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Commission makes right call for director

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission selected Debbie Colbert as the new agency director on May 10. Director Colbert has an extensive science-based background that complements her strong understanding of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and deep appreciation of the role hunters and anglers play in conservation and agency funding.

While the selection process ultimately yielded the best choice for the new agency director, many may not realize is how close the sportsmen's community came to a major shift in fish and wildlife management. The other candidate, an environmental lawyer employed by the City of Portland with a history of litigation against ODFW, could have ushered in a protectionist approach to fish and wildlife management.

Throughout the five-month process, many environmental organizations were vocal in their support of a director who would take the agency in a new direction, away from the North American Model and the "hook and bullet club." Their meaning was clear: management and conservation of species should be replaced with a preservation-only approach with little emphasis on traditional uses.

Had the Commission heeded those voices calling for imprudent and unscientific change, Oregon's fish and wildlife management policies and Oregon's harvest opportunities might have been drastically changed.

However, with the selection of Director Colbert, the agency and the sportsmen's community remain focused on science-based management and conservation. Director Colbert said it best in her interview: "Hunters and hunting organizations show up for conservation in meaningful ways ... I see no disconnect between conservation and providing for hunting opportunities."

We thank the Commission for listening to the voices of OHA and our partners in conservation. — *AMY PATRICK, OHA POLICY DIRECTOR*

OREGON HUNTER launches 2 new columns

Between celebrating our 40th anniversary last year and our 250th magazine issue at the end of this year, we are pleased to unveil two new columns in this issue of OREGON HUNTER.

One new department, called "Traditions," replaces the former "Black Powder" column. Muzzleloading articles will still appear on this page, but now the column will be more inclusive in offering such topics as hound hunting, nostalgia, and this first installment on trapping – why it's important to Oregon's wildlife management, and how to get started – by lifelong trapper Scott Haugen.

The other new department, called "Sharing the Heritage," replaces the previous "Young Guns" column. Likewise, this new offering will still include youth hunting topics, such as this issue's column by Brooke Watson about the Children of Circumstance Outdoors program, but will now expand its focus to include other facets of passing along our hunting heritage, such as OHA's Learn to Hunt program and the Women of OHA network.

We hope you enjoy reading about a wider array of hunting topics in these two new columns, and we thank our loyal members and readers for their dedicated following.

— *DUANE DUNGANNON, OREGON HUNTER EDITOR*





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WORK SHARP OREGON HUNTING QUIZ

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KNOW OREGON? WIN A WORK SHARP!

- A "sprig" is what kind of duck?
 - mallard
 - pintail
 - shoveller
 - canvasback
 - Which unit is your best whitetail bet?
 - Sled Springs
 - Klamath Falls
 - Stott Mountain
 - Malheur River
 - Which wilderness has mule deer?
 - Wild Rogue
 - Mtn Lakes
 - Grassy Knob
 - none of the above
 - Season is closed for what bird this fall?
 - scaup
 - sage grouse
 - band-tailed pigeon
 - none of the above
 - Which wildlife area hosts rabbit hunts?
 - Denman
 - Klamath
 - Fern Ridge
 - E.E. Wilson
 - ODFW collects wings from harvested:
 - sage grouse
 - forest grouse
 - mountain quail
 - all of the above
 - Which unit is entirely Mountain Time?
 - Whitehorse
 - Beulah
 - Owyhee
 - none of the above
 - Which is a West Cascade elk hunt unit?
 - Rogue
 - Metolius
 - Keno
 - Upper Deschutes
 - The ODFW Point Of Sale license system shuts down nightly at what time?
 - 10 p.m.
 - 11 p.m.
 - midnight
 - there's no shut-down
 - You can hunt bear in which season without a deer tag for that season?
 - W. Oregon ALW deer
 - E. Oregon ALW deer
 - both
 - neither
- TRUE OR FALSE?
- The daily bag limit for coots is typically 25.
 - Oregon has no archery-only bear hunts.



WHERE IN OREGON WAS THIS PHOTO TAKEN?

Identify this spot, be drawn from all correct entries, and win a Work Sharp Original Knife and Tool Sharpener! Not the easiest, but note the sign and the foliage, and that should narrow it down. We'll take the county or unit. Submit your guess on OHA's app, or website at oregonhunters.org, where a larger version of the photo appears. One entry per OHA member.

ENTRY DEADLINE: JULY 15, 2024.



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LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:

Keaton Zarbano of Powell Butte
Keaton's name was drawn from OHA members who identified the Snake River Canyon.

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

JULY 1
Leftover tags go on sale; Apply for 1st-time hunter tags

JULY 27
OHA Emerald Valley Chapter Family Event 623-670-6701

AUGUST 1
Fall bear season opens

AUGUST 10
OHA Malheur County Youth Shotgun Skills Day, 208-573-5556

AUGUST 17
OHA Yamhill County Chapter youth shotgun shoot, 503-737-9483

AUGUST 23
OHA Klamath Chapter's Gerber Reservoir youth antelope hunt BBQ, 541-281-6518

AUGUST 30
Bow tag sale deadline

AUGUST 31
General archery and most controlled bow seasons open

SEPTEMBER 1
Opens for forest grouse, mourning dove, western Oregon quail & turkey



LAKE COUNTY/TYLER DUNGANNON

Answers: 1-b; 2-a; 3-b; 4-d; 5-d; 6-d; 7-c; 8-a; 9-d; 10-a; 11-f; 12-f

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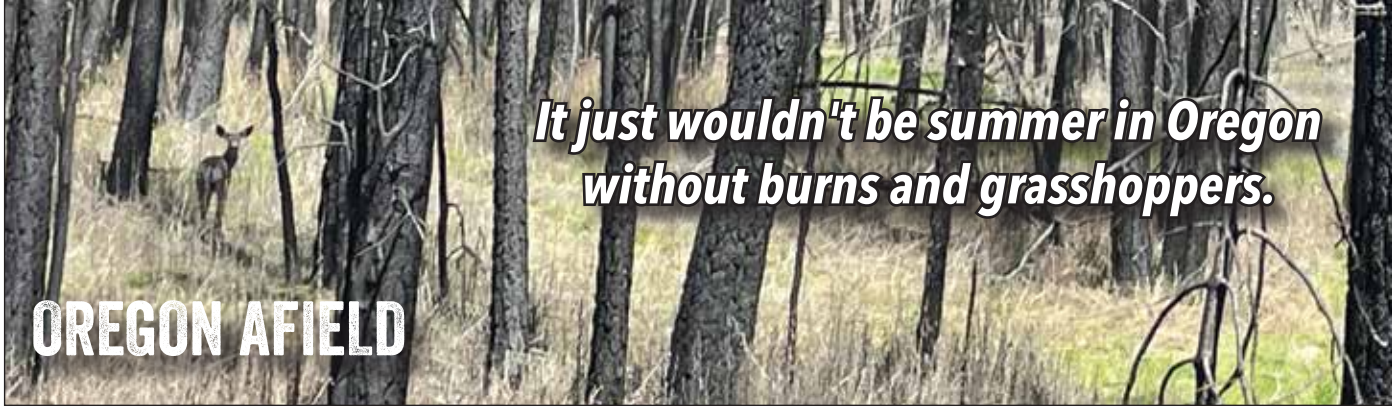
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BOOTLEG BURN/TYLER DUNGANNON

It just wouldn't be summer in Oregon without burns and grasshoppers.

OREGON AFIELD

While older burns support more browse, big game animals sometimes can be seen returning to burns before they've even stopped smoking.

It's all about burns, bulls, bucks and bears

Oregon's ever-increasing wildfires can yield positive and negative effects on big game habitat. Where fires burn extremely hot, not only is forage destroyed, but the soil nutrients can be severely damaged, whereby impacting an area's growth for many years to come.

Along the fringes of large wildfires, as well as throughout the entirety of smaller, less-violent fires and in prescribed burns where temperatures are less severe, however, soil quality can actually improve. The temperature of a fire is what directly determines the distribution, demise and proliferation of nutrients like calcium, potassium and magnesium, as well as nitrogen and sulphur levels.

Lightly burned areas can attain a rich soil that sees new growth with the first

rains of fall. Even condensation that forms on cool summer nights can spur new growth in lightly burned areas. Fresh, sparse grass is often a magnet for elk, deer, and even bears.

If hunting burns that are two to seven years old, focus on the areas of new growth. These usually occur along timbered edges and throughout wooded draws where wildfires blew over the canyons or burned partially down either side.

In rocky habitat and burns that have happened in open areas and on hillsides, runoff is high, meaning green-up is more likely below the burn.

While these habitats may not always be in highly visible locations, they're where the most growth takes place.

Last year a high number of big blacktails were taken all season long in a three-year-old burn area I hunt. Big bucks, even bulls and bears, were taken by hunters who found them venturing into fairly open habitats flourishing with new growth throughout the fall.

This season, return to old burns, check out recent ones, and let the new plant life help direct you to where

bucks, bulls and bears might forage for fresh salad. —SCOTT HAUGEN

Lightly burned areas can attain a rich soil that sees new growth with the first rains of fall.



GARY LEWIS/OUTDOORS.COM

Burns offer hot game bird hunting

Thinking about wildfires and burned habitat for game birds often makes us cringe about upland hunting opportunities. What was once lush and green cover is now dead or gone, creating a dilemma for birds and hunters alike.

OHA Conservation Coordinator Tyler Dungannon has experienced game birds nesting on scorched dirt where during the previous year there was ample cover. What does this mean? Well, obviously nesting and brood success will suffer due to lack of cover.

However, this is only a temporary issue on some landscapes, with fresh vegetation quickly returning to create improved habitat and food sources. Slow-growing sage communities not so much, although even the grasses that spring up may benefit some birds more than others.

Upland birds such as quail, doves, grouse and others prefer to forage for insects and seeds in burns. Seed beds are now exposed, and insects thrive on freshly sprouted plants, which are also excellent food sources for game birds. In addition, the ash provides some excellent dust bathing to reduce mites and lice.

Adding some moisture to the scorched earth promotes germination of desirable seeds birds thrive on. Additionally, 2 to 3 years following fires, shrubs and perennial woody plants begin to return to the landscape, creating the cover needed to support improved brood success. Probably the best news is that our game birds can adapt to the natural changes on the landscape. Although bird populations will face some challenges, they tend to recover in short periods of time. —TROY RODAKOWSKI

Upland birds are drawn to older burns like this for foraging, as well as more recent ash for dusting.

Grasshoppers are too much to bear

Grasshoppers. Everywhere. Clouds of the long-legged insects moved with every step. They clung to the door of the ranch house. They crawled along the rails of the fence. Grasshoppers had stripped every leaf and every blade of green grass east of the river.” I wrote those words in 2005, the year my daughter Jennifer killed her bear on a hunt we made with our friends Bitsy Kelley and Tod Lum in the Snake River Unit. Lum also bagged a bear. We called the first one in 60 seconds, using a deer distress call, and Tod’s bear responded to the call in 15 minutes on the same afternoon.

Grasshoppers had not only wiped out the hawthorn bushes, but whole groves of trees were also stripped of leaves.

Nature had gathered her creatures to the river bottom, where the apple and plum trees shed their fruit, and bushes still bore a few berries.

Jennifer and I found four different sets of bear tracks in the trail in the first hour of



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

Vegetation loss caused by a grasshopper plague can keep famished bears on the move.

the second day. The bears had come down out of the hills.

THE SEEDS OF ANOTHER SCOURGE

In January of this year, I read a story by Rick Haverinen, Jayson Jacoby and Bre-men McKinney for the EO Media Group. “The seeds of another scourge lie still and quiet, bothered neither by blizzard nor sub-

zero temperatures.” Grasshopper numbers were high last year, reported John Wirth, a cattle rancher northeast of Baker City. Grasshopper eggs lie dormant, waiting to hatch out in the spring.

“There’s a huge amount of concern for what we are going to see (in 2024),” said Whitney Rhoner, manager of the Baker County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

In a year of high grasshopper numbers, farmers and ranchers can expect reduced hay yields and less forage for their cattle, Haverinen, Jacoby and McKinney summed up.

What is a bear hunter to conclude?

Hopper numbers are likely to peak in late August through early September and can affect bear travel patterns and feeding areas.

Grasshopper infestations tend to be localized, but can sweep wide swaths through a region. There are still the same number of bears there would be otherwise.

Watch the reports from eastern Oregon. This might be a year to hunt at lower elevation, to stalk the river’s edge and call bears out of the bottoms of the canyons.

—GARY LEWIS

Hop to it! (Put more birds in the hopper)

Warming trends have brought a noticeable increase in bug life in Oregon, including grasshoppers, and where there are grasshoppers, upland birds won’t be far. By mid-summer we notice hoppers by the tens of thousands in meadows and farm fields. Combined family flocks of turkeys are what we usually see first, scurrying through fields gobbling up all the high-protein morsels they can devour.

If you live or hunt in areas where ringneck pheasants flourish, you’ll also see them feasting on grasshoppers. Last year I hunted pheasants and chukars in multiple states, and each place boomed with grasshoppers. I also hunted prairie grouse in Nebraska in November, and sharp-tails and prairie chickens had plenty of grasshoppers in their crops.

