUNTY

**TROY LAWS 503-738-6962**

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 13.

### COLUMBIA COUNTY

**JORDAN HICKS 949-533-7271**

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held Feb. 24.

### CURRY

**MATT THOMPSON 530-351-5847**

[mandmthompson02@yahoo.com](mailto:mandmthompson02@yahoo.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Curry Beast Feast Banquet, April 27, Event Center on the Beach, Call Matt for details.

**Update:** It's not too late to attend the Curry Chapter fundraising Beast Feast Banquet.

### EMERALD VALLEY

**TONY HILSENDAGER 541-729-0877**

[EmeraldOHA@live.com](mailto:EmeraldOHA@live.com)

<https://ohaemeraldvalley.webs.com>

**Chapter Meetings:** 2nd Wednesday, 7 p.m., Sizzlers 1010 Postal Way Springfield.

**2024 Fundraiser:** July 27, Cascadian Bowman, 91714 Poole Creek Rd., Noti, 623-670-6701.

**Update:** You're invited to our Family Fun Day fundraiser on July 27. Enjoy raffles, clinics, competitions, archery and more.

### HOODVIEW

**KELLY PARKMAN 503-706-7481**

[oregonhunters.org/hoodview-chapter](http://oregonhunters.org/hoodview-chapter)

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

**Chapter Meetings:** Second Thursday, Elmer's Restaurant, Portland.

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held Feb. 17.

**Update:** We hosted the annual White River Turkey Clinic on April 6. June 8 will be the annual White River Conservation Project near Wamic.

### JOSEPHINE COUNTY

**DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511**

[ddowns2646@gmail.com](mailto:ddowns2646@gmail.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 16.

**Update:** Our annual Youth Day will be held at the Josephine County Sportsman Association on June 1. We will host our chapter picnic at Fields Park in Murphy on June 22.

### KLAMATH

**ALLAN WIARD 541-591-9700**

[Ohaklamath.webs.com](http://Ohaklamath.webs.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 27.

**Update:** We hosted an OHA booth at the Sportsman & Outdoor Recreation Show March 15-17. Join us for the Hart Mountain Project on May 18-19 at the Hart Mountain Camp and the Topsy Reservoir Forest Cleanup Project on June 1.

### LAKE COUNTY

**LARRY LUCAS 541-417-2983**

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 6.

**Update:** The Lake County Youth & Family Event will be held on June 29 at the Juniper RV Park in Lakeview.

## LINCOLN COUNTY

TODD THOMPSON 541-270-2393

[tjaz@charter.net](mailto:tjaz@charter.net)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Pint Night, June 11, Location TBD.

**Update:** Please join us for a pint on our Lincoln County Chapter fundraising Pint Night on June 11. There will be great prizes and great camaraderie.

## 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.

**2024 Fundraiser:** TBD

**Update:** The OHA Malheur County Chapter Youth Shoot day will be held on Aug. 10 at the Snake River Sportsman Complex in Ontario.

## MID-COLUMBIA

CHUCK ASHLEY 541-993-8076

[Chuckashley4120@gmail.com](mailto:Chuckashley4120@gmail.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 30.

**Update:** We hosted the annual White River Youth Turkey Clinic on April 6.

## MID-WILLAMETTE

JOHN TACKE 541-231-8165

[john@visitnrc.com](mailto:john@visitnrc.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/midwillamettechapteroregonhuntersassociation>

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 13.

**Update:** Congratulations to our Sports Show raffle winner, David Diehl and the many folks who renewed, gifted or became members with their 2025 Gun Raffle Calendars.

## OCHOCO

JOHN DEHLER, III 541-815-5817

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held Feb. 17.

**Updates:** Crook County residents, if you are interested in obtaining an OHA Ochoco Chapter scholarship please have your applications in to Cindy Dehler by July 15.

## PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 503-266-2900

[oregonhunters.org/pioneer-chapter](http://oregonhunters.org/pioneer-chapter)

**Chapter Meetings:** 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m., come early for dinner, Canby Rod & Gun Club.

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 2.

**Update:** Chapter events include Youth Day on April 27, and the Family Campout on June 14-16.

## REDMOND

K. C. THRASHER 541-419-7215

OHA line 541-383-1099

[oregonhunters.org/redmond-chapter](http://oregonhunters.org/redmond-chapter)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held Feb. 24.

**Update:** Our annual Bridge Creek habitat project is May 3-5. Call 541-233-3740.

## ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

[Firepmt29@gmail.com](mailto:Firepmt29@gmail.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 16.

