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VOL. 42, NO. 5

RANDY SHIPLEY

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# FINDING DIRECTION

BY TYLER DUNGANNON,  
OHA CONSERVATION COORDINATOR



JIM WARD

## OHA sees new Oregon Mule Deer Management Plan to completion, shifts focus to implementation

**C**urrent Oregon mule deer population sizes are disturbingly low, and it is disconcerting that many herd ranges continue to decline. In the last five years, the Crescent herd range has experienced a severe 9-percent average population decline per year. Keno, Warner, Northside and Ochoco have seen abysmal 5-year average annual population declines between 6 and 8 percent. Over the last five years, three additional Oregon herd ranges have declined, eight herd ranges are slightly increasing and six are neither increasing nor decreasing.

OHA considered the revision of the state's Mule Deer Management Plan a top priority, and OHA was clearly the most involved conservation organization throughout the process of shaping the new plan for the benefit of Oregon's mule deer, habitat, and hunters.

OHA submitted 10 comment letters vetted by OHA's deer sub-committee on the draft mule deer plan, and OHA staff consulted with ODFW many times to voice concerns about the initial plan and to lend our support.

OHA's involvement produced a positive effect on the final revision, and in response to our concerns, ODFW incorporated many of our requests, including: specificity and stronger language to action items, clarity of the necessary steps to implement predator control efforts, resolution (and an extreme concern category) to herd range management concern levels, an expanded intermountain west section (i.e., sage-steppe), ODFW recommendations for land managers, and a level of ODFW accountability by providing specific 2-3 year goals for each individual herd range.

In order to make the plan actionable, OHA asserted that the goals in the plan must be measurable with an ambitious and detailed list of action items for each individual herd range. OHA commends ODFW for lining out an extensive list of specific action items for each herd range that includes items related to increasing predator harvest, engagement with the U.S. Forest Service to ensure habitat actions benefit mule deer, increasing chronic wasting disease sampling, and assessment of effects of predation on mule deer, to name a few.

The Oregon Mule Deer Management Plan was approved by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in June. OHA has now turned its focus to plan implementation by working to set implementation meetings with ODFW and establishing the new OHA Mule Deer Fund.

The OHA Mule Deer Fund will support landscape-scale habitat projects for mule deer and will target specific project goals outlined in the 2024 Oregon Mule Deer Management Plan. OHA intends to allocate \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually to large (\$50,000-\$500,000) mule deer projects that seek to leverage OHA funds for additional state and federal dollars.

**OHA's Mule Deer Fund will support landscape-scale habitat projects and will target specific project goals in the new Mule Deer Plan.**

# OREGON HUNTER

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# DEER ARE HURTING. OHA IS HELPING.



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Only ONE Oregon management unit is currently at its objective for mule deer, and most are under half. Threats to mule deer are many, and solutions can be elusive, but the Oregon Hunters Association is setting our sights on restoring our deer herds. Please join us and support us in these efforts:

- ✔ *Pressing for intensive predator management*
- ✔ *Protecting & enhancing vital mule deer habitat*
- ✔ *Funding crossings to prevent vehicle/wildlife collisions*
- ✔ *Doubling the rewards paid by OHA's Turn In Poachers program*
- ✔ *Lobbying for funding to fight the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease*
- ✔ *Contributing to Oregon's Mule Deer Plan implementation*