The last few seasons, I’ve seen more grasshoppers following a freeze than I can remember. This is likely because of the warming cycle that’s producing more grass and thicker ground cover, which is

where the hoppers burrow into on cold nights. Once the frost melts above them, the hoppers emerge to nibble on grasses. This is where upland birds find them. In fact, we had some great later afternoon hunts last fall in fields and along grassy hillsides where grasshoppers fed and pheasants, even chukars – which are largely herbivorous – targeted them.

If you’re a forest grouse hunter, burns, overgrown logging roads, logged units and grassy hillsides all hold grasshoppers. When scouting for deer and elk this summer, keep an eye out for grasshoppers in tall, dry grass, then return on the grouse and quail opener. Check out the crops of blue and ruffed grouse, mountain and valley quail that you take, and don’t be surprised to find them full of grasshoppers.

If fall temperatures remain mild, grasshoppers can be an important food source for upland birds well into October.

Hunt for hoppers and you might end up putting more birds in the pot.

—SCOTT HAUGEN

Grasshoppers can be an important food source for upland birds well into October.



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

Grasshoppers are flourishing, and so are many upland birds throughout Oregon, thanks in part to this high-protein food source.



JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

Commission selects new ODFW director

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

After a nearly five-month process, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission selected the next ODFW director at its May 10 meeting. Debbie Colbert, previously the deputy director of the agency, has been selected to take the helm following Curt Melcher's retirement earlier this year.

The Commission's selection committee on May 3 announced the names of the four potential candidates and selected two to move forward in the final selection process before the Commission on May 10. The other candidate put forward was Katelyn Lovell, an environmental lawyer employed by the City of Portland. After a short public meeting and a six-hour executive session, the Commission returned with an offer of employment to Colbert.



Debbie Colbert

Director Colbert has a deep resume in wildlife management with many years of previous experience with ODFW and Oregon State University. She holds a bachelor of science in biology, a master's in oceanography, and a doctorate in interdisciplinary oceanography, giving her an extensive science-based background.

In addition to her impressive background, Director Colbert possesses a strong understanding of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and a deep appreciation of the role hunters and anglers play both in conservation and in funding the agency.

OHA looks forward to working with Director Colbert as we work to promote healthy wildlife populations, protect and improve important habitat, and ensure Oregon's hunting heritage is sustained.

Howl for Wildlife becomes key ally for OHA's mission

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

In recent legislative sessions, nothing has been more effective for Oregon's sportsmen and women than Howl for Wildlife. Howl, as it's commonly known, uses the tactics commonly used by opposition groups, allowing individuals to easily engage on important wildlife management decisions through emails or phone calls.

The platform generates unique emails, including subject lines. Distinct individual emails get read, while form letter emails are easily deleted or sent to junk email folders.

OHA has worked with Howl for Wildlife on multiple legislative pieces:

- HB 3390, the bill to criminalize the sale or trade of fur: Howl engaged an action alert generating 11,110 interactions in which unique emails were sent to the 10 members of the House Judiciary Committee. Those 11,100 emails helped kill the bill before it received a hearing.

- HJR 5, the referendum to send a constitutional protection to fish and hunt to the 2024 ballot, was supported through Howl with 11,564 emails to the members of the House Rules Committee. While that bill did not pass, the amount of emails received by committee members was repeatedly noted.

- HB 3086, the bill to reform the ODFW Commission: Howl engaged three times on the bill, totaling 50,941 emails to committees and legislators. The emails helped push the bill over the finish line in the final hours of the session.

- Howl generated an alert on HB 4148, producing over 31,000 emails in support of our efforts to secure funding for Chronic Wasting Disease monitoring and testing.

Find Howl at howlforwildlife.org. See the Action Den and podcast. Become a Howl member and choose from several great memberships.

M-114 ruling faces challenge by state; status still on hold

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



Measure 114, the gun control measure narrowly passed in the 2022 election, is the subject of an appeal by the State of Oregon with the intent of implementation.

In November, Judge Raschio of Harney County ruled Measure 114 unconstitutional, issuing a final ruling in January that permanently banned its implementation. Oregon Attorney General Rosenblum then filed notice of the State's intent to appeal Judge Raschio's ruling.

As part of the appeal, the State requested a stay against Judge Raschio's ruling, which would allow the implementation of Measure 114 components while the case was further litigated. This request was recently denied by the Oregon Court of Appeals, which means Judge Raschio's injunction against Measure 114 remains in place.

The State's appeal will be before the Oregon Court of Appeals for the next three months with a ruling expected in August.

Meanwhile, the lawsuit filed against Measure 114 in federal court is pending an appeal to the Ninth Circuit following a July ruling that found the measure constitutional.

OHA participated in this litigation by filing amicus briefs in support of the lawsuit. That appeal has been paused, pending a ruling on a similar case, making its timeline unknown.

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BOWHUNTING

By SCOTT HAUGEN

Blind Faith

I know, I know, the trend in bowhunting is to see how far we can hike into the backcountry, escape fellow hunters and punch tags. But don't overlook the value of hunting in a prime location, and doing it from a ground blind.

Sometimes how many miles we can run or how much weight we can push has no correlation to our hunting success. Filling tags comes down to knowing the land, the animals and how to best fool them, and in the early bow season where conditions are hot and dry, less often is more.

Here, less equates to less movement, and more translates into higher success. Not only does a popup ground blind conceal your movement, it helps contain your scent and keeps you stationary so you're not disturbing the woods.

For two years I hosted a bowhunting TV show. I quickly learned that my preferred way of covering ground didn't always work, especially when one or two camera men tagged along. That's when I really discovered the value of hunting from a ground blind.

The most important key when hunting from a blind is placement. Knowing where to put a blind requires scouting, accurately reading sign, and predicting animal movement.

Running trail cameras to capture animals will reveal a lot of details. They'll show when and where animals are traveling, even how many there are. Run all cameras on video mode and you'll be amazed with what they capture compared to a few photos or even photo bursts.

Near waterholes, where multiple trails converge, and along well-used trails, are prime places to situate a popup ground blind for big game. Knowing when animals are using these areas is a bonus, but not always possible. Having a consistent wind is also a plus, but not always in the cards.

If targeting deer, know the early season can find them climbing higher in eleva-



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

The key with a blind is placement, and that requires scouting,

A ground blind helps contain your scent and keeps you stationary so you're not making noise.

In Oregon's early bow season, when it's hot and dry, less often is more.

tion as the day heats up. They do this to seek relief in the moving air among rising thermals. They'll bed in the shade atop knolls and near the crest of a ridge, and bucks often rely on well-used trails to get there. Setting up a blind along the trails can pay off.

At the same time, elk often drop lower in elevation to seek midday relief from the sun amid timber and thick cover. While it's almost impossible to set up a blind and expect a shot where elk spend the day resting, placing a blind on the uphill side of a game trail that connects nighttime

feeding areas to daytime bedding spots can be the ticket. A treestand is a better option yet.

Patience is a virtue when bowhunting from a ground blind. One day I lost 11 pounds and drank over three gallons of water. It was 104° outside the blind, closer to 120° inside the blind. The next morning I arrowed a buck just before 11 a.m. I was glad, because it was suppose to be 108° that day.

Confidence is a must when bowhunting from a ground blind. Scout, read the sign, monitor weather conditions, and trust where you choose to set up a blind. If in doubt and find yourself wanting to leap

out of the blind and start hunting on foot, fight the urge. Have confidence in your site selection and ability to predict animal movement based on what you observed. And know that if you leave the blind, the animals have the upper hand because their hearing and sense of smell are vastly superior to ours.

Before the season, practice shooting in a ground blind from all positions. Most of my shots have come off both knees, as this is the most stable position for me. Know that not all fiber optic sight pins gather light when inside a blind, meaning you need to be able to place a dark pin on an animal.

When entering the blind for a hunt, make sure the ground is clear of clutter so you can stealthily move into multiple shooting positions. If hunting from a stool, make sure it's quiet and comfortable. My preferred seat is a milk crate with a thin cushion, because it allows me to move freely and quietly.

As soon as daylight allows, get a range on all trails and landmarks, so when an animal appears, all you should be focusing on is its behavior and your shot placement.

For signed copies of Scott Haugen's popular adventure book, *Bowhunting The West & Beyond*, visit scotthaugen.com. Follow Scott's adventures on Instagram and Facebook.

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TRADITIONS

By **SCOTT HAUGEN**

Join the Other Trap Club

For 15 years I hosted startup TV shows for a major outdoor network. I'd been doing it for some time, and when we met to brainstorm a new series, I suggested a show on trapping. The producers and executives looked at me like I was from another planet. My reasoning was simple, and I told them never have I learned so much about predators than when trapping them, because you have to make some of the most wary animals in the woods step on a 2"x2" trap pan and do it with consistency. You must know the predators, the land, their prey, and how these relationships coincide in every habitat you encounter. They didn't buy it.

I started running a trapline in 1974, along the banks of the McKenzie River, near my home in Walterville. I was 10 years old. I trapped into high school and later in my early adult years when living in Alaska's Arctic, where wolves were the main target.

When I was a kid, I could walk across the road and get to the river. I started trapping muskrat, mink and raccoon, then moved on to beaver. By junior high, I'd progressed to trapping fields for red fox and coyote. I loved the challenges presented by canines. Then I hiked into the foothills of the Cascades, literally out my door, where bobcats and coyotes were targeted.

It didn't take long for farmers in the area to hear I was trapping. Soon I had more places to trap than time to trap them. For the traps I couldn't check by walking from home, Dad would drive me to check before school. After school, Mom would take me to check others. Once homework was done and dinner wolfed down, it was time to skin. Dad helped me often.

The countless hours we spent, up late, skinning, fleshing and stretching hides, is something I'll never forget. Trapping taught



There's a lot to be learned through running your own trapline. The author, pictured here in the mid 1970s, credits the experience for teaching him a great deal about animals, nature and life skills.



What I learned from years of trapping made me a better hunter.

If you want to put a dent in Oregon's predator numbers, trapping is how it's done. Scott Haugen learned to trap near his boyhood home in Walterville.

me more than just about the animals I pursued and the land in which it was done. It built a work ethic I carry to this day.

When trapping, you delve into a whole new realm of learning about animal behavior. You find their dens, and learn the trails they use and when they use them. The more time you spend closely inspecting sign and what's happening in the field, the more thoroughly you understand why things happen in nature.

One winter a hay field I trapped between the river and the hills flooded, sending rodents to the highest point in the northeast corner. Coyotes, red fox, gray fox, even bobcats, traveled there in search of food. Trapping them where they hunted at night was simple based on the conditions. When the water dropped, the rodents spread out and the predators were harder to trap.

What I learned through years of trapping not only made me a better predator hunter, but a more confident and successful big game hunter. By just being in the woods, I learned about predator-prey relationships and how all animals go about their daily lives. I paid close attention to seasonal shifts in weather and food, the rut, even migrations of big game while running traplines.

I got started trapping water animals thanks to my boyhood friend, David Mathews. Later, Randy Saltmarsh, a family friend, taught me a lot about trapping predators. Once I got rolling, the education I received was self-induced.

Today, a great resource for Oregonians looking to learn how to trap is the Oregon Trappers Association (oregonta.org). They hold events each year where you can learn how to trap, handle fur, and more. If trapping public land for the first time, an Oregon Trappers Education course must first be completed; this isn't needed for private land trapping. Learn more about the course and other furbearer regulations at myodfw.com.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of the Oregon Hunters Association, we're still able to trap beavers in Oregon, and OHA and its allies are to thank for the fact there's still trapping in the Oregon Wolf Management Plan. Predator hunting helps dilute predators, but trapping is what truly controls their numbers.



For signed copies of Scott Haugen's popular adventure books, visit scotthaugen.com. Follow Scott's adventures on Instagram and Facebook.



JEREMY WATSON

Oregon Trappers Association is committed to Oregon's wildlife and natural resources.



Visit our website oregonta.org to join or learn more about upcoming events!

Join us at these Upcoming Events!

- **OTA Heritage Trapping School** at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area near Corvallis, June 22, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Learn how to trap gophers, coyotes and more. Fur-handling demo and educational material. Door prizes! Lunch provided!
- **2024 Waldo Lake Rendezvous**, August 9-11.
- **2024 Banquet & Fundraiser**, November 2, Redmond VFW, 491 SW Veterans Way. Every sponsor table comes with its own gun. See details at oregonta.org

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STATE *of the* STATE'S BIG GAME



For eastside deer and westside elk, the outlook is less than outstanding.

BY JIM YUSKAVITCH

How hard the winter was, and how dry the High Desert was the previous summer and the resulting impacts, such as overwintering mortality of big game species, may affect your hunt for the upcoming season. But the most important key to reliable, quality, successful hunting opportunities now and in the future lies in abundant, healthy big game populations that can weather those ups and downs and still come out of the gate strong.

If you hunt deer on Oregon's east side or elk on the west side, the long-term trends are disturbing.