**Update:** Our chapter and ODFW hosted a successful Youth Turkey Hunting Clinic at Denman Wildlife Area on April 6.

## TILLAMOOK

JOHN PUTMAN 503-842-7733

**Chapter Meetings:** 3rd Monday (unless a holiday, then Tuesday), 7 p.m., ODFW Tillamook Office, 4909 Third St.

**2024 Fundraiser:** May 4, Tillamook County Fairgrounds, Dixie Whitehead 503-842-7153 or Glenice Smith 503-842-2475.

**Update:** This year's Youth Shotgun Trap Shooting Event will be held on June 1.

## TIOGA

MARCEY FULLERTON 541-294-7912

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 6.

**Update:** We will hold our annual Tioga Chapter Youth Day on May 4 at the Myrtle Point Gun Club.

## TUALATIN VALLEY

TONY KIND 503-290-6143

[oregonhunters.org/tualatin-valley-chapter](http://oregonhunters.org/tualatin-valley-chapter)

**Chapter Meetings:** 3rd Tuesday, dinner 6 p.m., meeting 7, Prime Time Restaurant &

Sports Bar, Forest Grove.

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 23.

**Update:** Recent guest speaker Troy Schaffner, who is the Controlled Hunt Draw and LOP Program Specialist for ODFW, gave us pointers on how to apply for our hunts. Join us for our annual Youth Day Event on June 1 and 2 at Hagg Lake.

## UMPQUA

TADD MOORE 541-580-5660

<https://www.umpquaoha.org>

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held April 6.

**Update:** Our picnic will be held at Roseburg Rod N Gun Club July 16 at 6 p.m. Bring your family and a potluck dish to share. Youth day has been canceled for this year, but we plan to hold the event in 2025.

## UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

**Chapter Meetings:** La Grande Library, next date TBA.

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held Feb. 24.


## YAMHILL COUNTY

ANDY BODEEN 503-490-2489

[ohayamhill.com](http://ohayamhill.com)

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

**2024 Fundraiser:** Held March 16.

**Update:** Our Youth Shotgun Shoot date has changed to Aug. 17 at Newberg Rod & Gun Club. 

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## Join OHA for SW regional habitat project June 15

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator  
[TD@oregonhunters.org](mailto:TD@oregonhunters.org)

OHA will install wildlife-friendly fencing around Willow Prairie on USFS land near Butte Falls, and just west of the Sky Lakes Wilderness on June 15 and 16.

We have reserved the majority of the Whiskey Springs Campground (10 minutes from Willow Prairie) for volunteers to camp at no cost. The campground is reserved from Thursday afternoon to Sunday afternoon so early birds are welcome. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided on Saturday by OHA's Josephine County Chapter. In typical OHA regional project fashion, we will have a great prize drawing at the event. Volunteers will be entered to win a Howa M1500 6.5 Creedmoor & 4-12 scope, a certificate for deer shoulder mount donated by North American Taxidermy, OHA apparel and other great prizes.

Please bring food for Friday and Sunday, appropriate work attire, and spread the word to others ready to work for wildlife. We plan to wrap up fencing work mid-day on Sunday, leaving plenty of time for fishing at one of many nearby cascade lakes.

Meadow systems are important for deer and elk, and across the western Cascades, meadows are at risk due to conifer encroachment, heavy use by domestic livestock, illegal OHV use, and wildfire suppression among other factors.

OHA conservation staff procured a \$50,000 Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund grant for this project.

**SIGN UP** Register to volunteer for the project at <https://oregonhunters.org/regional-projects/swcascadesmeadowproject> and OHA will provide more details.

Please see the project flyer on Page 49.

For more information, contact Tyler Dungannon ([td@oregonhunters.org](mailto:td@oregonhunters.org)).



KLAMATH BASIN/JOHN MCFARLAND III

*OHA wants the dire state of mule deer populations to be reflected in the Mule Deer Plan so OHA, ODFW, and other groups can address the contributing factors and help reverse the decline.*

## OHA seeks changes to Mule Deer Plan

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator  
[TD@oregonhunters.org](mailto:TD@oregonhunters.org)

The Oregon mule deer management plan revision continues to be a top priority for OHA, and it's paramount that we help shape the plan for the benefit of mule deer and hunters. OHA has dug into the draft plan, and OHA's deer committee of experts and staff have provided comments to ODFW on important chapters of the plan.