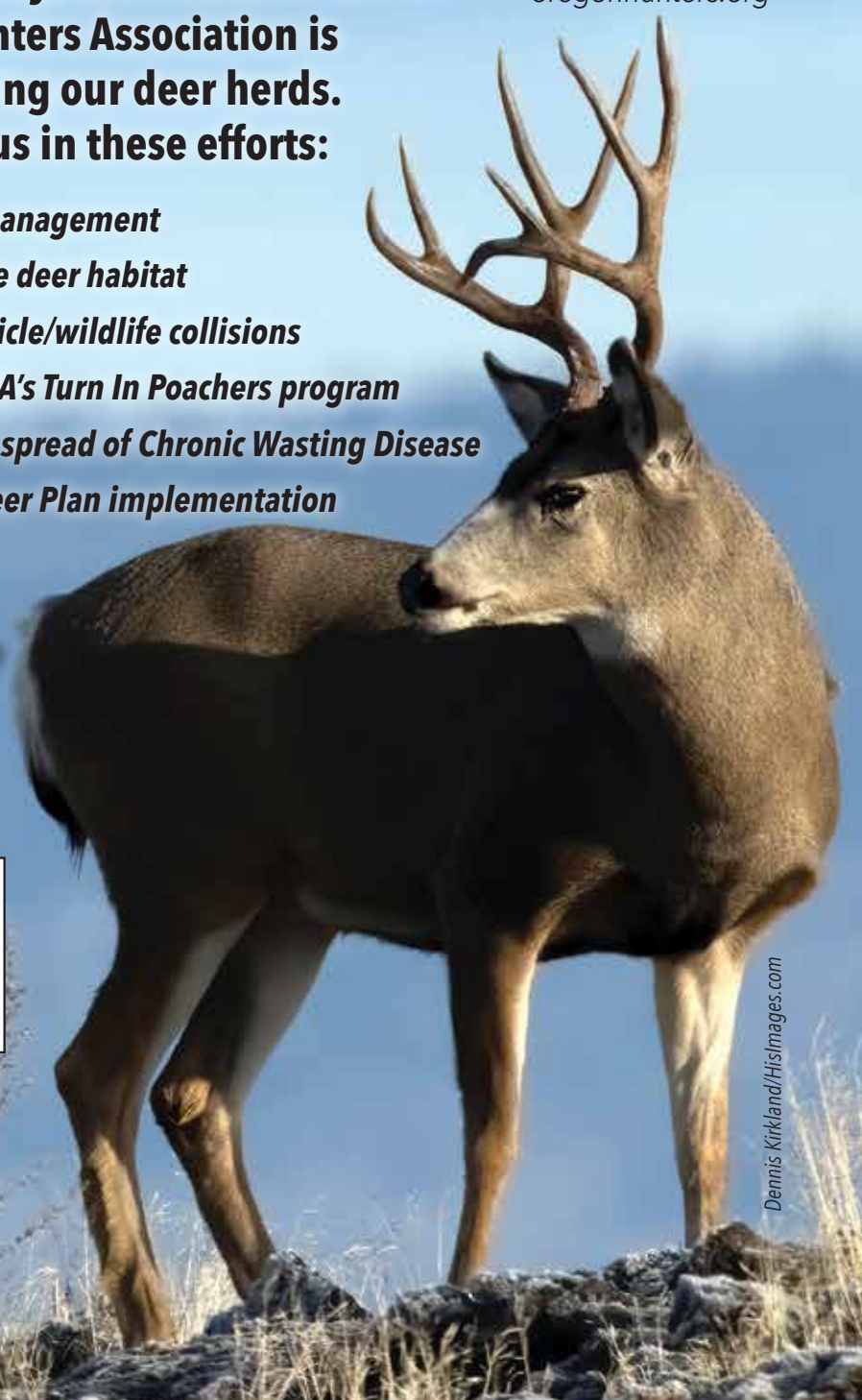


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1. The western Oregon any-legal-weapon buck season lasts:

- a) 30 days                      c) 40 days
- b) 35 days                     d) 45 days

2. Duck season ends in which month?

- a) November                 c) January
- b) December                d) February

3. Oregon's most southwest unit is:

- a) Chetco                      c) Sixes
- b) Tioga                        d) Applegate

4. How many members serve on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission?

- a) 5                              c) 9
- b) 7                              d) 11

5. Which of these is not a furbearer?

- a) coyote                      c) bobcat
- b) raccoon                    d) marten

6. Columbian sharp-tailed grouse currently would be most likely found in which Oregon county?

- a) Columbia                 c) Wallowa
- b) Melrose                    d) Klamath

7. Which bird requires its own permit?

- a) scaup                        c) band-tailed pigeon
- b) chukar                      d) snipe

8. If you have 3 preference points for elk, and your buddy has 2, the points credited to your party application will be:

- a) 2                              c) 3
- b) 2.5                          d) 5

9. In which Oregon county would you have the best chance of bagging a brant?

- a) Lincoln                     c) Lake
- b) Jackson                    d) Columbia

10. Which unit produced the highest spring turkey harvest east of the Cascades in 2022?

- a) Ochoco                     c) Heppner
- b) Starkey                     d) Murderers Creek



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**ENTRY DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2024.**



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**LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:**

**David McFarland of Yreka**

David's name was drawn from OHA members who identified the state line in Lake County.

- SEPTEMBER 1**  
 Traditional openers for forest grouse, mourning dove, W. Oregon quail
- SEPTEMBER 14-15**  
 OHA Pioneer Chapter Sight-In Days, Canby Rod & Gun Club, 503-710-1233
- SEPTEMBER 21-22**  
 OHA Pioneer Chapter Sight-In Days, Canby Rod & Gun Club, 503-710-1233
- SEPTEMBER 29**  
 General archery and most controlled bow seasons end
- OCTOBER 4**  
 Deadline to buy tags for any legal weapon deer, bear & cougar
- OCTOBER 5**  
 Deer season opens for any legal weapon
- OCTOBER 12**  
 Proposed opener for chukar, pheasant, E. Oregon quail, Hungarian partridge and E. Oregon fall turkey
- OCTOBER 15**  
 Fox season opens
- OCTOBER 16**  
 Eastside buck season ends
- OCTOBER 19**  
 OHA Bend Chapter Youth Bird Hunt, 541-480-7323
- OCTOBER 26**  
 Lake County guzzler project 541-417-2983;  
 OHA Klamath chapter youth Chukar hunt, 541-883-8326
- OCTOBER 27**  
 OHA Klamath Chapter Youth Chukar Hunt, 541-883-8326
- OCTOBER 29**  
 Deadline to buy tags for Rocky Mountain elk 1st season

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



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# OREGON AFIELD

JEFF RICH

Last year's western Oregon deer season offered the latest ending date in recent memory, providing rifle hunters an opportunity to hunt the blacktail rut.

## Blacktail rifle harvest spiked in 2023 season

**W**hen the western Oregon deer season dates were announced for 2023, hunters lifted a collective eyebrow – due to the calendar shift and the first-Saturday-after-Oct. 1 opener – blacktail season was running through Nov. 9.

Armchair prognosticators predicted a blacktail buck slaughter. So what happened? In 2023, hunters enjoyed 26 percent harvest success in northwest Oregon and 42 percent in the southwest. Now let's compare that to 2022 with harvest success rates of 17 percent in northwest Oregon and 33 percent in the southwest.

The buck harvest jumped from an estimated 220 to a reported 413 bucks in the northwest zone and from 179 to 338 bucks in the southwest.

With the '23 season going deep into November, did that contribute to an unprecedented harvest increase? When we go back to '21, we find the identical harvest percentage - 26 percent success in the northwest and 42 percent success in the southwest. In 2020, the numbers were 24 percent in the northwest and 37 percent in the southwest.