A multitude of factors affect the long-term fortunes of deer, elk and other Oregon big game species. Some, like available food sources, predation and disease, are typical factors wildlife managers have been dealing with for years. Others are trickier to address, such as expanding human populations and our increasing demands on natural resources. One example is more traffic on rural highways resulting in more deer/elk motor vehicle collisions. Once a minor issue, it is now putting a real dent in big game numbers in some areas. And when solutions can be found – such as wildlife crossings – they can be very expensive and take years to implement.

What follows is a brief look at the current status of Oregon's big game populations and some things going on behind-the-scenes, especially for mule deer, to help rebuild those numbers where needed and keep them there.

Deer

Mule deer numbers in Oregon – and throughout the West – are still declining. Oregon's mule deer numbers dropped by 3.6 percent over last year, with a total current estimated statewide population of 150,000 to 160,000 animals. Recent mule deer surveys show that of the 49 wildlife management units with identified mule deer herds, 27 had stable numbers while the remainder experienced declines. Only four units are at management objective, and below it in the rest. The Oregon mule deer population peaked in 1981 at an estimated 306,000, but has been in steady decline since then.

To address this ongoing decline and identify management actions, the ODFW is updating its Mule Deer Management Plan

this year – the first revision since 2003. The initial mule deer plan was adopted in 1990.

OHA's conservation staff and advisory council have worked closely with ODFW in the development of the revised mule deer plan, and many of OHA's comments have been incorporated into the plan. (See related article on Page 46.)

The primary driver of mule deer populations is habitat and nutrition. When deer have proper habitat and abundant and nutritious food sources, they do well, and not so well when those resources are poor. However, there are other factors, including impacts of weather, predation, competition for food and space with elk and livestock, fragmentation of habitat and disruption of migration, vehicle collisions, hunter harvest, poaching and disease as part of the mix.

One of the key areas that ODFW is focusing on is seasonal movements and migration of various mule deer populations within and across wildlife management units. ODFW has typically managed mule deer populations based on unit boundaries. A flaw in that approach is that deer don't pay attention to boundaries drawn by humans. For example, wildlife management unit boundaries are often drawn around easily identifiable landmarks, such as roads, to help hunters avoid inadvertently straying into a unit for which they don't have a tag. But that's not a concern for deer, and over the course of the year, herds move and migrate across the landscape, management unit boundaries, and into different management situations and varying habitat types and quality.

To factor those movements into management decisions, ODFW conducted a number of mule deer migration studies over the past several years throughout their Oregon range, identifying specific herds and their movements over the seasons. As a result of that research, ODFW has been able to identify home ranges of various herds across eastern Oregon as well as their summer and winter migratory movements. An important outcome from those studies is that ODFW has identified the biological boundaries of mule deer herds, which will significantly help management efforts, including harvest management.

Nevertheless, Oregon's mule deer population has been in steady decline that so far no one has figured out how to reverse.

Since its high point in 1981, Oregon's mule deer population has declined by nearly 50 percent.



TILLAMOOK COUNTY/RYAN HOEFT

Blacktail rifle success was up substantially, possibly due to the latest-ending season in recent memory.

Since its high point in 1981, the mule deer population has declined by nearly 50 percent. And that decline continues. With less opportunity for success, the number of mule deer hunters has dropped, as well, from 150,000 in 1986 to less than 50,000 by 2022, along with the loss in license and tag revenue needed to fund wildlife management and conservation. For the foreseeable future, hunters can expect conservative management, and decreases in the number of tags available each season more often than increases.

Mule deer buck harvest for the any-legal-weapon hunts was down in most regions last year from 2022, with the lone bright spot being the Northeast Region, where success increased from 33 percent to 36 percent and the harvest increased correspondingly from 4,770 to 5,339.

Bowhunting mule deer effort and harvest was up across the board.

The news for black-tailed deer is better. Not too many years ago, their numbers were believed to be low, with problems that included outbreaks of hair loss disease in some lower elevation Coast Range areas. Now, improved population models and better data indicate that black-tailed deer are no longer in decline and are likely even increasing in some management units.

Blacktail rifle success was up substantially in both the Northwest and Southwest regions, possibly owing to the latest-ending season in recent memory. Last year's western Oregon bow success was down from the previous year.

Elk

Rocky Mountain elk in the northeastern part of the state continue to thrive, with

76 percent of wildlife management units at or near management objective. With an estimated population of 71,150, they are at 97 percent of MO across the board.

In western Oregon, Roosevelt elk numbers continue to be depressed, with an overall population of an estimated 54,830 animals. This is 77 percent of the objective of 70,850, although historically, that is well above the 1980 population of a little under 40,000. The most recent population high was about 65,000 in 2002. Overall numbers have been steadily dropping since then.

Statewide, elk hunter participation in rifle seasons was down 2.5 percent last year, and the average success rate for all hunts – including bull and antlerless har-

vest – also dipped from 19 percent in 2022 to 17 percent.

While predation plays a role, the probable primary culprit is the decline of logging on Forest Service lands in western Oregon, leading to less early seral stage habitat, which provides forage vegetation that helps grow elk (and deer) numbers. This situation is more prevalent in the Cascade Mountains, which is mostly composed of Forest Service lands. Further west in the Coast Range, large tracts of private commercial timberlands are still seeing regular logging operations along with improved ungulate habitat.

“While all the talk has been about Rocky Mountain elk, western Oregon elk numbers and harvest have declined, likely due to a combination of reduced logging and increased calf mortality from an expanding cougar population,” said Duane Dungannon, OHA State Coordinator. “OHA will be addressing western Oregon elk with ODFW. We are supporting some great habitat projects from the southwest Cascades to the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative, but there’s so much more that can be done, and we need every district on board.”

Complicating matters are necessary efforts to reduce conflicts on private lands through controlled antlerless hunts – even in units below management objectives. For example, the Willamette, Applegate and Melrose units that contain substantial parcels of private lands are elk de-emphasis areas.



COAST ELK/TERRY SMITH

Oregon's overall Roosevelt elk numbers have been declining steadily for the past 20 years.

Despite struggling Roosevelt elk herds, at approximately 126,000 animals, Oregon continues to have the third highest elk population in the United States, after Colorado and Montana.

Pronghorn

At 16,000 to 19,000 animals, pronghorn populations are stable. Because they are very sensitive to environmental conditions, drought or heavy winter snow can have a significant impact on pronghorn herds. Heavy winter snows that lasted well into spring 2023 caused some concern, but apparently pronghorns were not heavily impacted. This winter saw above average snowpack in southeast Oregon, but those heavy snows usually fall at higher elevations outside pronghorn winter range, so impacts are minimal. Snow at lower elevation provides moisture for spring green-up that benefits the animals.

Last year's pronghorn harvest and success rates were both down about 10 percent from the previous year.

Bighorn Sheep

Occupying the northeast part of the state, the Rocky Mountain bighorn population is estimated at 800 to 900. Some herds continue to have respiratory disease issues, spread by contact with domestic sheep. ODFW is aggressively researching sheep diseases and tracking their spread by regularly testing Rocky Mountain bighorn herds with suspected health problems. It has also partnered with the Hells Canyon Restoration Initiative to work with ranchers to reduce the incidence of wild-domestic sheep encounters.

California bighorn sheep in southeast Oregon number 4,200 to 4,500, and although a few herds have experienced respiratory health problems, the overall population is generally stable. ODFW is continuing to test California bighorn sheep for the presence of respiratory disease.

In addition, ODFW has also been addressing reduced genetic diversity in the Trout Creek Mountains and Abert Rim California bighorn sheep herds by translocating 21 bighorn sheep from the I-84 Herd this past winter.

Rocky Mountain Goat

The total population of Rocky Mountain goats in Oregon is about 1,200 animals and are stable or increasing. The largest herds are in the Elkhorn and Wallowa mountains, while smaller populations are found in the Strawberry Wilderness and Mt. Jefferson areas. A large fire in 2020

caused the Mt. Jefferson goat population to redistribute itself, but their overall numbers were not affected.

Bear and Cougar

Oregon's black bear population is close to 30,000 animals. To maintain a healthy population, ODFW monitors the yearly bear harvest through mandatory check-in to make sure they are not being over-harvested. Studies have shown that if the median age of all bears harvested is 3 years old or younger, the median age of males is 2 years old or younger and females 4 years old or younger, then the population is being over-harvested. Data collected in 2022 showed that median ages of harvested bears was 4 years for males, 5 years for females and 4 years overall, making the harvest well within conservation guidelines. More than half the bears taken in both spring and fall hunts were males.

The cougar population continues to slowly increase, with a current population estimate of 7,068. Cougars have been expanding in northwestern Oregon in recent years and are expected to continue occupying available territory and increasing their numbers until the population reaches carrying capacity, although it is difficult to say how long that will take.



LAKE COUNTY/JOHN C. MCFARLAND III

Snows from the past winter don't seem to have hurt Oregon pronghorn populations this year.

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ANTELOPE ANGUISH

A hunt you wait a quarter-century for shouldn't be a frustrating experience.

BY SCOTT HAUGEN

As I stepped onto a gravel road, just having hiked down a sage-covered hill, a man slammed on his brakes. Letting the dust clear, he opened the truck door and hopped out. "I just watched that whole thing and if you want to press charges on that guy, I'll be your witness!" he boiled.

I explained I had no intention of shooting the antelope buck in front of me, anyway, but that didn't calm the furious man. "I watched you get into position first thing, then wait as all the 'goats moved your way," he continued, breathing harder with each sentence. "I saw that SOB spot the herd from this road, drive his quad up the ridge, hop off and run to get in front of you for a shot. That's wrong! Just damned wrong! Hunters don't do that to each other!"

The man was right, but there was nothing illegal, just unethical, something I've seen a lot of over the decades.

I've killed a lot of antelope over my years, but I'd never killed an Oregon speedgoat. I rank them as the most beautiful of pronghorns, anywhere in the West. The black face and forehead of our bucks stand out; they're just different from mature bucks in other states, full of breathtaking beauty when you lay eyes on a buck in its prime. A taxidermist can tell an Oregon pronghorn cape from a Wyoming cape in a glance.

It took 24 points for me to draw this Beatys Butte tag. Unfortunately, record rainfall in the basin had pronghorns spread out, but changing conditions are a part of hunting. I'd set my sights high, very high.



PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

After seeing record-book bucks in preseason scouting, author Scott Haugen had many exciting stalks and passed several bucks, choosing to go home with a tag in his pocket that took 24 points to draw.

I wouldn't call them unrealistic, rather just on the brink. I wanted a buck in the mid-80 inch class. I saw two during scouting missions, and chats with seasoned hunters I trust and area biologists confirmed it was possible. Not probable, but possible. All I wanted was a chance, and you're not going to kill a monster unless you pass up lesser bucks. I'd waited a long time for this tag and was in no rush for the hunt to end.

But as the days progressed, more stupid moves by fellow hunters just left me scratching my head. Two days before the season, one group set up camp right next

to a waterhole that had hundreds of pronghorns coming to it each day. By the season opener, six other camps had joined them. Why so many hunters feel the urge to camp right next to water when hunting antelope is beyond me. Why invade where the animals want to be?

On day two of the hunt, I watched a man drive his quad to the edge of a little waterhole at daybreak, park it and stay sitting on it thinking antelope would come in. When the sun hit the man he made a move that solidified his lack of common sense. He walked 50 yards into tall sage but left

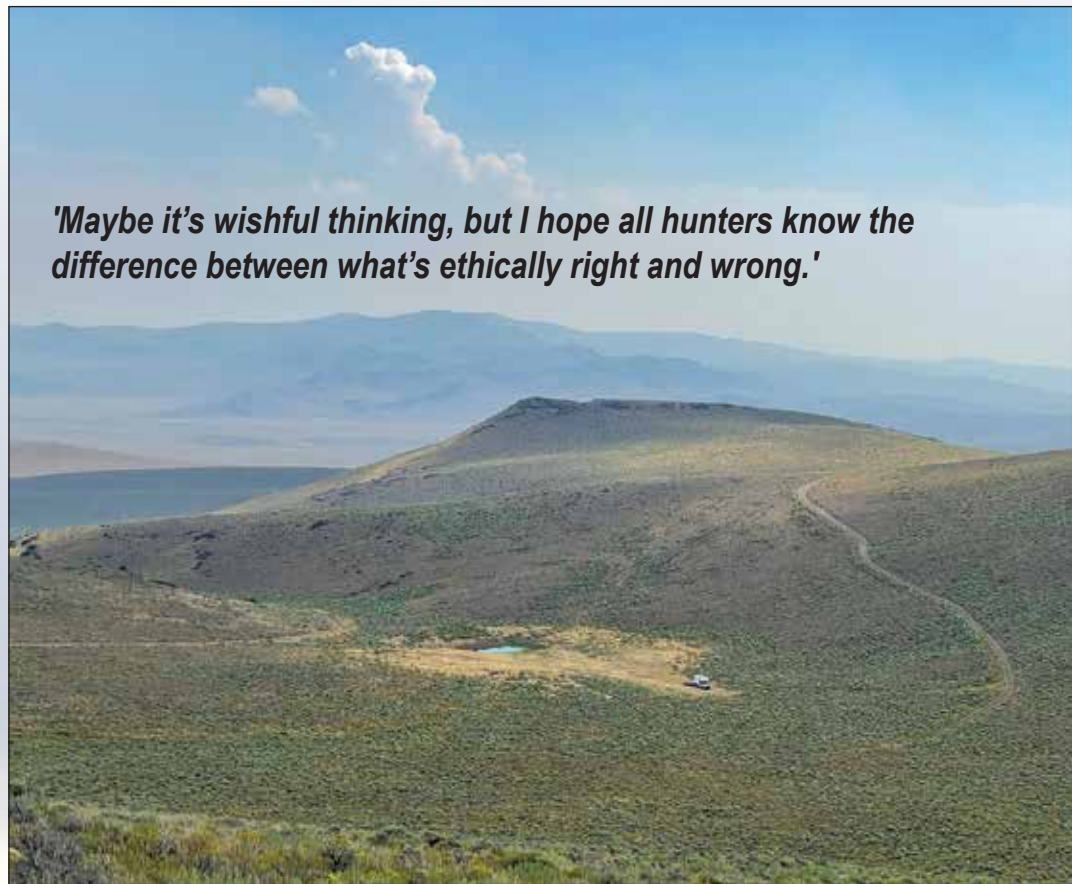
his red quad on the edge of the waterhole, smack in front of him. I talked with him later. He told me antelope were stupid and he figured they'd come in to drink if they were around. It was his first antelope hunt.