We are currently awaiting feedback on those extensive comments, and we hope to see a revised draft from ODFW with many if not all of our comments incorporated into the next draft of the plan prior to commission approval.

For example, it's important that the abysmal state of mule deer populations is reflected in the plan so OHA, ODFW, and other groups can point to this plan to get ODFW the help they need from agency partners, and other entities capable of assisting or hindering deer populations. Initially, the plan was to be approved by the Commission in April, but OHA was successful in moving that date back to June to allow ample time for the agency to review and incorporate comments from OHA and other stakeholders. OHA hopes to be supportive of the plan when it goes before the Commission in June so we can turn our attention to plan implementation.

## OHA eyes NE wildlife crossing structures

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director  
[mtotey@oregonhunters.org](mailto:mtotey@oregonhunters.org)

OHA has been working around the state to address critical areas that have a high density of wildlife/vehicle collisions. To date, work has been completed on the Highway 97 undercrossing near Gilchrist, and projects are being planned on the southern portion of Interstate 5, Highway 20 between Suttle Lake and Bend, and Highway 20 east of Juntura.

In northeast Oregon, two highways need work to safely get deer and elk across.

The first is Highway 82 in Wallowa County, where stretches experience high numbers of both white-tailed and mule deer struck by vehicles. The second is Interstate 84 between Pendleton and La Grande. While not as many elk and deer are killed on I-84, wildlife tracking has clearly shown this interstate to be a major barrier to migrational movement. Addressing this barrier will be a key factor to connect habitat, protect seasonal movement corridors, and promote healthy elk and deer populations.

# Make sure OHA has your email and/or sign up for online auto-renew and win!



As part of an emphasis on investing more funds in our mission and less on printing and mailing, OHA is setting our sights on obtaining email addresses for more of our members and encouraging online auto-renewal of memberships.

As reward, OHA will hold drawings later this summer to award prizes (including guns, knives and optics – see Page 61) to those for whom we have emails and those who have signed up for auto-renewal.

If you currently receive OHA emails, we already have your address, so you are entered. If you don't receive OHA emails, simply send us an email containing your name and address to [OHAcontests@gmail.com](mailto:OHAcontests@gmail.com) and you'll be entered to win great prizes. We don't share your information.

Sign up for OHA auto-renewal, and you'll be entered for a chance to win more! Visit <https://oregonhunters.org/joinrenew>



ZUMWALT PRAIRIE PRESERVE/TNC

Two lucky hunters won Zumwalt Prairie dream hunts in OHA raffles drawn on March 14.

## Zumwalt hunt winners drawn

The winners of OHA's raffle for dream deer and elk Hunts on The Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie, drawn on March 14 at the OHA office, are:

**Elk Hunt:** Jake Spiering, Bend   
**Deer Hunt:** Harry Hansen, Klamath Falls

OHA thanks all who bought tickets to support Blue Mountains habitat work and OHA's mission, as well as TNC for their commitment to conservation.

## Next Gun Calendar winners announced

OHA drew the winners of the 2024 Gun Calendar Raffle on Jan. 3 at the OHA State Office. Winners are posted every Wednesday on OHA's Facebook page, app and website. Here are the latest winners:

- Feb. 14: **Howa 1500 Yote Package .223**  
Paul Silverio of Salem
- Feb. 21: **Ruger American 6.5 PRC**  
Douglas Town of Hillsboro
- Feb. 28: **Kimber .280 Ackley**  
Fred Heins of Blue River
- March 6: **Citadel 1911 Flag .45 ACP**  
Dennis Vosika of Medford
- March 13: **Howa 1500 6.5 CR**  
Sandy Morse of Unity
- March 20: **Pointer Acrius 12 Ga. O/U**  
Tim Taylor of Stayton
- March 27: **Browning A-Bolt 3 Grade II**  
Lyla Duncan of Powell Butte




Sales of the 2025 OHA Gun Raffle Calendar are underway! Call the OHA state office at 541-772-7313 or visit OHA's website at: [www.oregonhunters.org/store](http://www.oregonhunters.org/store)

*Contributions made recently to the*  
**OHA Memorial Fund**

In memory of Kenneth Leek  
from Julie Vopel

In memory of Greg Oriet  
from Kathryn Krieger,  
Stan and Kay Varuska



Send contributions in honor of loved ones who loved wildlife to:  
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OHA LADD MARSH MEMORIAL OVERLOOK/JIM WARD

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# OHA IN ACTION

BY MIKE TOTEY  
OHA CONSERVATION  
DIRECTOR



STEENS MOUNTAIN/TERRY SMITH

## OHA Makes Big Impact for Bighorns

**O**HA has been one of the original driving forces in getting Rocky Mountain goats and bighorn sheep re-established in Oregon. Some of the earliest projects funded by OHA, in the early days of our organization, helped fund sheep and goat restoration and management.