While the four-point take doubled in 2023 over 2022, the number of two-points and three-points increased by almost 150 percent. For perspective, we asked Brian Wolfer, ODFW's big game program manager.

"One thing to keep in mind was 2022 was a bit of a down year for hunter numbers compared to (the COVID years) 2020 and 2021 and a much bigger jump (in terms of participation) from 2022 to '23."

"Weather conditions don't always line up with the calendar seasons," Wolfer pointed out. "Some years you can have an early end date and have really favorable hunting conditions."

Another reason for increased success, Wolfer gave was, "When there is less hunter participation, like in 2022, you would expect to have carryover. Part of the other piece was increased access to river canyons that had been closed because of the 2020 fires."

"You have some areas (in the Cascade units) that have great habitat now that people couldn't get into in 2020 and 2021. All of that is factoring into hunter success in 2023. For the Cascades, we are on the front edge of what I consider to be good future blacktail hunting." —GARY LEWIS

*'We are on the front edge of what I consider to be good future blacktail hunting.'*

—Brian Wolfer



OHA Conservation Coordinator Tyler Dungannon took this blacktail just 10 minutes into his late October hunt. His dad tagged a buck 2 minutes later.

## Butte Creek Falls recreation area to reopen after 2020 wildfires

**T**he Oregon Department of Forestry recently announced that the recreation area at Butte Creek Falls on the Santiam State Forest, which includes a trailhead and trail system, a small campground and a 100-yard shooting range, will reopen nearly four years after the fires that occurred during the 2020 Labor Day weekend. Work to recover from these fires continues.

The shooting range includes a new gravel backdrop, concrete barriers at approximately 100 yards, parking and new informational signs. The area was formerly used as a gravel pit.

While huge expanses of public forests were closed to the public after the fires because of safety concerns, closed roads and infrastructure damage, ODF has worked aggressively to reopen roads, salvage damaged timber and recover recreation sites.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for large areas on our national forest lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Much of these lands have been painfully slow to reopen, due in part to litigation by environmental groups, despite OHA's efforts to expedite these operations.

For updates, more information, maps to the area, as well as information on all Oregon State Forests recreation sites, visit the ODF Recreation website:

<https://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Recreation/Pages/Default.aspx>

—MIKE TOTEY, OHA CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

# The early bird gets the geese

Sept. 7-11 marks Oregon's September Canada goose season in the Southwest Zone, High Desert and Blue Mountain Zone and Mid-Columbia Zone. The season runs Sept. 7-15 in the Northwest Permit Zone, but a Northwest Goose Permit is not needed to hunt during this season, when resident honkers are the Canada geese in the region.

With a daily bag limit of five and a possession limit of 15, this hunt is largely geared toward managing crop damage by local populations of Canada geese. Hunting local birds early in the season is one of the highest percentage waterfowl hunts you can find. Family flocks are gullible, and once they find a field with plenty of food, they'll hit the same spot at just about the same time every day.

Scouting is important for this September Canada goose hunt. Find where geese are feeding, knock on doors to get permission, then go hunting. This is largely a private land hunt, but solid public land hunts can be found. Locate where geese are roosting on rivers, lakes and ponds, and hunt those when birds return in the middle of the day. Or, set up your decoy spread between areas where geese are roosting and feeding, with the hopes of pulling them over for a shot.

It can be hard luring geese away from the X, but pass shooting as they fly overhead is very doable. You don't need many decoys when hunting early season Canada geese. A half-dozen full-body decoys placed where birds are feeding will do the job.

If geese are approaching an area by flying low, silhouette decoys work well. A properly concealed blind can be the biggest challenge when hunting geese that are feeding in cut or plowed fields. Look for fence lines, ditches or standing stubble to cover a layout blind in.

With some scouting, a small decoy spread and a low-profile blind, you're on the way to one of the best goose hunting opportunities in the West. The season is short and sweet, but these grain-fed birds are worth the effort, for they make great table fare. —SCOTT HAUGEN



*The September season is short and sweet, but these grain-fed birds are worth the effort.*

*The author scouted, set out a small spread of decoys and nailed this double on a September Canada goose hunt in the Willamette Valley.*

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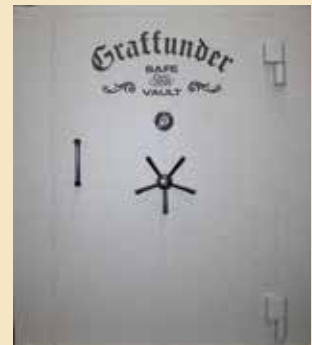


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# ODFW proposes license and tag fee increases

## OHA requests bear, cougar and turkey tags remain the same

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

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in June approved a new budget for ODFW that includes license and tag fee increases for hunters and anglers. These will be the first fee increases since 2020. As currently proposed, a hunting license will increase 12 percent in the first biennium, and 8 percent in each of the next two bienniums.

OHA's comments at the Commission meeting specifically called out three areas

that should not be increased. Bear tags, cougar tags and turkey tags are all specific items that OHA would like to maintain at their current cost. Many believe turkey tags are overpriced. OHA initiated the half-price youth turkey tag (and the Youth Sports Pac) years ago to encourage families to participate. OHA also wants to encourage hunters to purchase bear and cougar tags.

ODFW Wildlife Division leaders attended the May 4 OHA Board of Directors meeting and outlined options for fee increases. The board provided OHA's perspectives and preferences for the fee increases. Clearly inflation affects everyone,

including ODFW, and the board agreed with the need to increase license and tag fees to cover increased costs over the next three bienniums.