One afternoon I watched a man drive his quad around the entire edge of a waterhole, not getting off one time. He was looking for tracks and fresh sign, I assumed. He evidently found it because he drove the quad into some tall sage brush 20 yards from water's edge and sat there. I was looking down from a ridge and he had no idea I was watching. It didn't take the man long to realize the sage brush was too tall to

'If you hold a prized Oregon pronghorn tag for this upcoming season, congratulations. You're going to get to see parts of the state you may not often see. There are so many special things out there I wish all fellow hunters could see and appreciate.'

see over. That's when he stood on the seat and slowly turned in circles, searching for antelope. I left, but passed by a few hours later and could see the man's head and shoulders sticking up above the sage brush from over a mile away. One morning I left camp at 3 a.m. to reach a distant spot where I'd seen a nice buck the evening prior. Two hours later, when I was just about there, a man on a quad went by me. We were the only hunters out there and the track we traveled was an old, weathered road loaded with big rocks. Narrow and rough, it was the only track around. As the man got closer I figured he'd stop and talk, so dropped my bino's and waved a hand to greet him. But he kept his head down and sped by. I could have reached out and touched him, he was that close. That thoughtless move infuriated me. Again, not illegal, just unethical and plain rude. Obviously the hunter education test we all have to pass isn't sinking in.

And don't get me going on the man



'Maybe it's wishful thinking, but I hope all hunters know the difference between what's ethically right and wrong.'

It's fine to hunt at water sources, but don't camp there. Not only are you ruining a good hunting spot for yourself and others, your presence will keep all wildlife away from water they need.

who took a dump in the middle of a main road, leaving toilet paper and all, when all he had to do was take two steps into high sage. Or the ridiculous number of beer cans I picked up. Or the number of ATVs I saw heading across the sage brush going after antelope when fire danger restricted off-road travel, not to mention the fact these people honestly thought they were going to get in range of animals by driving toward them. Good grief.

With two days left in the season, I'd passed on six bucks I figured were between 77 and 82 inches. I placed the crosshairs on two of the biggest bucks, knowing I could have filled my tag either time. They were fun, memorable stalks I thoroughly enjoyed. I saw dozens of smaller bucks, none of which I desired to pull the trigger on.

That night a man came to my camp. He'd been drinking, was belligerent and just plain obnoxious. He wasn't threaten-

ing, just rude. I was embarrassed to be associated with someone holding such a prized tag.

By choice, I didn't fire a shot on my pronghorn hunt. I could have, many times. I'd set my standards and held to it. It was my decision and no one was to blame for my choosing to end the hunt with a tag in my pocket. I didn't fail. I have no regrets. I'd do it all over again.

If you hold a prized Oregon pronghorn tag for this upcoming season, congratulations. You're going to get to see parts of the state you may not often see. From big herds of antelope to feral horses, sage grouse to famous landmarks, even petroglyphs that tell stories of the same hunt you're going on, but etched in stone thousands of years ago, might be beheld. I loved these facets of the hunt, things I'd otherwise not have seen were it not for the tag I held.

There are so many special things out there in Oregon's high desert I wish all



Petroglyphs tell many stories of the same passions hunters have today.

fellow hunters could see and appreciate, because we truly do live in a wonderful state.

We all share the same passion, otherwise we wouldn't be reading these pages or hunting the same game in the same places. Maybe it's wishful thinking, but I hope all hunters know the difference between what's ethically right and wrong. The important part is doing what's right, always, and realizing selfish actions affect more than just ourselves.



For signed copies of Scott Haugen's popular book, Trophy Blacktails: The Science of the Hunt, visit scotthaugen.com. You can follow Scott's adventures on Instagram and Facebook.

MOREL SUPERIORITY (Continued from Page 62)

Meanwhile the sisters inferior gathered on the other side of the truck to ooh and aah at the bountiful harvest, anticipating their customary tithe. At this point, Joe said he could have run the gauntlet between the long-robed nuns, but the sisters' 14-year-old beagle was standing in the middle of the two-track. Joe opened the window a crack and handed out a bagful of reishi to the Mother Superior who took a big sniff and knew exactly what she was looking at. "Happiness is a warm ganoderma," she murmured.

Joe tried to distract the cloistered contemplatives with mushrooms of the genus *coprinus*, but the nuns were not to be truffled with. A novice tried to avert her eyes, but as for the rest of them, well, let's say they saw more than the usual 10 percent.

MOREL OF THE STORY

Someday I hope to strike up a conversation with the Mother about morel relativism which is the view that judgments about a particular mushroom are valid only relative to some other particular standpoint and that no standpoint is uniquely valid.

Relativists often claim an action or judgment is required of a mushroom. For example, if a person believes a person should not have to buy a tag to procure mushrooms, another person might take the opposite viewpoint that working hard is good and becoming wealthy enough to buy a harvest tag is a sign of blessing from God.

Morel absolutism is the opposite. It argues there are truths about mushrooms relevant across all contexts. But that will be a topic for another day.

It is touching to know the Mother Superior cares for our souls. She said she would pray for Joe's morels which are a genus of edible sac fungi. Which is nice.



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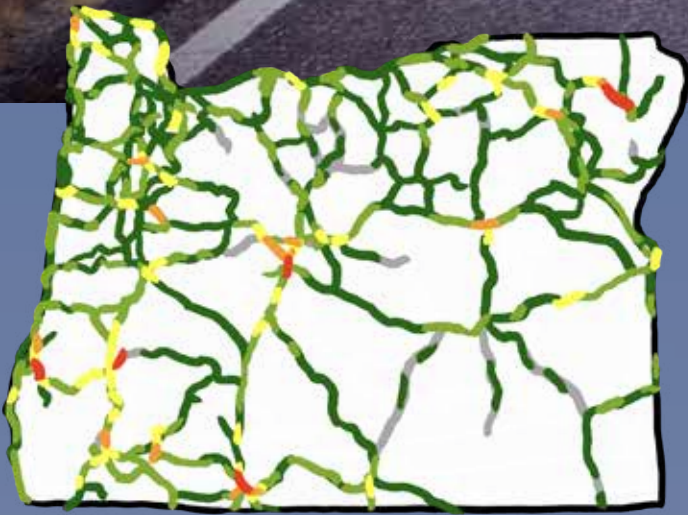
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OHA member Jon Duerst earns honorable mention and OHA hat for these images of an elk herd and a black bear cub in Wallowa County.



OHA member Rich Jansen from Newberg earns an OHA hat and honorable mention for this Tillamook bull in velvet.



Matthew Wood, OHA member in Wilsonville, captured this Alsea Unit cougar, an OHA hat, and honorable mention.

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GAME TIME

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STORY & PHOTOS BY TROY RODAKOWSKI



As the hot summer turns ever so slowly into early fall, we notice changes that signal a time to prepare and look forward to what most of us wait for all year: hunting season and cooler crisp mornings. The lush green landscape fades and goes to seed for the next season of growth. Thistles, thorns and Velcro weed seeds stick and poke at our pant legs.

Deciduous trees, such as oaks, aspens and maples are now showing light hints of yellow and brown during the shortening days. Grasshoppers, crickets and butterflies take to the air in search of the last viable morsels of food and nectar. Yellowjackets, flies and mosquitoes dart around looking for one last bite or a morsel of venison. We look ahead to the first smell of fresh rain and mushrooms to pick while scouting and hunting. I didn't care much for fresh liver, onions and mushrooms when I was younger, but now I crave the smell of cast iron and butter on a cool October

evening. With cooler mornings, tamaracks begin to yellow, signaling an eventual end to summer's relentless radiating heat waves. Berries are now ripe and fill the air with sweet hints of a possible pie, jam or maybe cobbler for fall deer and elk camps. Thick bacon and eggs on the griddle will be the reward after a morning hunt. Wildfire smoke still bellows across the land, creating a haze and messing with hunting plans, while also laying the groundwork for rejuvenated habitat.

I'll never forget the family campfire ring – the ring that my great grandfather built back in the 1940s with my great uncle Orville, using hand-selected eastern Oregon rock. Of course, many stones have been added over time, increasing its size and changing its shape. But if you look closely, you can still see some of the original stones placed there decades ago. The fire ring has had a multitude of family and friends sharing generations of stories – some more square with the facts than others – next to its warm flames.



Leaves change color, signaling a change of the season and adventures to come.



Controlled hunt draw results are out in June, giving us the excuse to head out to camp in late summer and refine our surroundings, look for animals and relax while anticipating the season to come. The air is still warm, and the mornings just cool enough to keep us refreshed. We may throw in a fly or spinning rod and try to catch a few trout out of the small trickling mountain streams. Great uncle Orville would build a small makeshift smoker in camp, and we would feast on the freshly smoked trout, roast hot dogs and marshmallows.

Sometimes we even pack a rifle for fall bear and coyotes as we survey the countryside with anticipation of a big bull or buck in velvet that we hope to see hard-horned in the next few months.

My grandpa and great uncle are long passed, and now we all take on new roles that were once those of our relatives and friends. Now Dad is getting older, and I have a young daughter who




Author and grandpa in the late 70s at the family deer camp in eastern Oregon.



The author and his father in the family camp in the late 70s.

loves the outdoors and is eager to learn the family hunting history and create new memories with all of us. I shot my first buck in our family camp at age 12, and my daughter is quickly approaching the age that she will have the opportunity to bag her own. We are all looking forward to the next opportunity where old meets new and memories from the past melt together with new.

It's sometimes hard to believe how fast time goes by in a blink of an eye. I look back and can still remember the cool opening morning in 1988 when I was the new hunter in the group. I vividly remember the exact place where I bagged my first deer like it was yesterday, and will likely take my own daughter there in a few short years hoping to replicate my experience as best we can. Regardless, we will be making more memories for generations to come and adding many more stones to our fire pit along the way. 