For example, before there was even a specific budget that existed for Rocky Mountain goat management in Oregon, OHA helped fund the cost to capture and relocate 15–20 goats to Oregon. It was OHA that pushed for ODFW to auction the first goat tag to help kick start the process to secure ongoing funding for Oregon's mountain goat program. OHA hosted the first mountain goat tag auction and donated our 10 percent of the auction proceeds back to the Oregon mountain goat program.

Long before Oregon had its own chapter of The Wild Sheep Foundation (formerly known as the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep or FNAWS), OHA was the primary funding source for many of the bighorn sheep projects in Oregon. Past OHA involvement included funding for sheep captures and translocations, the Lostine sheep trap, and improving water sources by building guzzlers and improving natural springs. Perhaps some of the most important work was helping to address the transmission of disease between domestic sheep and bighorns. When wild sheep wandered into a grazing allotment, OHA



OHA has funded translocation of bighorns and mountain goats to and within Oregon.


funded a range rider to keep wild and domestic sheep apart. OHA also supported buying out domestic sheep grazing allotments in critical areas that overlapped with wild sheep.

Looking through Oregon's Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain goat Management Plan (2003), OHA is referenced multiple times as one of the primary conservation groups to support its implementation. During the public input process before the plan was approved, OHA chapters hosted several of the management plan public meetings.

OHA and its members continue with this vital work and support today. OHA contributed \$100,000 to the purchase of the Minam property, which has some key bighorn sheep habitat. OHA members participated

in the Owyhee Canyon sheep survey in May of 2023. And OHA supported the predator control plan under the new Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Bighorn Sheep Plan.

Today, OHA and the Wild Sheep Foundation are heavily "cross-pollinated" with leadership in both organizations. Key people like Vic Coggins, Kevin Martin and Craig Foster are keeping this collaboration moving ahead.

Moving forward, OHA will continue to support key projects to help build and sustain huntable populations of both Rocky Mountain and California bighorn sheep, and Rocky Mountain goats in Oregon. 

### Quotes from the ODFW Mountain Goat & Bighorn Sheep Management Plan:

*"Historically, restoration and management efforts have been developed and implemented at local ODFW district levels with most funding provided through grants from organized groups such as Oregon Hunters Association."*

*"Bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain goat restoration in Oregon has been possible because of the generosity and cooperation of other states and Canadian provinces contributing transplant stock without compensation, the assistance of dedicated individuals and groups such as Foundation for North American Wild Sheep and Oregon Hunters Association, and funding provided by annual auction and raffle tags."*

*"No specific budget exists for Rocky Mountain goat management in Oregon. However, trapping and transplanting has occurred recently, primarily due to generous donations from interested organizations such as Oregon Hunters Association and other resource management agencies. The cost to capture and relocate 15 to 20 goats in Oregon is approximately \$14,800."*

*"From 1987-1992, five bighorn tags were auctioned at the annual Oregon Hunters Association statewide banquets for an average bid of \$41,800 (\$25,000-\$56,000)."*



# Southwest Cascades Regional Project Meadow Protection



Tyler Dungannon



**Protect Habitat with Wildlife-Friendly Fencing!**

**June 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**Willow Prairie, Butte Falls**

**WHERE:**

We will meet at Whiskey Springs Campground at 9am on 06/15/24

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

OHA is working to fence large, sensitive meadow systems near Butte Falls. On June 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, we will build wildlife-friendly fence around Willow Prairie.

**CAMPING:**

OHA and USFS have reserved 20 spots at the Whiskey Springs Campground (10 minutes from Willow Prairie) from Thursday afternoon (06/13) to Sunday (06/16).

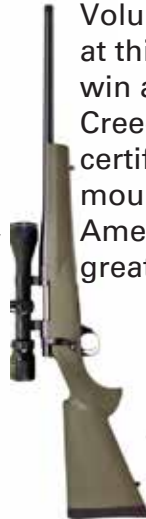


**SIGN UP:**

Register to volunteer with the QR Code and OHA will provide more details.