Commission approval is the first step for the next ODFW budget. The Agency Request Budget (ARB) was built after multiple public meetings and included specific input from OHA staff and Board of Directors. The proposed budget includes fee increases, policy option packages (additional requests for general funds) and other elements. The ARB will be submitted to the Governor's office for consideration before going to the legislature in the 2025 general session.

## IP3 misses ballot, reloads for 2026

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

Initiative Petition 3, IP3, has failed to submit the necessary signatures to qualify for the 2024 general election ballot. The initiative seeks to criminalize the killing of all animals, including mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles, for any reason other than self-defense, which would outlaw all legal hunting, fishing, trapping, as well as raising animals for food.

The proponents have refiled for the 2026 ballot and received a new initiative petition number: IP28. While their campaign funds can be transferred from the old initiative to the new one, the signatures gathered under IP3 cannot be counted for IP28. They will now have two years to gather approximately 120,000 signatures before the July 2026 deadline.

OHA will continue to monitor the initiative and keep our membership informed.

## OHA defends public land beaver harvest

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

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted new regulations specific to beavers at its June 14 meeting in Chiloquin. Previously, beavers had a dual classification as both a furbearer and a predatory animal, which divided the management responsibilities between ODFW and Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

With the passage of HB 3464 in the 2023 legislative session, the predatory animal listing was removed, bringing full management authority under ODFW's jurisdiction. The bill also instituted new permitting and reporting requirements for the take of beaver on private land as a result of damage.

In the same meeting, the 2024-26 furbearer regulations were approved. During the public testimony on this topic, a request was submitted to ban beaver trapping on all federally managed lands in the state. This request was denied after nearly 30 people testified on the topic.

OHA provided testimony in opposition to the ban based on the science and data presented by ODFW staff.

## ODFW unveils 2025 big game changes

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



ODFW hosted public meetings in July to introduce ideas for potential changes for the 2025 big game rules for deer, elk, pronghorn, sheep, goat and bear.

Meetings were presented by district biologists and other ODFW staff from the geographic area that was being covered in the meeting.

Attendance was sparse from the hunting community. Interestingly, a couple of the meetings were attended by members of protectionist groups.

Overall, little is proposed to change in terms of tag numbers in 2025. There are specific areas and units that have been adjusted due to local conditions, buck to doe ratios, or other factors.

A bright spot is the proposed addition of several bighorn sheep tags and a new hunt area for Rocky Mountain goat in the central Cascades.

Tag proposals will go to the Fish and Wildlife Commission at its September meeting in the The Dalles for consideration and approval.

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## Sage Advice

*Tips for hunting Oregon's high desert for a magnificent muley*

**E**astern Oregon's high desert winds are swirling, you're miles from sufficient coverage, and you're battling high temperatures as you attempt to get your sights on a big muley. Archery hunting mule deer in sagebrush is not an easy task, but it's worth every bit of suffering when you lock in on your quarry.

From our perspective, this landscape may seem barren, and we might question why some deer wouldn't select thick, shady timber spots. The truth is our muleys see this terrain as being a great option for bedding, cover and food. It's also a great way for these prey animals to keep their eyes on the horizon for predators who may be looking to pick up some fresh venison for dinner.

Desert living can be very hot, so deer tend to only become active in the mornings and evenings, and hunting is not likely to be productive in the heat of the day. My dad, brother, and I prefer to take a good nature nap in the afternoon, because we know the best hunting times are early mornings and the hours before dark. Some preferred hunting methods our family uses include hunting from ground blinds, using tree stands, and the good ol' spot and stalk. In sage-steppe habitats, you'd be hard-pressed to find a juniper that will accommodate your tree stand, so I opt for ground blinds with the occasional spot and stalk (usually from the blind) when needed.

*Spending the night in a blind allows you to get the jump on a buck that's making his way back to a bedding area.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

*The author took this muley last year after spending many nights in the same ground blind.*

Although spotting and stalking can make for an exhilarating hunt, we have had much more success in ground blinds. Fickle winds and sensitive doe noses ruin many stalks. However, when you use a blind, you have the element of surprise and the ability to prepare.

When setting up a ground blind, you want to find spots that are frequented by deer, which pre-season scouting and trail-cams can help identify. Even though this is a lot of work, our crew usually has a few target bucks by opening day thanks to hours of scouting and trail-cam footage.

It's best to start by looking for trails coming and going from bedding areas to water or food sources and setting blinds along these routes.

We begin observing deer patterns in early to mid-August because we've found they will tend to be in the same summer travel patterns in the first week or two of bow season.

Almost all of our success as a hunting family comes within the first two weekends of archery season while the muleys are still using summer travel routes. We've found that deer patterns are seldom interrupted by the placement of a ground blind, especially if you set them early and allow more time for the deer to get accustomed to the change.

Once set up, it is crucial to brush in your blinds with fresh-cut sage to ensure both cover-scent and camouflage are accounted for. I've always been taught the more you can reduce your scent, the more time you may have to execute your shot when a buck steps into your sights; a few seconds can make a huge difference. Letting off a soft grunt can stop a buck, offering you a clear broadside shot rather than a missed opportunity.

Don't be opposed to spending the night in a blind. This allows you to get the jump on a buck that's making his way back to a bedding area. But these all-night stays do come with challenges; you must be careful of descending winds and place your blind in a location that takes into consideration these downsloping drafts. I've learned how critical it is to pay attention to any little detail that might give you a slight edge on a wary animal that is geared for survival. Deer are designed to stay alive and will use every sense they have to accomplish this great feat, even if it means skipping out on an appetizing meal.