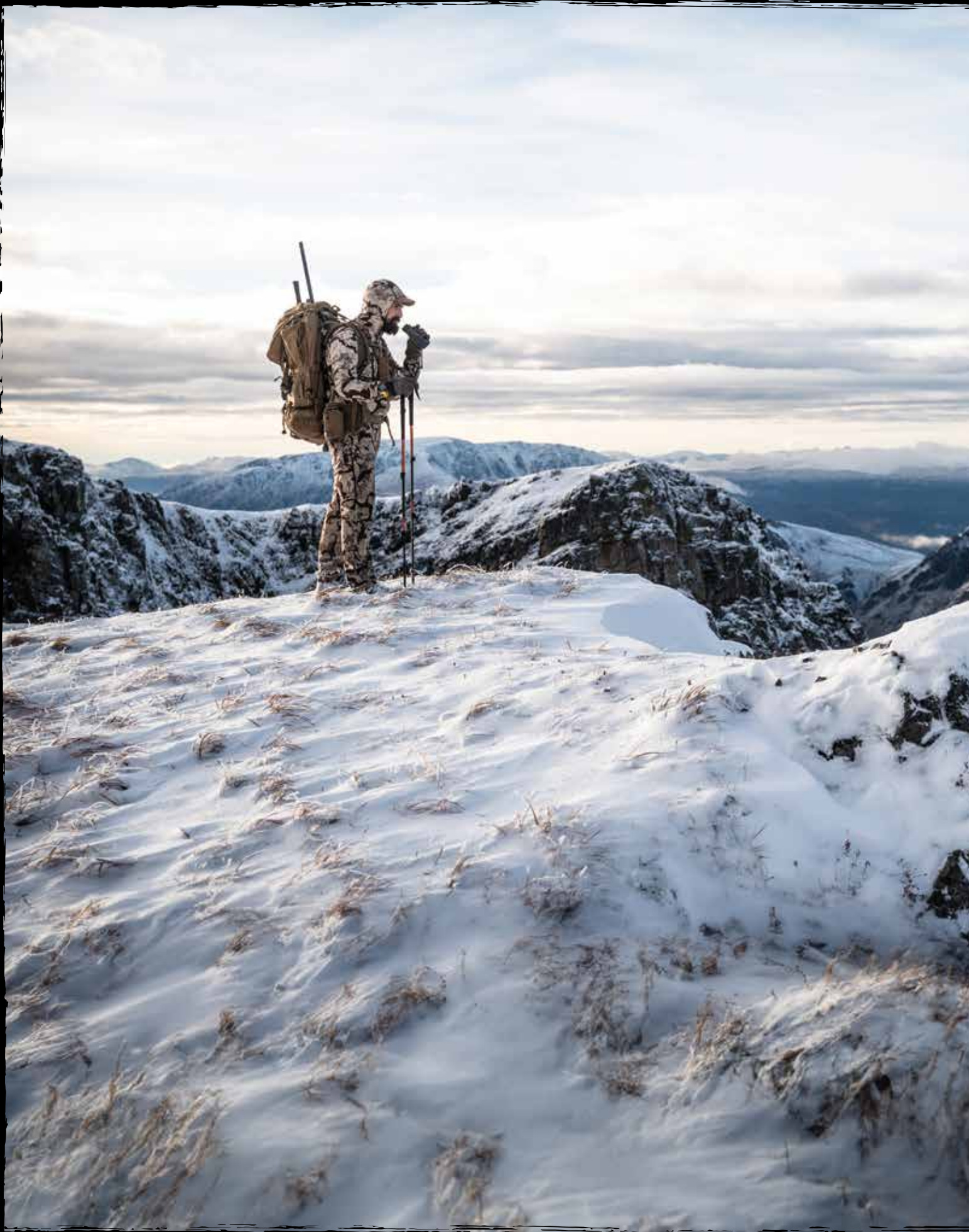
Fresh berries are a bonus reason to get out and scout this summer.



A summer scouting and camping trip can help you formulate your hunting plans for fall, but it's also a great excuse to spend relaxing time in the places you love in warmer weather.



The campfire is where legends grow larger.





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Taking the Bull by the Horns

The road from rifle to bowhunting is paved with valuable lessons.

BY ZACH MANSFIELD

In my younger years, I would often frown at the process of any endeavor. I was much more concerned with the end result. Time, success and failures have all played a hand in shaping my elk hunting perspectives and outcomes. Over the last decade I've managed to screw up in just about every way possible when it comes to elk hunting.

Missed 20-yard broadside shot? Check.

Deflect an arrow off a limb while a six-point bull has no idea I'm even in the same zip code? Check.

One of my personal favorites: be so wound up on adrenaline that I can't even pull back my bow. Check.

All this, coupled with a multitude of bad stalks, fickle wind changes and just plain bad elk hunting antics has led me here. I'm a middle-aged man with a handful of kills under his belt and a solid list of things that a person should and should not do when they take to the elk woods.

In the 2023 season, I would need every lesson learned to come out with a heavy pack, notched tag and a newfound appreciation for the process of any hunting adventure.

Rocky Mountain elk have captivated my adult life. My dad always took time to go elk hunting. We didn't spend as much time deer hunting, but we always managed to find time to hunt elk. The excitement I

saw in him on the old hair tag hunts will forever be etched in my mind. Branch-antlered bull, cow, spike, it didn't matter. He loved to hunt elk and loved bringing home a truck bed full of stories and meat.

It took me a long time to be successful. For whatever reason, I am drawn to challenges, and had it not been for my good friend Chad Dotson in the steep nasty country that breaks into Hells Canyon on a late October day several years ago, I'm not sure I'd be hunting elk at all. The success we had that day during Oregon's first-season rifle bull hunt when I tagged my first bull elk is etched into my core. That feeling of excitement, sense of accomplishment, burning thighs, and winded lungs created a highlight reel I wanted to repeat year after year.

Elk are big and loud, and once you figure out the subtle nuances of the creatures, they are a ton of fun to hunt.

Luck of the draw has never been on my side, but for whatever reason, 2023 was a fantastic year of luck, and looking back, maybe a little bit of skill learned from all those hard lessons from the seasons prior. I had never drawn a tag that has required preference points. Every hunt I have ever

been on has been one that anyone could get with relative ease. However, in 2023 I threw my name into the hat for a hunt that I had no business drawing, and lo and behold, the elk hunting gods felt bad for all the wear and tear on my mind and body from the previous decade and granted me a tag that I'll likely never draw again.

The country was vast, rugged, and as beautiful as I've ever seen. The thin air and relentless pace wore me both mentally and physically. In the end, I got exactly what I expected out of a hunt like that.

To maximize family time, hunting time and my precious PTO bank at work, I would leave after work with a loaded trailer, arrive in the dark of the night, or maybe morning, catch a few hours of sleep

and then begin my elk hunt odyssey. Around 3 a.m. with the windows cracked in my pickup, I heard a faint bugle, then another, and then another. I couldn't believe it. There have been entire seasons, where I haven't heard three bugles, and here I was pulled off the side of the road after a few hours of driving and I was being kept awake by the rut-crazed bulls in these mountains.

Elk are big and loud, and once you figure out the subtle nuances of the creatures, they are a ton of fun to hunt.



After managing to take a trophy bull at the end of his exhausting hunt, the author was then faced with packing out the meat and antlers solo.

I awoke to a stiff breeze out of the north, so I did what any elk hunter would do and put the wind in my face and started making boot tracks. The first faint bugle I heard just a few hours prior had come from this direction, so I figured this option was as good as any. One thing has impressed me more than anything is the keen sense of an elk's nose. You can beat its eyes and ears, but you will never beat its nose. The subtle breeze at your back is a red flag to any elk when you are within striking distance. Lucky for me that morning, I had a stiff headwind and was making good time in some steep county.

As I approached the basin, I heard the distinct high-pitched squeal of a bull. I told myself this tag was too good to shoot a bull on the first day, but shortly after hearing that bull bugle and then seeing him, I would have gladly cut the hunt short to validate my tag.

I worked my way through some shade pockets to within 100 yards of this mountain monarch. I was as close as I could get with the cover I had, and with his cows strung out from 40 yards to 80, all I could do was wait and see if he would follow their path. The steady headwind out of the north started doing funny things, and wouldn't you know it – a bull that I had dreamt about for decades sauntered out of my life and likely out of the county.

That was Day One of the hunt. In my

not-so-humble manner, I told myself, "If I did that on the first morning, I can probably get this done in a couple days and be home in no time!" Those fickle elk hunting gods had different ideas.

I had carved out 11 days for this hunt, and that was quite an undertaking at this stage in life. Between kids, careers and every other iron I seem to have in the fire, 11 days was asking a lot of everyone who depends on me back home. I used every one of those 11 days that I set aside for elk hunting to make it happen. Looking back, it was one of the most intense, grueling hunts I've ever done, and it has defined perseverance for me.

On the evening of Day 10, I was pretty much defeated. I texted my wife and said, "I'm just not sure it's going to happen. It's been a blast, but I'm not sure I'll be coming home with anything other than a few lost pounds and some blisters." She responded in her sweet demeanor like she always does, "Well, honey, keep hunting. We love you. If it's meant to be, it's meant to be. We'll see you in a couple of days."

That evening I loaded up and trekked down an old two track that hadn't seen a boot print in some time. I was working my way around the end of a timber knob when the unmistakable sound of a bull broke the evening silence. I ran as hard and as fast as I could to get the wind right and began the all-too-familiar game of cat and mouse that

the hunter and hunted play. I had worked myself into position, made one last call and set up with the most confidence I've ever felt. The bull read the script perfectly and walked within 25 yards, where I released a lethal arrow.

At this point in the hunt, I was completely content to shoot a lesser bull. The bull that I encountered will likely be the best archery bull I ever take. The overwhelming sense of accomplishment I felt in that moment could be seen in the tears rolling down my face.

Over the years I've almost always been able to phone friends to help me get an elk out of a bad spot after a kill. As luck would have it, I had no lifeline on this hunt; all of my usual suspects were off on their own adventures, and I was left completely solo. I could write an entire issue for OREGON HUNTER about what transpired over the next 24 hours, but in the end, I had packed all the meat and antlers, and left every ounce of myself on that mountain, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

I've had plenty of time to digest my most recent archery elk hunt. Some of the meat from this bull is still stored in my freezer, and his antlers have taken up a spot on the wall. The stories will live in my head and have been embellished to my best friends and family members.

What I've learned from this hunt will be applied to other elk hunting seasons. The process that I once scoffed at, I now find comfort in. Every ounce of misery, joy, pain, and success is what makes a hunt for me. Having a freezer that's busting at the seams and first-world problem of re-organizing my shop wall are desirable additions to any elk hunting process. Bad luck and hard-learned lessons led me to that bull, and I am forever grateful for every one of them.





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TRADING AMMO FOR ARROWS

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, YOU'RE RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. HANG TOUGH, AND SOON YOU'LL HANG QUARTERS.

BY BROOKE WATSON

I never thought I'd be a hunter. As a youngster, I was the biggest animal lover you'd ever meet, and I just couldn't reconcile hunting and my love for animals. When I was 9 years old, my dad drew a pronghorn tag and offered it to me through Oregon's Mentored Youth Hunter Program. I knew he'd always wanted me to hunt, so I accepted his offer.

Are you sure they can't hear my heart beating when they get so close?

All it took was one hunt for me to realize that my love for animals fit perfectly with the sport of hunting. I got to see them up close, hear them, and learn about them even down to their internal anatomy. Over the years, my dad continued to teach me what it meant to be a hunter; we are advocates for the animals, champions of conservation, and we work hard for the wild, healthy meat we bring home to the dinner table.

I started out a rifle hunter, but by age 15, I wanted to get even closer to the animals. My dad took me to the archery shop and bought me a Bowtech Infinite Edge. I started shooting it religiously.

By the time my first archery season rolled around, I was as excited as ever. I remember my first blind sit like it was yesterday – wide-eyed, sitting on the edge of my chair, prepared for any buck that came into my sights. The first sit... nothing. Then it was a second sit, all does. A third sit, all does plus some magpies. I remember thinking, geez! This is much more painstaking than I had thought.

It was hard to learn this kind of patience at first. I wasn't used to this type of hunting where you aren't out hiking, but rather just sitting with nature, trying to be calm, quiet, and concentrated. It took many sits before a spindly 3x3 came by.







The author took 9 bucks in 10 years with a bow, but success with elk came in small steps filled with eye-popping, heart-pounding excitement.

One arrow, 20 yards. After the shot let off, I felt my adrenaline spike, and I was shaking like a leaf on a tree! He was hit! It wasn't a perfect shot, but I knew it would do the job. I called my dad on the radio, and soon the crew was on their way to help me locate the buck in the sage. As I looked for blood, the guys were teaching me what to look for as you track. The buck made it a good 100 yards before expiring on the back side of a small hill. What an exhilarating experience! I was convinced – bowhunting was just the thing for me.

That same year, I went archery elk hunting and learned the truth about its difficulty. I didn't nock a single arrow during those weeks, but I heard bugling, and that was enough to keep me hooked. Before each season, I was shooting for months on end working on increasing both my poundage and range. As a young girl, it wasn't easy competing with the guys; they could draw so much more than me, which meant they could shoot farther with less error. I do remember times when elk would come in and I would pass the shot to my dad or a friend because I didn't have the confidence that my arrow would make it.

When I was 16, I had my first miss. I was drawing right at the legal pound limit for elk, and my dad called in a six-point bull at 45 yards. With my adrenaline pumping, I pulled my bow back with ease and let off a shot. I watched my arrow go, go, go and then drop, drop, drop. As the bull began to move, the arrow just barely nicked the underside of his chest. I sat down in disappointment trying to hold back the tears as I waited for my dad to locate me. I remember that being the first experience that motivated me to practice more and work out harder so I could pull additional poundage.

By 18, I was consistently pulling 60 pounds and was proficient at 50 yards.

Over the years, I learned success was highly dependent on the work I put in. If I wanted to shoot a deer each year, it would require lots of scouting, setting up blinds, early mornings, late nights, long hikes, and sometimes even a few nights sleeping in the blind on my own. I became very successful as an archery deer hunter, bagging a buck every year except one in 10 years. Elk,

however, was not quite that simple. It took me six years to shoot my first archery bull. Even still, every archery season was full of bugling, call-ins, and crazy encounters that made my eyes nearly pop out of my head and my heart almost pound out of my chest. I always used to ask my dad, "Are you sure they can't hear my heart beating when they get so close?"

Even though I was struggling to bring it all together and make a kill shot, I was in love with being surrounded by such incredible creatures.