**WIN PRIZES:**

Volunteers that work for wildlife at this event will be entered to win a Howa M1500 6.5 Creedmoor & 4-12 scope, a certificate for deer shoulder mount donated by North American Taxidermy, and other great prizes.



**FREE FOOD:**

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner Provided on Saturday by Josephine Co. OHA

**CONTACT:**

Tyler Dungannon  
OHA Conservation Coordinator  
[td@oregonhunters.org](mailto:td@oregonhunters.org)

<https://oregonhunters.org/regional-projects/swcascadesmeadowproject>



**OHA THANKS OUR PROJECT PARTNERS**



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## 2024 PHOTO CONTEST

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**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

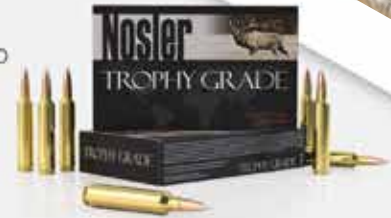
Go to **OHA's website at [www.oregonhunters.org](http://www.oregonhunters.org)** Click on **OHA CONTESTS**. Read the rules, and fill in the required fields. Click **CHOOSE FILE** and attach your photo. Click **SUBMIT**. That's it! You will be entered for a chance to win more great prizes courtesy of 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.

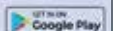
**YOUTH:** Same as above, except photos must feature a person who was 18 or younger at the time the photo was taken.

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year



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SCAN



# NOSLER<sup>®</sup> PHOTO CONTEST

## GENERAL CATEGORY FINALISTS



Medford OHA member Jeff Lewis earns an OHA Coast knife and a spot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest with this cougar he called to 20 yards in the Rogue Unit in February.

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OHA member Jacob Andrews of Canby nabs a slot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife with this blacktail buck taken in the Willamette Unit in December.



# NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

## GENERAL CATEGORY HONORABLE MENTION



Gary Hadermann, OHA member from Nehalem, lands honorable mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of Misty Hadermann with this big Wenaha bull elk.



OHA member Kevin Blair of Portland garners honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this photo of Lily Langer and her 6x7 bull she bagged in Wheeler County with the Nosler .30-06 she won in the Nosler Youth Photo Contest in 2019.



Terrebonne OHA member Bryce Denfeld's photo of Lindsey Denfeld and her first elk earns honorable mention and a Nosler hat for a successful hunt in Fossil this past February.



OHA member Yvette Whang of Ashland grabs honorable mention and a Nosler hat for her first successful hunt with Theo and Tuff at Denman Wildlife Area in September.

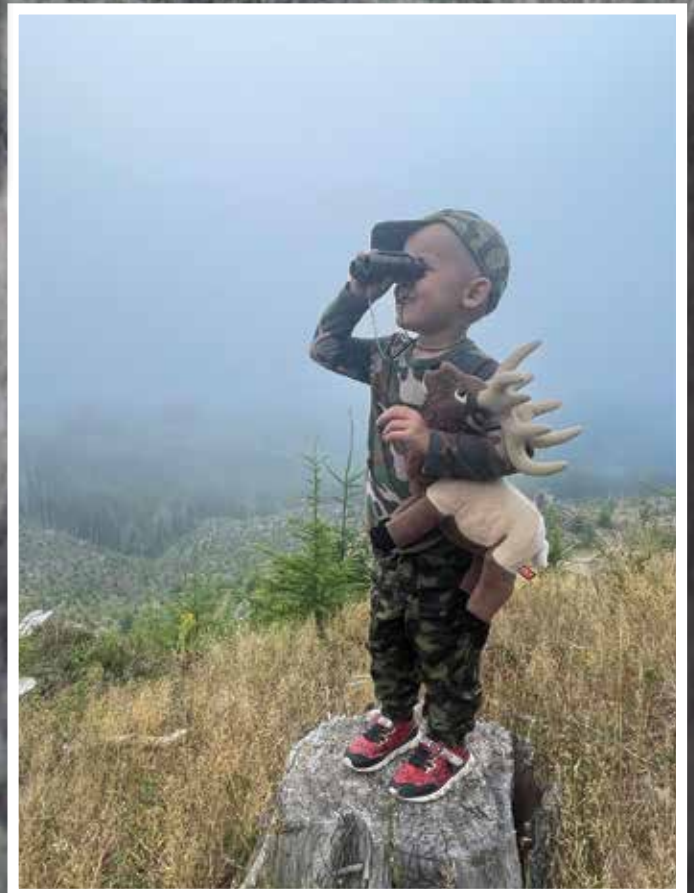
HARNEY COUNTY/TYLER DUNGANNON (DID YOU SEE THE DEER?)