As hunters, we can appreciate the incredibly impressive survival skills that allow mule deer to survive and thrive, while still learning how to pursue them for wild, healthy meat and the most amazing of experiences.



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## TRADITIONS

By CLINT EPPS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

# Squirrel hunting with a trade gun

One of the things I love about hunting is trying something new — and maybe foolish — now and again. For fall 2023, I decided to get serious about hunting with muzzleloading smoothbores. Why? I'd just completed building a flintlock 20-gauge trade gun, and had acquired an original double barrel, a percussion 11-gauge. I figured on using the double for serious work — ducks, bandtails, doves — and the flintlock for anything else that I could get close enough to hit with shot or a .60 round ball, fired without rifling or rear sight.

The first test? The western gray squirrel. I grew up hunting eastern grays and fox squirrels, but the silver grays are big, elegant, and a lot scarcer, unless maybe you have access to a big oak woodlot. I do not. But, as the season approached, I inspected maps and completed making my new gear: a leather pouch sewed from bark-tanned deerskin, a small horn to carry shot, and a wooden loading block for three patched round balls.

On that warm weekend morning, I drove to a patch of publicly accessible timber land with a few oaks near Corvallis. With my 20-gauge smoothbore, in early September, I could legally kill grouse, quail, dove, turkey, rabbit, or squirrel — or a bear or cougar if I could draw the shot load quickly enough to reload with a ball.

Twenty minutes after dawn, I loaded my trade gun with 80 grains of FFg powder, a wad of grey paper from a hornet nest, an ounce of bismuth #6 shot, and more hornet nest all pounded down tight. I keep an eye out for downed nests in the fall. It's traditional wadding and patterned well with lead shot.

I walked past the locked gate and into the hills along a wooded dirt road, the sky brightening steadily. Within 15 minutes I spotted a big western high in a large oak. I stalked to about 25 yards, then cocked my piece, lining him up with the blade on the 41-inch barrel. The flint sparked, the priming powder flared, the gun thumped, but peering through the white smoke, I saw the squirrel disappearing higher into a tall, thick fir.

In Virginia, I would have walked on, but I rarely see more than one squirrel here. I reloaded and waited. He was a big old boar squirrel, probably hunted before. I stood, gun poised. A Stellar's jay bounced through the branches, and the day warmed. Bears, cougars, doves, quail, grouse, turkeys, and rabbits failed to appear.



*The author's northwest-style trade gun is based on an English-made gun from the 1760s; these guns kept their basic form for more than 150 years, shaped by the preferences of the Native Americans who traded furs and hides for them.*

It took nearly an hour, but he finally broke cover. I slipped down the steep road bank into the brush — the range was awfully long given the tree height — lined up, and squeezed. Smoke, maybe a dangling leg, but there he went into another tangled tree top. And the gun didn't sound right. The report seemed dull, soggy. As I rammed down more hornet nest over the powder, I wondered if too much gas was escaping. I fished a thick, greasy commercial fiber wad out of my pouch, rammed that down too, poured in shot, then followed up with a card wad. But the squirrel, possibly wounded, did not show.

I headed up the draw, stalking along the creek, working through thick cover. In my hour-long circuit, I found picked bones of a deer, vultures flapping up. Lion kill? I circled back toward the gate. As I neared the oaks, there was the squirrel, scrambling high into another fir. Again, I waited.

After 20 minutes, a twitch. I stepped toward the tree and saw him clear on a high branch. Down he fell at the crisp report, more than 3 hours after I first spotted him.

When I skinned him, in addition to my #6 bismuth pellets, I found two lead #7.5 pellets in his leg. An old, wily boar indeed. But not too old to fry, I decided.

The final part of the lesson came when I cleaned the gun. An inch or two of barrel in the breech had been neatly "tinned" with a thin layer of melted bismuth. At \$1/shot, I'd been too cheap to pattern my bismuth load, opting for lead instead. Mistake. Given the low melting point of bismuth (520F) and inadequate wadding, I'd apparently melted some of my first two shot charges.

It turned out to be a great season. I killed more squirrels, a pheasant, two turkeys, and several white-tailed deer with that trade gun. But that September morning in the timber was hard to beat.



*Clint Epps has hunted with muzzleloaders since age 15, builds flintlocks, and is a wildlife biologist at Oregon State University.*





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# IN FINE FEATHER


OREGON'S FALL OUTLOOK IS UPLIFTING FOR BOTH UPLAND BIRDS & WATERFOWL.

BY JIM YUSKAVITCH

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PHOTOS BY RANDY SHIPLEY





**D**epending on where in Oregon you live, this past winter and spring weather seemed to range from normal to a little flaky to outright outrageous. As every bird hunter knows, the life history of both upland birds and waterfowl is tightly tied to annual weather patterns and events, and the environmental conditions they create. Most birds harvested each fall have hatched in the spring of that year, along with a small number of adults that survived the previous winter. Because upland birds are short-lived – a three-year-old is an old bird – it's not possible to stockpile them over five or six years and end up with whole bunch of birds to hunt. That's what makes the weather such a crucial factor for the health of bird populations and hunter success. The more adults that overwinter successfully, the more nesting activity, more broods and more birds to hunt in the fall. But only if the weather cooperates.

Here's a brief roundup of winter, spring and summer weather conditions around Oregon, and a sample of ODFW wildlife biologists' take on what that might mean for this year's upland bird hunting season, along with some similar information on resident and migratory waterfowl.