It all came to fruition in 2022, and I shot a beautiful spike bull. I had dragged myself out of my warm bed after hunting for weeks and was ready to give it one more go. My dad and I hiked 2 miles in the dark up to a flat we knew the elk were visiting frequently. Right at dawn, my dad began cow calling, and we started getting answers like many years before. It took but 10 minutes before a huge five-point bull made his way to my 70-yard pre-ranged bush with a pile of cows in tow. He started to pick up his speed, and within seconds was 6 feet in front of me. My eyes widened as I watched him open his mouth and let out a loud, deep bugle. Steam billowed from his mouth, and I could see every detail of his teeth, eyes, and each hair on his muzzle.

I wasn't sure what to do so I figured my best bet was to draw and hope for the best.

As I pulled my bow back, he locked eyes with me and swirled around. The cows panicked, too, and soon they were 100 yards on the opposite hillside staring at me. There were two younger bulls in the back that hadn't seen us yet, so I knew I had to make a move.

I crawled on my belly as 30 sets of eyes watched me intently until I reached another tree for cover. My dad continued to call, and the herd started to make its way up the mountain. As I stood there, I thought there goes year seven of no bull.

In silence, a tall spike came creeping in from the opposite side. I noticed him out of the corner of my eye and prepared to make a move. I drew as he stepped behind a juniper. He kept walking until he was just beyond the tree. I lined up my sights and shot.

He sprinted downhill and toppled over on the other side. I jumped up in awe and began yelling for my dad. He could hear the crashing and came barreling up the hill.

"Did you shoot? What happened?" he eagerly asked.

With a huge smile I pointed just down the hill and said, "He's right down there! I think I double-lunged him."

Within 50 yards, we walked up on him. The sun had started to rise, and the sky was laced with colors. It felt as if God was smiling down on us. We thanked him for the gift and began our chore of gutting and quartering the bull.

That day was just one of many that has solidified my love, my passion, and my respect for bowhunting. Hunting has taught me more than anything else in my life. I have learned how to have patience, how to be focused, and how to work hard to attain a goal. I joined the military in 2019, and during bootcamp, I remember thinking, I know how to do this, I'm prepared for this. All of those disciplines I had learned as a hunter – the early mornings, physical challenges, and long hours were spilling over into another discipline. Becoming a bowhunter as a woman had its challenges, but the men around me taught me things I could never have learned had I not taken the first step into this extraordinary lifestyle. As I write this, I'm full of excitement for the next season and cannot wait to learn more from the wilderness God has given to us to steward and enjoy.



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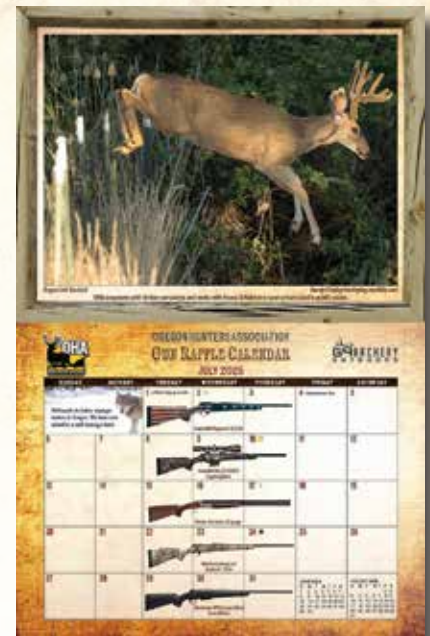


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KLAMATH BITTERBRUSH

CHAPTER NEWS

OHA chapters make hay while the sun shines

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

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., Big E's.

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 9.

Update: The All Hands All Brands project date has been changed to June 28-30 at Deep Creek Campground in the Ochoco National Forest. Our youth and family day was held on June 1.

BLUE MOUNTAIN

KEVIN MARTIN 541-969-6744

ohablumountainchapter@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.

CAPITOL

DANNY SOUTH 503-577-6033

Chapter Meetings: See newsletter for date and time of meetings.

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 16.

Update: We did our Westside Habitat Enhancement and Cleanup Project in May. This project has been an ongoing OHA effort for over 20 years.

CLATSOP COUNTY

TROY LAWS 503-738-6962

ClatsopCountyOHA@pacifier.com

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 6:30 snacks, 7 p.m. meeting, 4H Clubhouse,



OHA's Redmond Chapter took down over a half mile of 8-foot fencing around a 1,000-plant plot they put in at Priest Hole. The plants, which they irrigated, were in great shape and will be a huge benefit to the wintering wildlife in the area, which includes mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, antelope, chukar, pheasant, valley quail and mountain quail.



Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

2024 Fundraiser: Held April 13.

Update: We helped sponsor two Clatsop County 4-H youth to attend the 4-H National Championships in Nebraska to compete in small bore rifle and archery competitions.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

JORDAN HICKS 949-533-7271

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held Feb. 24.

Update: Our newsletter is now coming quarterly in order to keep costs down.

CURRY

MATT THOMPSON 530-351-5847

mandmthompson02@yahoo.com

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held April 27.

EMERALD VALLEY

TONY HILSENDAGER 541-729-0877

EmeraldOHA@live.com

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

2024 Fundraiser: July 27, Cascadian Bowman, Noti, 623-670-6701. There will be games, raffles, silent auction, food and drinks, air rifle and archery events and more to enjoy.

Update: 2024 Lane County Hunter Education Field Days will be held June 23, July 20, Aug. 14 and 24, and Sept. 14.

HOODVIEW

KELLY PARKMAN 503-706-7481

oregonhunters.org/hoodview-chapter

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

Chapter Meetings: Second Thursday, El-

mer's Restaurant, Portland.

2024 Fundraiser: Held Feb. 17.

Update: We held our annual White River project on June 7-9. We host a Learn To Hunt class on Aug. 8 about blacktail hunting, presented by our ODFW biologist. Register early at www.oregonhunters.org/learntohunt

JOSEPHINE COUNTY

DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511

dtdowns2646@gmail.com

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 16.

Update: The annual JoCo Youth Day was held June 1 at the Josephine County Sportsman Association. We joined other chapters and members June 15-16 for a fencing project at Willow Prairie. Our JoCo Chapter Picnic is June 22 at Fields Park in Murphy.

KLAMATH

ALLAN WIARD 541-591-9700

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held April 27.

Update: OHA conservation staff and our chapter recently protected bitterbrush we planted in October, and noted roughly 75 percent plant survival. The Hart Mountain project was held May 18-19, and forest cleanup project was on June 1. We host the Gerber Youth Antelope BBQ and orientation for tag holders on Aug. 23.

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 and 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

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

2024 Fundraiser: Pint Night, June 12, Rogue Brewing in South Beach at Brewers on the Bay.

Update: Please join us for a pint on our Lincoln County Chapter fundraising Pint Night on June 12. There will be many great prizes to take home with you.

MALHEUR COUNTY

BRUCE HUNTER 208-573-5556

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

Update: Our annual Youth Shoot will be held on Aug. 10 at the Snake River Sportsman Complex in Ontario.

MID-COLUMBIA

CHUCK ASHLEY 541-993-8076

Chuckashley4120@gmail.com

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 30.

Update: The annual White River project was held on June 7-9. The Mid-Columbia Chapter is looking for chapter officers, including president and vice president. Plenty of support is available, so please step up to help protect our local hunting heritage.

MID-WILLAMETTE

KEN MCCALL 541-753-8588

kenemccall@gmail.com

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

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held April 13.

Update: May guest speaker Jennifer Beathe, forester and public outreach manager at Starker Forests, provided a presentation on hunting opportunities, forest management and public outreach.

OCHOCO

JAMES COX 541-408-4816

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held Feb. 17.

Updates: Look for our OHA booth at the 4th of July in the Park event as well as the Crook County Fair Aug. 7-10. We will sell Gun Raffle Calendars and will give away a Nosler rifle on Aug. 10.

PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 503-266-2900

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: We held our annual youth day on April 27 and our traditional family campout and guzzler project on June 14. Our chapter will be at the Molalla Buckaroo again this year.

REDMOND

K. C. THRASHER 541-419-7215

OHA line 541-383-1099

oregonhunters.org/redmond-chapter

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held Feb. 24.

Update: At the annual Priest Hole project, chapter members took down a half-mile of fencing to allow wintering wildlife access to the plants we cultivated. We also removed cages from cottonwood trees we planted in a previous year's project.

ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

Firepmt29@gmail.com

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 16.

Update: The annual Youth Turkey Clinic at Denman Wildlife Area was another great success.

TILLAMOOK

JOHN PUTMAN 503-842-7733

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Monday, Board Meetings 6:30, 3rd Monday General Meetings 7 p.m., ODFW Tillamook Office.

2024 Fundraiser: Held May 4.

Update: We held our youth trap shoot on

June 1. Don't miss our OHA booth at the Tillamook County Fair; stop by and enter to win a gun.

TIOGA

MARCEY FULLERTON 541-294-7912

Chapter Meetings: 4th Tuesday, 6 p.m., Corner Bar & Grill, Coquille.

2024 Fundraiser: Held April 6.

Update: We are looking for volunteers for the OHA booth at the Coos County Fair on July 23-27. This is a great opportunity to share our hunting heritage; contact Marcey to sign up.

TUALATIN VALLEY

TONY KIND 503-290-6143

oregonhunters.org/tualatin-valley-chapter

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 23.

Update: Our chapter held our annual Youth Event at Henry Hagg Lake June 1 and 2.

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: Chapter picnic will be July 16 at the Roseburg Rod N Gun Club, 5:30 p.m.

UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

Chapter Meetings: La Grande Library, next date TBA.

2024 Fundraiser: Held Feb. 24.

Update: If you are looking for a great volunteer opportunity, contact us about joining our chapter as a board member, officer or newsletter editor.


YAMHILL COUNTY

ANDY BODEEN 503-490-2489

ohayamhill.com

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

2024 Fundraiser: Held March 16.

Update: Our Youth Shotgun Shoot date has changed to Aug. 17, 9 a.m. at Newberg Rod & Gun Club. Ages 9-17 of all experience levels welcome. Lunch and ammo will be provided. Call 503-737-9483 for more information. 



OHA NEWS & VIEWS

DUANE DUNGANNON

OHA supports bird hunting opportunity, seeks sharp-tailed grouse restoration

By Tyler Dungannon, OHA Conservation Coordinator
TD@oregonhunters.org

At the April ODFW Commission meeting, OHA once again showed up to ensure we are maximizing hunting opportunity within the confines of sound science-based wildlife management.

✓ **WILD TURKEY** - OHA previously supported a proposal to increase wild turkey hunting opportunity to address damage on private lands in Grant County, and now in western Oregon counties (Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Benton, Linn, and eastern Lane counties, excluding private industrial forest land).

We are supportive of the beardless fall turkey permit program, as long as ODFW continues to monitor turkey populations to ensure we don't see population declines among turkeys that predominantly use public lands.

✓ **SAGE-GROUSE** - It seems every year, sage-grouse hunting is on some Commissioner's chopping block, and every year OHA is there to remind Commissioners that our conservative sage-grouse hunting season doesn't contribute to any population decline. Further, it was hunter-harvested wing data that determined sage-grouse productivity (chicks per hen) in 2023 was the highest recorded since data were first collected over 40 years ago.

✓ **SHARP-TAILED GROUSE** - OHA made the Commission aware that we're embarking on another effort to reintroduce native Columbian sharp-tailed grouse to northeast Oregon. This species was extirpated from Oregon in the 1960s/70s, so we feel it's time to work with sharp-tail experts from across the West to determine the best available habitat for another potential reintroduction effort.



JOHN C. MCFARLAND III

OHA has been adamant that the dire status of mule deer must be reflected in the management plan.

OHA helps shape mule deer plan

By Tyler Dungannon, OHA Conservation Coordinator
TD@oregonhunters.org

OHA has been calling for a substantial revision to Oregon's Mule Deer Management Plan for several years. ODFW began working on the new plan in 2022, and throughout the process, OHA staff and its deer committee sent 10 separate comment letters that have helped shape the plan for the benefit of mule deer and hunters.

The goal of the plan is to provide a framework to improve conditions for mule deer and ultimately reverse the species' decline. In particular, the plan can serve as a guide for natural resource agencies and landowners to create conditions that benefit mule deer.

OHA recognizes that the new mule deer plan was a considerable lift for ODFW, but initially, the first draft of the plan fell short of the plan's goal. Broadly, the plan did not express the dire situation that mule deer populations are enduring to land managers, developers, elected officials and other entities capable of assisting or hindering mule deer. Following OHA's comments, ODFW integrated language that better reflects the drastic conditions on the landscape for mule deer, and this will help our efforts to reverse population declines.

✓ **Habitat and Nutrition:** OHA provided specific, additional language to ensure mule deer and their habitat needs are considered in land use planning processes.

✓ **Parasites and Disease:** OHA has long supported ODFW's effort to prevent and ultimately limit the prevalence of chronic wasting disease in Oregon. ODFW thoroughly addressed our concerns in this

chapter, though we requested ODFW include a strategy to increase hunter awareness for those who travel between Oregon and CWD states.

✓ **Predation:** OHA was generally supportive of ODFW's language regarding efforts to determine impacts of predation on mule deer, but we disagreed with language in the draft plan that appears to hamstring the agency in implementing target areas or other efforts to remove predators for the benefit of mule deer. OHA will continue to support predator removal efforts in areas where conditions are conducive to achieving a positive mule deer population response.