# NOSLER<sup>®</sup> PHOTO CONTEST

## YOUTH CATEGORY FINALISTS



Ashland OHA member Yvette Whang wins a spot in the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for this photo of Theo and Mari. This was Theo's first pheasant hunt and Mari's first point at the Denman Wildlife Area youth hunt in September.



OHA member Kyle Payne from Sublimity earns a berth in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for this photo of son and scout Carter Payne glassing for elk in the Saddle Mountain Unit last August.

LAKE COUNTY/DUANE DUNGANNON (DO YOU SEE THE COYOTE?)

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# NOSLER<sup>®</sup> PHOTO CONTEST

## YOUTH CATEGORY HONORABLE MENTION



Lucy Langer, OHA member of Sherwood, wins a Nosler hat and honorable mention for this photo of herself and her 5x5 Jefferson County bull she called the Stag.



OHA member B.J. Grimmer of Sandy collects a Nosler hat and honorable mention for this photo of Isaac Grimmer and his first elk from the Heppner youth hunt in November.



Yvette Whang, OHA member from Ashland, scores again for a Nosler hat and honorable mention with this photo of Theo and a spring turkey. Theo attended a youth turkey clinic led by OHA, won a guided hunt with Jeff Heil, and had a very successful first hunt.

# Bighorn Sheep Update



## What are some recent issues impacting California and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep in Oregon?

### Hells Canyon

Recent outbreaks of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, commonly referred to as Movi, in the Hells Canyon area have the potential to affect Rocky Mountain bighorn populations along the Snake River and its tributaries. But ODFW remains committed to the Hells Canyon Initiative which began almost 30 years ago in collaboration with Idaho Fish and Game and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. This tri-state effort to restore bighorn sheep also includes the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation as well as the national Wild Sheep Foundation and the Idaho, Oregon, and Washington chapters.

The spread of pneumonia from domestic sheep to wild sheep is a major threat in Oregon. Without a way to treat or cure the disease, wildlife managers are left with limited options to fight back. They often must let Movi run its course and work to re-establish herds after die-offs. "Test and Remove" efforts have proven successful in recent years but getting hands on sheep each year requires a large number of resources and skills.

### Lower Owyhee

In southeast Oregon, disease issues persist for California bighorns. The Lower Owyhee herd declined by about 75% in 2015. Last year, ground surveys conducted by ODFW and volunteers counted 82 sheep which is obviously much lower than the 400 observed before the exposure to Movi. Sampling and collaring efforts by ODFW's Ontario staff this winter and summer 2024 will help us better understand what is happening to this herd.

### Hart Mountain

The Hart Mountain California bighorn sheep population has also seen a decline due to habitat loss and increased predation but recent efforts by ODFW, the Wild Sheep Foundation and the Fish and Wildlife Service are promising. Staff from ODFW's Lakeview field office worked to finalize an environmental impact statement (EIS) to allow management actions such as predator control as well as habitat and water source improvements. Bighorn capture and marking efforts in recent years will allow biologists to monitor population response to cougar removal, cutting juniper at higher elevations and adding or repairing guzzlers.



### John Day (I-84) to Trout Creeks & Abert

ODFW partnered with the BLM and local landowners to capture and relocate California bighorns from the John Day (I-84) herd to the Trout Creek Mountains and Abert Rim herds. The goal was twofold; to relieve some agricultural crop damage on private lands caused by wild sheep and to provide genetic augmentation to herds. In the 1980s and 90s, ODFW conducted bighorn sheep releases in these herds to help re-establish them and since then they have not had genetic augmentation. Oregon State University researchers identified genetics as a possible limiting factor in those herds. Each of the 14 sheep that were relocated tested negative for Movi and were moved by truck overnight across the state. Each animal was fitted with tracking collars and ear tags so that biologists can monitor survival in years to come.



### When did hunting ewes in Oregon begin?

California bighorn ewe hunts in the Deschutes and John Day canyons started in 2021 for a few reasons; to provide opportunity for hunters where we have a surplus of animals and to control population growth to reduce straying of wild sheep out of the canyons where they could come into contact with domestic sheep and bring disease (Movi) back to an otherwise healthy herd.