### Upland Birds

As Oregon goes, the North Coast – and the Coast Range in general – tends to have relatively mild, stable weather. Occasionally, there will be some unusually heavy winter snow and cold, although it typically doesn't last long, or a cold, wet spring that can be detrimental to nesting success and brood survival. But typically, weather conditions usually don't have extreme fluctuations as in some other parts of the state. That's the case again this year.

"We are coming out of a good winter and decent spring," said Tillamook-based ODFW Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Austin Reeder. "There was a lot of green-up and bugs for food for the birds, and we should have good production similar to last year."

This part of the state has had very good forest grouse production over the last several years. Band-tailed pigeons and mountain quail are also available in this region, with populations of those birds tending to be stable over time. "Based on the weather, I would say to expect a good year for bird hunting," says Reeder.

The situation is somewhat different 120 miles or so south and east of Tillamook on the western slope of the Cascade Mountains.

***'Based on the weather, I would say to expect a good year for bird hunting.'* —Austin Reeder, ODFW**



*Oregon's band-tailed pigeon numbers have been on the rise in recent years.*

“We had a major snow and ice storm in Lane County in January that shut everything down, and extended into the rural areas,” explained Chris Yee, District Wildlife Biologist based in ODFW’s Springfield office. While the 20 inches of snowfall from that storm wasn’t impressive for the Cascade Mountains, it was subsequently covered with a hard layer of ice – conditions especially difficult for wildlife, both feathered and furred, to get at food sources.

“I’m sure we had some wildlife mortality,” said Yee.

While the west slope of the Cascades is a pretty reliable producer of forest grouse, and numbers have been good most years, snow conditions limited access for hooting surveys, making this year’s counts less thorough than normal, so hunters may have to wait to see how readily grouse will be available this season.

Yee reported that upland bird success was down a little last year, and expects similar conditions for this year. Analysis of grouse wings turned in by hunters from last year’s hunt indicated that most of the birds harvested hatched later in the nesting season and were a little smaller, possibly indicating more failed first broods. Biologists can determine when a grouse has hatched by looking at when new feathers have grown out after the birds molt. That’s one reason ODFW wants hunters to turn in their wings for analysis.

Despite all this, Yee had numerous hunters tell him that they got into lots of birds last year, so they are out there if you can find the right locations, and Yee still

anticipates good upland bird hunting opportunities this fall.

Still further south, in the Roseburg area, Acting District Wildlife Biologist Nick Leonetti reports a mild winter and a favorable spring.

“The weather started out pretty good in the spring,” he noted. “We had a slow snowmelt, the rain we had in June wasn’t too extensive, and it didn’t get too cold.”

Milder conditions in the mountains also applied to valley areas, which will benefit valley quail populations, whose numbers are also boosted by high-quality habitat created by irrigated farmlands.

“The turkey broods I have been seeing so far indicate the population is doing well,” added Leonetti. He noted that he had not seen any forest grouse as of mid-July, which is unusual. But he also observed that there was good green-up at the higher elevations, which should provide an abundant food source for grouse, and hopefully result in a productive brood year.

Band-tailed pigeons and mountain quail are also species hunters may encounter in forested areas in this part of the state. Their numbers have remained fairly steady in recent years.

“Overall,” he said, “I think we’ll have a pretty good upland bird season.”

If the snow and ice storm that hit Yee’s district qualifies as outrageous, then the High Desert winter fell into the flaky category in more ways than one.

“The winter was kind of funny in Harney County,” explained Hines-based District Wildlife Biologist Lee Foster. “We had a pretty high snowpack at the high elevations. In some watersheds we had up to 160 percent of normal.” From the perspective of water storage for human, fish and wildlife use throughout the spring, summer and fall, the situation was near perfect.

High Desert upland game birds also got a break, compared to wildlife hit by the Cascades snow and ice storm. The deep snow stayed at the higher elevations, while the lower areas were snow free, or when it snowed it didn’t stick for long. This helped



*A mild winter and spring in Oregon's valleys should translate into plenty of quail this fall.*



A good green-up can keep chukars well fed but also scattered and harder for hunters to find.

the birds get through the winter with minimal weather-related mortality.

But good weather conditions last fall through the winter also proved that what's good for game birds isn't always good for game bird hunters, and in this case chukar hunters. Lee, a chukar hunter himself, explained that an extensive green-up last fall that provided an abundant food source for chukars also made it harder for hunters to find birds as opposed to when the vegetation grows in pockets separate from each other. The same held true in the winter when snowpack concentrates birds in snow-free pockets, making them easier

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to locate, which wasn't the case last winter. Foster said there were lots of chukars out there, but they were spread out over a large area, making them tough to track down, which reduced hunter success.

The summer hot spells are also a wild card, but as long as they don't last too long it shouldn't be a problem for the birds. Based on overall weather and resulting habitat conditions, High Desert upland birds, which include chukar, valley quail, sage grouse and some pheasant, should be relatively plentiful this season.

Up in the classic upland game bird hunting country of north-central Oregon, Heppner-based District Wildlife Biologist Steve Cherry related that, "Our winter went pretty well and we were able to successfully overwinter birds. We had a pretty decent year last year, both spring and winter conditions, so our upland bird populations are pretty healthy." That includes chukar, Hungarian partridge, valley quail, pheasant, wild turkey and forest grouse.

In addition to good overwinter survival, spring conditions were also favorable. The hot summer weather was of some concern to Cherry. "The hot weather wasn't good, but the chicks should be big enough by now that they are less vulnerable to overheating than if they were younger," he said.