✓ **Harvest Management:** Management objectives are considerably different in the new mule deer management plan. OHA expressed deep concern in reducing our population goals in the name of making them more realistic, but we are encouraged that ODFW will now use cutting edge population models to determine population growth rates in conjunction with population size estimates to discern mule deer herd range management concern levels.

OHA also provided comments on the plan's executive summary, anthropogenic (man-made) impacts, poaching, specific herd range reports, and mule deer population monitoring. ODFW did not incorporate all of our comments, but those that were included have certainly enhanced this plan as a tool that ODFW, OHA and others can use to address mule deer declines. OHA has put a tremendous amount of work into shaping this plan, and now we will turn our attention to plan implementation.

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 42) 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 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>



OHA pays out \$6,200 in rewards in 6 cases

In the last two months, OHA issued 6 reward checks to informants in 6 cases totaling \$6,200 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund. Charges included: criminal trespass II, hunting in violation of criminal trespass, take/possession of buck deer, unlawful take of antlerless elk, fail to allow inspection, take/possession of steelhead, falsely applied for license and tag, hunting on another's cultivated land, unlawful take/possession of bull elk, waste of game mammal, no big game tag, unlawful take of cow moose, waste of a game mammal, hunting from/across a highway.

Next Gun Calendar winners announced

Here are April and May winners of the 2024 Gun Calendar Raffle:

- **Kimber 84 Hunter 280 Ackley**
James Settie of Estacada
- **Henry Golden Boy .22LR**
Dave Hamrick of Coos Bay
- **Stoeger M3500 Max 5 Camo 12 Gauge**
Randy Pridham of Brookings
- **Browning A Bolt III 7mm**
Nicole Taylor of Estacada
- **Taurus Judge .45/410**
Mark Marriott of Union
- **Ruger American 6.5 CR**
Don Calac of Susanville
- **Weatherby Vanguard 6.5 PRC**
Seth Cooney of Hermiston
- **Howa 1500 Yote Package**
Steve Grabenhorst of Bend
- **Christensen Mesa 300 PRC**
Jonathan Holman of Albany



Get your 2025 Gun Raffle Calendar at 541-772-7313 or www.oregonhunters.org/store for your shot at one of 53 great guns!

OREGON HUNTER, OHA's Calendar bag 4 awards

OREGON HUNTER contributors won awards in multiple categories in the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association's annual Excellence in Craft contest.

Gary Lewis won first and second place in the humor category for "Relationship Status: It's Complicated" and "P-22



JOHN C. MCFARLAND III

Finally Runs Out of Lives," which appeared in OREGON HUNTER's Parting Shots column.

Richy Harrod earned third place for his feature article about big game hunting parties and camps in "Traditions on the Brink," appearing in the November/December 2023 issue.

John C. McFarland III took second place in wildlife photography with a coyote photo in this year's OHA calendar.

OHA STATE-LEVEL SPONSORSHIPS

Please support the sponsors who support OHA's mission of protecting Oregon's wildlife, habitat and hunting heritage. For information about OHA state-level sponsorship opportunities, call the OHA State Office at (541) 772-7313.

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Wilderness Packs
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Ukiah

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Sunset Lodging
sunriverlodging.com



Fun & Funds

OHA's State Convention caps a smashing banquet season for our mission, thanks to all of our donors, guests and volunteers

Nearly 500 guests celebrated OHA's 41st State Convention on May 4 at Seven Feathers Casino Resort. In an exciting highlight of the evening, an Oregon Access & Habitat Statewide Deer Tag was auctioned for \$71,000.

More than 100 items were up for auction and over 100 were raffled, including more than 70 great firearms from donors such as Legacy Sports International, Sig Sauer, Coastal Farm & Ranch, Nosler, G4 Outdoors, Christensen Arms, Centerfire Gunworks and William Hamelman.

Guests took home an amazing array of optics donated by OHA Platinum Sponsors Leupold & Stevens and Sig Electro Optics.

Donations were too many to list here, but included great gear from OnX, Silencer Central, Benchmade, KUIU, Coast, Work Sharp, KuduPoint, Born & Raised Outdoors, Langer's Family Entertainment Center, Vortex, Klymit, G4 Outdoors, Ukiah and others.

A few guests got the boot – from Daner, Zamberlan and Twisted X.

Awesome adventures – from weekend getaways to safaris – sold by auctioneer George Tavera were donated by Broken Arrow Outfitters, Cross Hollow Outfitters, S2 Outfitters, Troy Rodakowski, Jody Smith Guide Service, Ladies Hunting Camp, Kokanee derby champ Robert Hamman, Sunriver Lodging, Hammerhead Guide Service, Chinooks Winds, Patriot Guide Service, Sabudawn Safaris of South Africa and TGB Outfitters in Argentina.

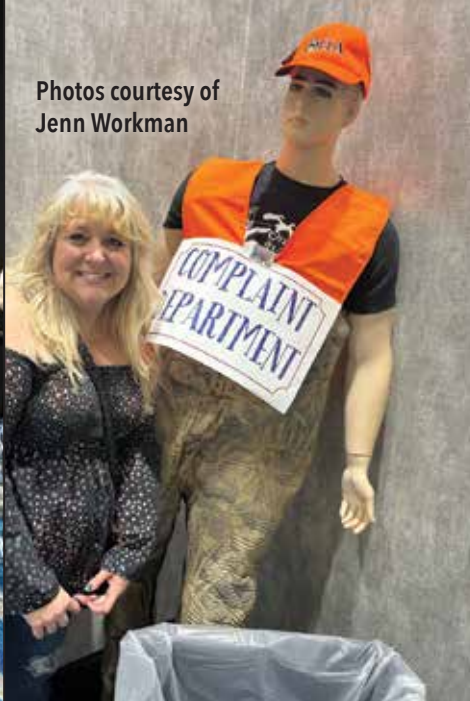
Amazing craftwork included an afghan by Shirley Pritchett and quilts from Joy & Leroy Miller, as well as woodworking marvels from Pioneer Pacific Flags, Steve Pentkowski and Pearson's Gallery.

Amazing artwork was donated by Tom Derbyshire and Capper's Framing and Oregon artist Jane Vanderzanden. OHA's Pioneer Chapter, State Vice President Cindy Rooney, and longtime supporters Tammy & Anita Cook and Cris Benitez of





Photos courtesy of Jenn Workman



Acme Construction Supply each contributed several silent auction items.

While several hundred individuals contributed to making the night a success, special thanks go to Leupold & Stevens Foundation, Waldron's Outdoor Sports, Valley Web Printing, ProntoPrint, Enthusiast Media Group, and the Douglas County Sheriff's Posse.

Last but not least, a tip of the hunting hat to our Herd Bulls – John & Julie Quimby; Bill & Tiffany Ogren; Lisa Greif & Rachel Pavich; Dan Haggard & Steve Granger; Jim Thompson & Jared Shuttleworths; Cris & Angel Benitez; Zack Dahl, Kyle & Ashley Humphrys - Table Mountain Forestry – and Benefactors Garth Brech & Lisa Gover; Bob & Leta Trask; Howard & Heather Kem; Derek & Leah Hamill; Robin Vogel & Trevor Aslin; Chuck & Christi Oeleis - 3 Queens Ranch; Jered Goodwin & Sherry Noble; Ryan & Missy McCormick; Ryan & Shawna Scroggins; Byron & Rita Collman; Britney Young & Bob Decker - All About Excavating & Plumbing, Inc.

Conventioneers donated thousands more in a paddle raise to protect Oregon's hunting heritage.

Make plans now to hit the beach for Oregon's 2025 Convention on May 3 at Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City!



We look forward to having you as our guest in 2025!

GAME ON THE GRILL

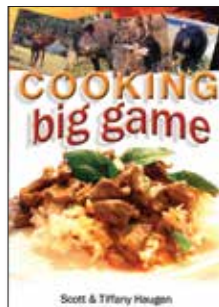
By TIFFANY HAUGEN

Garden Noodles with Venison

Looking for a tasty meal that's easy to freeze and take to upcoming hunting camps? This is it! The great thing about slow cooking venison is the meat can be added to virtually any meal. Slow cooked with a jar of salsa, this venison recipe is inspired by leftovers, garden bounty and the love of spaghetti. Deer, elk, pronghorn, bear, even turkey and upland birds all work great with this recipe.

Several more cups of seasoned vegetables can be added to this one-pot meal. Using elbow macaroni makes this a freezer-friendly entree. Taking prepared frozen foods made from wild game to hunting camp not only provides a quick, healthy meal, it makes the benefits of hunting last all year.

- 3-4 cups venison, cooked*
- 8-12 ounces elbow macaroni
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, puréed
- 1-2 large tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped
- 1 cup tomato juice or V-8
- Salt and pepper to taste



Slow cook venison and chop into bite-sized pieces. Cook elbow macaroni, al dente, according to package directions. Drain and set aside. In a large pot, heat olive oil on medium heat. Sauté onions 5-10 minutes. Add bell pepper and garlic, sautéing another 2-3 minutes. Add juice and bring to a low boil. Add cooked venison and noodles and bring to desired temperature. If needed, add a bit more juice or a drizzle of olive oil. Salt and pepper to taste. Add parsley right before serving.

*Slow Cooked Venison (option)

Place venison roast, neck meat, or shanks in a slow cooker. Add 16-ounces of your favorite salsa or spaghetti sauce. Cook on high heat, 4-6 hours or until the meat separates easily from the bone. Separate all meat from any cartilage and sinew, chop and set aside for Garden Noodles or refrigerate or freeze for another recipe.

Leftovers of meal-size portions can be put in sealable baggies and frozen. Come hunting season, just pull out a package, take it to camp, and you have a quick, mess-free, tasty meal that takes only minutes to re-heat and enjoy.

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



Frozen foods made from wild game provide a quick, healthy meal in hunting camp. Using elbow macaroni makes this recipe freezer-friendly.

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SHARING THE HERITAGE

By BROOKE WATSON

How Hunting Can Heal

Hunting has existed since the dawn of man and has continued to prevail despite the convenience of modern stores and supermarkets. The most critical piece to continuing this heritage is teaching the next generation; without this, hunting will be lost. My dad taught me at a young age, and I grew incredibly passionate about the sport. I began to feel a pull to teach others and share these awesome experiences.

That opportunity came in 2015, when my dad and his good friend Tyler started a nonprofit called Children of Circumstance Outdoors. This 501c3 was created to take children with life threatening conditions on hunting trips. My little brother was born with a disease with a very low survival rate, but he beat the odds and is still here today, healthy as any young man. During these tough times, our outdoor pursuits seemed to be a perfect distraction for our family and allowed us to have quality time together. We wanted to provide that same break from the trials of life to other families with hunting adventures that create lasting memories.

We began by only taking a few kids each year and then slowly progressed to taking 4 to 7 annually. Over the past 9 years, we've built a network of guides, sponsors, and landowners who have helped us make every hunt successful. To date, we have taken more than 30 kids on deer, elk, antelope, and bighorn sheep hunts throughout Oregon.

Every child we take is uniquely amazing with impressive achievements, hobbies, and positive attitudes despite the illnesses they are fighting. Hunting is an opportunity to forget about all the struggles, enjoy the outdoors, and pursue the wild.

Prior to each hunt, we take the kids to the shooting range and get them comfortable with the equipment and our group. The guys coach them through shots, practice target acquisition, and have



Sam with one beaut of a pronghorn. Sam has had Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy since he was young. He embraced all of the vigors of hunting and showed incredible strength the whole time.



Hunting is an opportunity to forget about all the struggles, enjoy the outdoors, and pursue the wild.

Kimber with a huge Oregon bull. Cystic Fibrosis can't slow down this young lady who still hunts and rodeos every chance she gets.

them shoot at varying ranges to give them confidence needed for the hunt. This is followed by a big barbeque at our house to get to know them and their families better over a home-cooked meal.

Even before the hunts, we feel like a team there for one purpose – to capture one big memory for one special child. Our mission is to show that each animal we take is a gift that is to be brought from field to table for them to enjoy with their families.

Once we're out in the field, we scout and glass while sharing many laughs and stories along the way. The most emotional moment is when there's an animal on the ground and the kids walk up to their accomplishment; they touch the antlers and smiles erupt on their faces. It's not long before they are showered by high-fives, congratulations, and happy tears.

It's at these times in the hunt the emotions really begin to show. The many hospital visits, treatments, and struggles seem to melt away as they hug their parents, who are beaming with pride. All they can see are the big smiles on their children's faces, those same children who they have watched fight for their lives. Teary eyes become contagious as the parents talk about their battles and the faith, hope, and strength the family has had to have through it all.

A common sentiment is that every moment is special because you never know when it might be the last.

I'd like to think we've done a lot for these kids, but the reality is, they've done so much more for us. We have learned more about living life to the fullest from them than anyone. They've taught us what it means to be better humans and passing on a tradition of love for the outdoors to others who share our passion. God so graciously entrusted to us the role of being stewards of the land and the animals that occupy it. It is our job to share the extraordinary experiences that bring us back to something we were created to do.