For anyone looking to get into bighorn country, ewe hunts are a good opportunity. They are not Once-in-a-Lifetime, so drawing this tag doesn't affect your ability to draw a ram tag later. They are a low-pressure option compared to a ram hunt as you don't have to wait so long or get so lucky, meaning less pressure to find a big ram. With ewes, you will have lots of opportunities if you mess up a stalk.

### How many poaching cases of bighorn have we seen?

Each year in Oregon, there are one or two bighorn poaching incidents that we know of happening. Thanks to OHA and the Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation, the reward for turning in a bighorn poacher is at \$4,500.







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**NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN.**

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# OR-WSF matches OHA ram reward, total now \$4,500

**R**ewards now stand at \$4,500 for information leading to the felony arrest of the person who illegally shot a Rocky Mountain bighorn ram south of Baker City last November. The poacher took the animal's head and horns, leaving the rest to waste.

Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation (OR WSF) President Kevin Martin announced they will add \$2,000 to the standard OHA Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward of \$2,000 and the Oregon Wildlife Coalition (OWC) reward of \$500, for a total of \$4,500. Tipsters who call the TIP Line may opt for five hunter preference points from ODFW in lieu of the cash reward. Information must lead to an arrest or citation, and tipsters may remain anonymous.

Poaching a bighorn carries a penalty of up to \$10,000 in fines, as well as hunting license suspension and forfeiture of the firearm used to commit the crime. Forfeiture of any wildlife parts, including the head and horns, is standard, according to officials. In this case, additional charges of waste of a game mammal would likely apply.

"It's so hard to believe that someone would shoot and waste such an amazing animal," Martin said. "The Lookout Mountain herd of bighorn sheep is an area ODFW, Wild Sheep Foundation, Oregon WSF and our partners have been focusing a lot of resources to understand what has caused the ongoing loss of animals, and this criminal act just adds to that loss."

OSP Fish and Wildlife Trooper Dakotah Keys, responding to a call from the public, discovered the headless carcass on Nov. 30, 2023. The carcass was on BLM land, near Hibbard Creek Road, which is within the Lookout Mountain Unit.

California bighorn sheep are the most abundant subspecies in Oregon with an estimated 3,700 animals that make up 32 herds in central and southeast Oregon. Oregon's estimated 800 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep live in the northeast corner of the state, in canyons of the Snake River and its tributaries and in alpine areas of



*Eleven-year-old Gage recently received a \$1,000 TIP reward from OHA's TIP fund after witnessing and reporting a poacher unlawfully shoot a deer and retrieve it from private property. Gage was home sick from school and reported the incident to OSP troopers who located and cited the poacher.*

the Willowa Mountains. Don Whittaker, ODFW ungulate coordinator, emphasized the long-term effects of poaching.

"Not only are poaching acts like this considered theft of a public resource highly valued by all Oregonians, including hunters and non-hunters," Whittaker said, "they undermine the long-term effort to restore and conserve this iconic species on Oregon's landscape for future Oregonians yet to come."

ODFW biologists and other conservationists monitor and manage bighorn sheep throughout Oregon as a valuable natural resource. The nimble animals are a draw for recreationists around the state, and hikers and photographers go to great lengths to get a glimpse of them in the wild. Hunters apply to draw a once-in-a-lifetime hunt for the rams.

OHA State Coordinator Duane Dungannon said the crime is reprehensible.

"I've personally viewed and photographed bighorns in the Lookout Mountain

Unit, but that's all, because in 35 years of applying, I've never drawn a once-in-a-lifetime bighorn tag, and probably never will," Dungannon said. "For someone to steal one of these mountain monarchs is truly a heinous crime against all those who dream of a chance to pursue them legally someday, as well as those who just count themselves fortunate to see them."

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the Oregon State Police Dispatch at 1-800-452-7888, \*OSP (\*677), or email at [TIP@osp.oregon.gov](mailto:TIP@osp.oregon.gov)

OHA pays about \$20,000 annually to informants in fish and wildlife violation cases through our TIP Reward Fund.