"Based on the broods we have been seeing, hopefully it will be a decent year," he concluded.



*Water conditions in eastern Oregon have seen a significant increase in places.*

*Gadwalls are rebounding in Oregon, and mallard numbers are up.*

### **Waterfowl**

For waterfowl, the news is mainly good, especially for southeast Oregon, which currently has considerably wetter conditions than it has over the past several years or more.


This year's ODFW resident duck survey found an increased population of resident ducks, with a count of about 300,000. However, about 80,000 of those were northern shovelers, many of which were migrants rather than residents, so the actual resident count may be a little

lower. Nevertheless, it's up from last year. At 70,000, mallard numbers were up from 2023, and gadwalls are also rebounding.

Overall, water conditions are good throughout the state, resulting in good production. The situation is especially bright in southeast Oregon, which has suffered under years of drought conditions that sometimes made the effort to hunt waterfowl virtually pointless. In fact, water levels dropped so low on Malheur Lake in 2022 that the North and South Waterfowl Hunting Zones were closed.

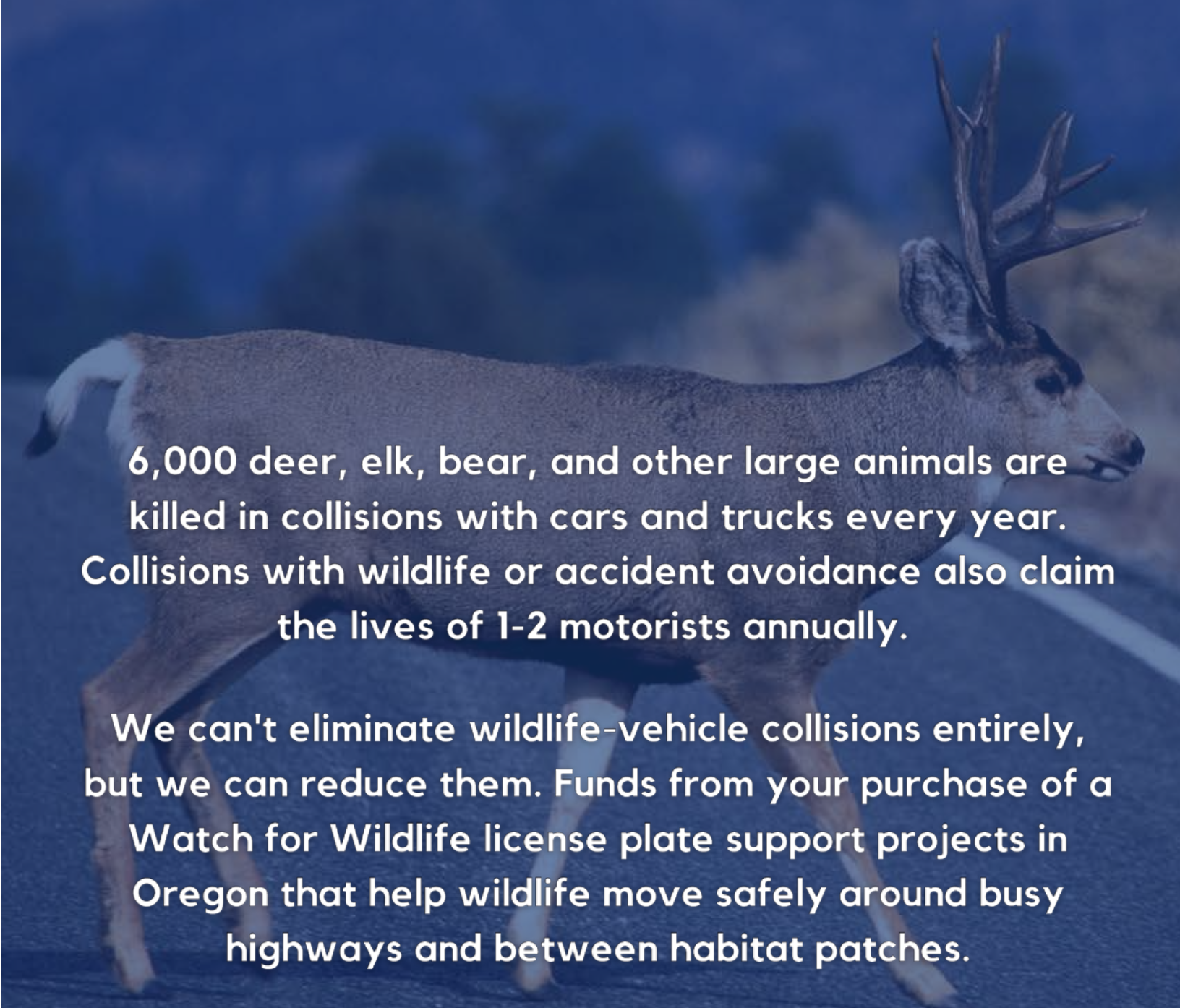
But the situation has changed. According to Brandon Reishus, ODFW Migratory Game Bird Coordinator, "Water conditions in eastern Oregon have had a significant increase in places. So expect pretty good local production."

News from up north wasn't available at this writing, but Reishus had been hearing that conditions in Alaska were on the dry side – a state that supplies a good number of Oregon's migratory ducks. Another major source of Oregon's fall flight ducks is Alberta, where conditions were tending to be on the dry side, as well. "There seems to have been a run of dry years up north," he said, "but not too severe. I expect we will have excellent production."