If you would like to donate funds, a hunt, access to land, guiding services, etc., or you know of someone between the ages of 12-21 who is battling a life-threatening illness and would like to go on a hunt, please contact us at huntcocoutdoors@gmail.com or call (541) 815-2505. Our website is www.huntcocoutdoors.org.

WANTED:

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The hunter education program involves passing on the hunting tradition to future generations in a safe, fun, and responsible manner.

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- Wildlife management and conservation
- Hunter ethics and responsibilities
- Outdoor safety

Hunter education instructors are individuals 21 and older who have a passion for hunting. You do not need to be an expert hunter to teach this course; a strong interest in introducing young people and adults to the sport is what is required.

How do I become a Certified Instructor?

- Easy process: contact the number below for an application.



Hunter Education

**ODFW Hunter Education Program (503) 947-6002
Email: hunter.ed@odfw.oregon.gov**





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ASK ODFW:

Late Summer Hunting Tips

... for pronghorn and archery hunters to keep in mind.

BEST PRACTICES - HUNTING BLINDS



Construction materials

- Should be removable. Portable stands preferred.
- Should not damage property. Digging, trenching, surface disturbance can damage public land.

Placement dates

- Check with landowner, but some national forests have a short 1-3 day window for how long blinds can be up.

Labelling

- Hunter's full name, zip code on the blind.
- The placement of a blind on public land does not convey exclusive right of use. But hunters should be respectful of each other's efforts and give the hunter who set up the blind first claim it when they are hunting.

Water or livestock developments

- Do not divert water or modify water troughs, reservoirs, springs or other developments.
- Do not harass livestock or block access to water.
- Give wildlife access to water. Do not camp within 300 feet of a water source.

E-TAGGING REMINDERS

- Update and log into MyODFW app before you go hunting.
- Don't forget flagging or duct tape or something to tag animal.
- Try toggling to offline mode in app settings if you have problems tagging or opening app while in the field.
- Keep your phone charged with a portable charger.



Know before you go:

Most common fire restrictions

- Campfires prohibited on many public lands incl. designated campgrounds.
- Only liquid-fueled camp stoves. No charcoal briquettes or other flammable solid materials.
- No smoking except in vehicle.
- Off-road driving prohibited incl. motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles.
- Vehicles must have either a gallon of water or a fully charged and operational 2½-pound fire extinguisher and shovel.
- ATVs must have a charged and operational 2½ pound fire extinguisher.

Remember ODFW does not close hunting seasons but access can be restricted by land managers. Check with land manager for fire and access restrictions before hunting.

TAG SALE DEADLINES

The day before the hunting season begins. SportsPac holders must redeem their voucher by deadline.

Archery deer and elk: Aug. 30
Western Ore. Deer, Bear, Cougar: Oct. 4

NOSLER®

2024 PHOTO CONTEST

FINALIST PRIZES

Prizes will be awarded in general and youth categories.

1ST PRIZE: Nosler Model 21 rifle

2ND PRIZE: Case (10 boxes) of Nosler Trophy Grade Ammo

3RD PRIZE: Leupold Scope

4TH PRIZE: Danner Alsea Hunting Boots

5TH PRIZE: Benchmade Altitude Hunting Knife

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

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

ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

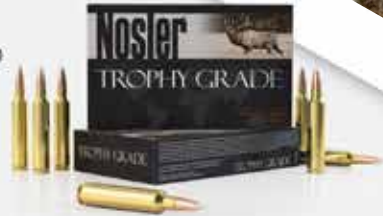
Go to **OHA's website at www.oregonhunters.org** Click on **OHA CONTESTS**. Read the rules, and fill in the required fields. Click **CHOOSE FILE** and attach your photo. Click **SUBMIT**. That's it! You will be entered for a chance to win more great prizes courtesy of Nosler, proud sponsor and OHA supporter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

PHOTO CATEGORIES

GENERAL: Any aspect of hunting, including but not limited to preparation, camping, hunting situations, game and packing.

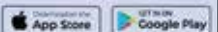
YOUTH: Same as above, except photos must feature a person who was 18 or younger at the time the photo was taken.

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year



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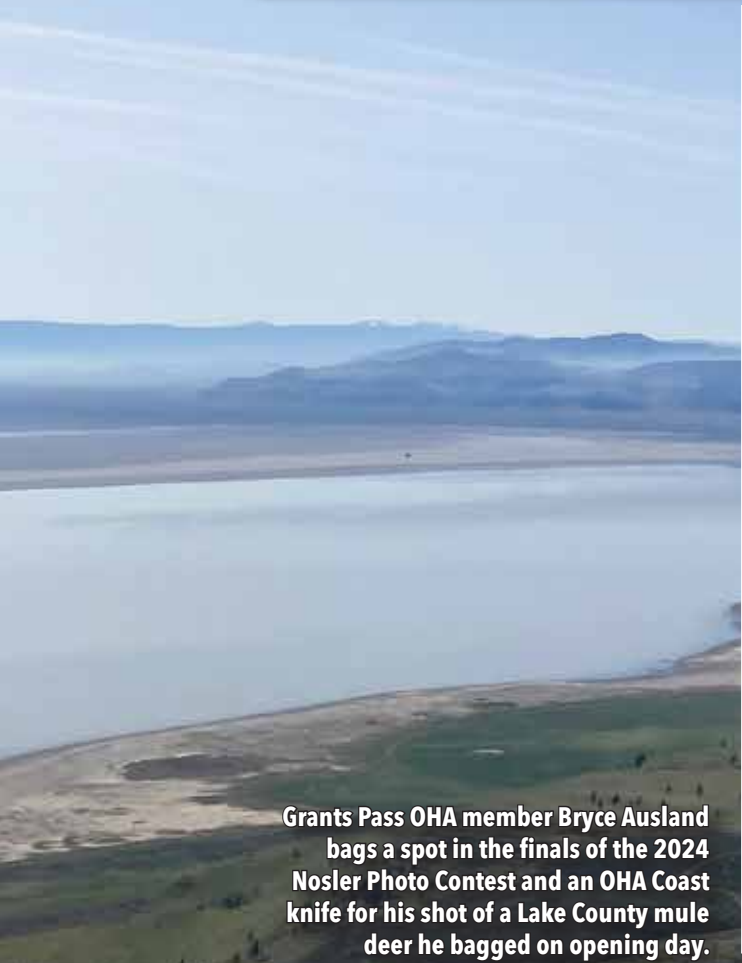
NOSLER[®] PHOTO CONTEST

GENERAL CATEGORY FINALISTS



OHA member Chris Bocchi of Redmond lands a spot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife with this photo of his mountain goat taken in the Elkhorn Mountains.

**ENTERING IS EASY
WITH OHA'S APP!**



Grants Pass OHA member Bryce Ausland bags a spot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his shot of a Lake County mule deer he bagged on opening day.



NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

YOUTH CATEGORY FINALISTS



Matthew White, OHA member from Columbia City, earns a spot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his photo of daughter Madison and her youth weekend gobbler.



OHA member Mitch Quimby is a finalist in the Nosler Photo Contest and receives an OHA Coast knife for his photo of Janie and James Quimby and a trio of Crook County honkers.

NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

HONORABLE MENTION



Ricky Peck, OHA member from Molalla, garners honorable mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of grandson Zachary and his first tom, bagged during the youth hunt in the Applegate Unit.



OHA member Richard Sells of West Linn nabs honorable mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of himself and friend Butch Riley with a British Columbia bull moose.



West Linn resident and OHA member James Adkins receives honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this shot of a Baker County black bear.



Matthew Hedgpeth, OHA member from Baker City, earns honorable mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of a Whitehorse Unit pronghorn.

LAKE COUNTY MEADOW RESTORATION/DUANE DUNCANNON



Honorable mention and a Nosler hat go to Jay Baymiller, an OHA member from Central Point, for his photo of Atlas and a limit of Klamath wigeon.



OHA member Shawn Schmittke of Oregon City garners honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this photo of an archery bull taken in the Mt. Emily Unit.



OHA member Tyler Albright of Stayton grabs honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this photo of his spring bear from the Santiam Unit.



OHA member Mike Herzog of Eagle Point takes honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this photo of himself and Tyler Herzog with turkeys taken in the Rogue Unit.



Lucas McKillip, OHA member in Cloverdale, gains honorable mention and a Nosler hat for this photo of Austin McKillip and Moxie on a November goose hunt.

PARTING SHOTS

BY UNCLE GEDDY

Morel Superiority

For years my friend Joe and I have been hunting on property owned by a convent. The sisters are stewardesses of a not-insignificant acreage irrigated by a slow-moving creek on the banks whereof in spring the skunk cabbage bloometh and in fall the huckleberries doth produce yea verily an abundance.

Joe, whose wife likes to eat bear meat but hates for him to spend money on hunting gear, contacted me in the middle of summer last year.

Joe's wife thinks I am smarter than he is, which means my public relations efforts are working, although he has known about many things since he was just small. Like mushrooms.

Joe knows mushrooms by their first names, and which ones support memory and immune function and which ones don't do anything at all.

Joe's missus wanted to know if hunting clothes can be made quieter. He wanted to buy a complete set of the newfangled pajama-looking camouflage, but his other-of-significance put the camo kibosh on that due to budgetary constraints of an inflationary nature. Joe's spousal unit suggested he call me and ask if I knew of a spray-on product to make his old camo quieter.

I knew what he was talking about.

Me and Joe, at the end of a good hunt are happy to share a portion of the bear meat with the nuns. And over the years, the cloistered contemplatives have developed a taste for the flavor of *ursus americanus*.

The sequestered sisters often stand in their garden as we drive out of the gate and if there is bear loin to share, they say bless you my brother and extend the palms of goodwill. Sometimes we have collected a bucket of chanterelles or shiitakes or other edible fungi, and on those days even the Mother Superior will stand in the garden and partake of the shiitake.

I sent away for a couple bottles of Fabrican and passed the bottles on to Joe and he decided to give it a try in that first week of September a couple of days after a rain.

The benefits of Fabrican, which is not unlike silly string, include that it is sterile and fully washable.

I wanted to know how the Fabrican had worked. After a few tries I was able to get Joe to answer the phone.

MOREL HIGH GROUND

Joe said after he parked the truck, he hid behind a tree and took off his Texaco hat and all his clothes and then sprayed on a t-shirt and a pair of long sleeves. Because it was a warm day, he

finished by spraying on knee-high shorts. To mimic the leaves on the trees he sprayed on a layer of camo paint, and, to kill the slight smell of solvent, he emptied the entire contents of a bottle of spray-on leaf litter scent upon his glorious set of new clothes.

He said he only walked a few yards and he knew this was going to be the best day of mushroom picking of his life. "I got down on my knees and put my ear to the ground and I could hear them stirring," Joe said.

Down beneath the leaf litter, mushrooms were growing. Shaggy manes, honey mushrooms, giant puffballs, bear's head and other large fleshy fungus grew scattered on the ground in and out of the meadows. He said the only thing he was missing was the morels.

I could just imagine Joe's delight and could picture him murmuring the Latin names as he put the ripening mushrooms in various sacks that he keeps with him for heady moments like this.

Boletus, coprinus comatus, trametes. Even *sparassis crispa!* Oh, and you, *ganoderma lucidum.* Yes, I got you this time.

Joe said he was particularly excited to see the reishi, the *ganoderma*, because of the properties of which he had been talking to the nuns about earlier in the season. And the increase in bear scat which we had seen in recent years was undoubtedly a factor in the harvest.

MOREL FIBER

The Mother Superior had been recommending mushroom extracts to the novices to fight infections and said she heard there were possible side effects and those who took reishi extract had reported liver problems. Joe assured her it was likely there were other factors involved. And now, as long as she dried them properly and didn't jump the gun, she could use fresh reishi in her teas and various recipes.

What Joe didn't know and probably no one could have told him is that the common woodlouse spider is attracted to the smell of leaf litter, because that is where its prey, the woodlouse resides, and furthermore, the common woodlouse spider is in the mood to find a mate in September in these parts.

Now a female woodlouse spider, existing on a diet of potato bugs and earwigs, is not an aggressive critter, except when it finds a male. In this happy event, both spiders risk injury in the mating ritual because they have large fangs. All of this was unknown to Joe and yet would be except Joe was sitting on a rotten stump waiting for a bear to materialize when the scent of rotting leaf litter attracted the attention of a spider and then one more and then another till they all were climbing around in the camouflage fabric and commenced to fraternizing. In the fracas, Joe got bit on the tookus and other tender parts.

"I screamed like a little girl," he admitted later. "I picked at the fabric and pulled off this spider and that spider and then another one. And they were biting me and biting each other and here I am grabbing up mushrooms and putting them in separate sacks and all I can think is I'll be safe in the truck. And I picked up my gun, got out of there and forgot my clothes in the woods."

He was in no mood to talk to the sisters at the gate. Joe had stripped down nearly to his birthday suit and had spider bites and swelling in personal spaces. And there was the Mother Superior coming up to the window to strike up a conversation about mushrooms or gardens as was her habit.

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BEAR MOUNTAIN/T. ROY



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