## OHA pays out \$8,200 in rewards in 10 cases

In the last two months, OHA issued 12 reward checks to informants in 10 cases totaling \$8,200 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund. Charges included: Unlawful Take/Possession of deer, Hunting Prohibited Area, Unlawful Take of elk while using a motor vehicle and exceeding bag limit times two, Waste of Game Mammal deer, Illegal Harvesting of deer and turkey, Unlawful Take of bobcat, Take/Possession of Game Mammal Closed Season deer fawn, Hunting Prohibited Method Thermal/InfraRed Scope, Failure to Allow Inspection of Hunting Equipment and Tampering With Evidence; also a habitat destruction case that led to significant penalties



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## PARTING SHOTS BY UNCLE GEDDY

### Spirits Having Flown (and other bird hunting anthems)

**T**he long-suffering editor of this magazine recently confessed to having the beegees scared out of him while hunting elk. I had to wonder, what took him so long?

It seems he was ambushed by Huns at close range.

That very thing happened to me back when I was a young deer hunter. I learned, when you least expect it, expect a ruffed grouse. But it made me think about the Bee Gees, which I hadn't thought about since 1979. A quick tour through their discography revealed some things I didn't know about the band.

Spirits Having Flown was the name of their 1979 album. I think it's about hunting collared doves, when you shoot Grandpa's old double-barrel .410 and all you get are feathers, the doves having flown. Or maybe you hit one and the bird dies but the spirit is gone, having flown. I tried to look at the lyrics online, but I threw up a little in my mouth.

A little-known fact about the band was that their 1966 release "Spicks and Specks" was about hunting geese. I'm told that if you listen deep enough into the song, you can hear the haunting, falsetto cries of the speckle-belly goose, which I think was recorded by Herbie Mann with a short-reed acrylic tube in a goose blind.

I tried to watch the video, which starts with three men without shotguns pointing at the sky and sounds like my first piano lesson. I quit watching when the aforementioned three men linked arms and started skipping toward the camera. I don't care how good a hunter you are, when you link arms and start dancing at me, I'm out of this pit blind, Barry!

According to my sources, the Bee Gees didn't hunt geese again after the late '60s.

Their single "Man For All Seasons" (released in 1970) was a tribute to Ed Park, who was the first editor of OREGON HUNTER magazine and who hunted year-round for every critter he could get a tag for. In the video, you see what looks like three men waiting to use a one-holer in Summer Lake, and you are treated to an ear-splitting inkling of what we could expect from the band later in the decade. I didn't make it far enough through the video to see if all the anxious men actually were able to hold IT long enough, but it's a short song at 2:56 in case you want to try.

I continued surfing through the band's back catalog and paused at "When The Swallows Fly" (1971) which reminded me of Dewey Delaney of the Bear Mountain Gang telling me that a swallow bombed him in the face last year. He killed a bear the next day, so now he believes it's a blessing to be bombed in the face by a swallow, but one you should keep your mouth shut about.

The band's evolution seemed to foreshadow my own bird hunting journey, which progressed from shooting starlings out the window to grouse hunting on my bicycle. In '76 and '78,



the Bee Gees released "Country Lanes" and "Down The Road," which I'm guessing were both about grouse hunting, because why wouldn't they be?

Disco finally died in 1979, although people still argue about the reasons why. One theory is that 80,000 Chicago White Sox fans, each armed with a 12-inch vinyl projectile and a whole lot of pent-up angst killed disco off. But once disco went to kindergarten with Sesame Street Fever, that was its dying gasp. Myron Floren didn't help the cause with his Disco Polka LP either. Talk about long-playing records!

But the Bee Gees persevered, biding their time and presumably shooting pigeons while they waited for their rowboat to come back in.

They were back on the scene in 1987 with a single called "Backtafunk," which I think was about waking up in a trailer with a German shorthaired pointer after the first afternoon's hunt and last night's Alpo had come out of both ends, something I could relate to.

The 1980s were good years for bird hunters, the best of times and the worst of times, again harmonized by the Bee Gees with "You Win Again," which was an ode to chukar, I'm pretty sure. And then came the single, "Wing and a Prayer" (1989) which was about keeping evidence of the species and sex attached to the carcass while driving home from a bird hunt with a limit of Hungarian partridge.

Maintaining their relevance in the wing-shooter's world, the band finally released "This Is Where I Came In" (2001) which was about getting lost in the junipers when you're looking for your 4-wheeler in the dark and you were pretty sure this was the canyon and you tell yourself, "This is where I came in. I hope."

You know, what really scared the Bee Gees out of me was when I borrowed my Uncle Jack's 8-track copy of Uncle Ted Nugent's "Cat Scratch Fever" and played it a dozen times. Then I heard the J. Geil's Band play "Love Stinks." Ya, ya, that's what scared the Bee Gees out of me.



*Author's note: No actual brain cells were harmed in the writing of this article.*



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