A curious trend over the past two years is a fall-off in Canada goose numbers, which is a bit unusual. Some early guesses include impacts from long-term drought conditions or avian influenza infections. However, Oregon still has plenty of resident Canada geese to go around. 



*After years of a goose glut, resident honker numbers have declined the last couple of seasons.*



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# A FEW HOURS *TO* KILL

*A PUBLIC LAND HUNT FOR A LOCAL LEGEND*



**P**ublic land deer hunting in this state is hard, but trying to fill a tag on a mature buck, solo, in a heavily pressured unit, days after the season opener? Next to impossible. Or so I had thought.

After an eventful first round of buck hunting, clients had left camp, equipment had been cleaned, and food restocked, I had two choices for the evening: go home and rest (which was needed, as another round of hunters would arrive at camp soon), or head to a strip of public land about an hour's drive south and look for a buck worthy of a tag validation.

I chose the latter, knowing I only had a pair of days to attempt to find an elusive mature public land deer. I knew there was one around the area I was traveling to, as he was

seen by elk hunters during archery season, occasionally running around just after legal shooting light and without giving much of a glimpse of his size. My friend who had seen the buck told me he was much larger than the deer he was used to seeing in that area, and he had, at initial glance, thought it was an elk. This gave me plenty of motivation to find him.

My plan was to travel to the general area where he was last seen and glass the top ends of the timbered draws in the area. Whereas we had a relatively wet fall, there was plenty of feed and water sources around, so my priority wasn't trying to find him where I would traditionally look for bucks during our early-October season. It was well past the opening weekend and the animals would likely be a bit scattered. He probably

**By HANNAH MOBBETT**





*The author took this Umatilla County buck on public land near the ranch where she is an outfitter.*

would be in an area where he could hide well and keep an eye on his surroundings. I parked my pickup, grabbed my pack and rifle, and headed down a game trail.

Taking my time and being sure to glass each basin thoroughly, I found a few scattered deer and some younger bucks filtering through the trees. I sat for a while and enjoyed the sights, does keeping a watchful eye on their fawns and the young bucks feeding and occasionally checking their surroundings. Though they gave me plenty of shot opportunities, I had told myself when I purchased the tag that it was

“big buck or bust.” Onward I went, telling myself “just one more basin” until it was finally getting close to dark, and I realized I had wandered a distance from my pickup. With around an hour left of shooting light I spun on my heels and headed east.

Though I hadn’t seen my target deer, I was still happy to have seen a few around. I told myself that I gave it a good amount of effort and that with an upcoming elk and whitetail tag in Idaho, I wouldn’t need to worry about a lack of game in the freezer this year. Naturally, as soon as I had convinced myself that I was likely not

going to fill this tag, I saw movement a few hundred yards in front of me. I stopped and lowered myself behind some brush, as it appeared they hadn’t noticed me. As I put my binoculars up, I saw about a dozen does feeding on a grassy knob. They were on the path I was traveling back to my pickup, though I could walk around to keep from disturbing them. I sat and watched for a few minutes, keeping in mind I needed to keep going as I had only around 15 minutes left of shooting light. I started to gather my things once more, and as I scanned one last time to make sure there were no bucks in the group, he appeared in my lenses. I audibly said “oh, that’s him” as his white face and large frame were highlighted in stark contrast against the darkening hillside. I couldn’t quite make out points, but that didn’t matter. I could tell he was big, old, and tag-worthy.

I was stunned.

Of course he decided to show just before dark. He was pushing the does, clearly estrus was beginning, and he was not about to miss out on the opportunity. I took his range, 410 yards. The conditions were perfect, it was a nearly still evening, the sun had just gone behind the hills, and they didn’t know I

*I couldn't quite make out points, but that didn't matter. I could tell he was big, old, and tag-worthy. I was stunned. Of course he decided to show just before dark.*

was there. I laid on my pack and adjusted the turret on my rifle scope. As I settled into my pack, I felt the wind at the back of my neck ever so slightly. I knew I didn’t have much time as one of the does snapped her head up in my direction. With the deer clearly nervous and without a clear shot, I had to wait for a pair of does to move just enough to open my shooting window. Just when the deer started to move, I saw my opportunity. Quartered slightly towards me with his left shoulder exposed, I squeezed.

I always find it interesting how many of us hunters tend to black out when it comes to our shots. We remember all the steps leading up to, and after, though the shot itself ceases to exist. Though I have taken my fair share of game over the years, including a hat trick of bears this year al-

ready, I had figured this wouldn't happen to me anymore as it hadn't in years. With this buck, similar to my very first well over a decade ago, I do not remember pulling the trigger or hearing the blast from the muzzle. The confirmation of my shot was made when I heard the impact it made with the deer, hitting behind the shoulder. He stiffened, staggered, and fell. The does single-filed out of the area, and I was finally able to exhale.

As I approached the downed deer, still unsure of his exact measurements, I was shocked when there was no ground shrinkage. Just judging by his frame, I already knew this was my biggest mule deer to date. After making sure he was truly down, I emptied my floor plate and put my hands on my buck. His chocolate horns had beautiful contrast to his speckled grey coat, and of course in true mule deer fashion, his ears looked enormous. He was a 4x3 with eye guards, and though he was not symmetrical, he had multiple points that were bladed. I could have lived in that moment forever, though I knew that with just a few minutes of light left and being solo, I needed to get to work. I got him loaded by 8 p.m., and I pulled into my

driveway that night knowing I still had a bit of work to do as I planned on saving the cape. Finishing with some help from a good friend, I was able to close the chapter on this day around 10:30.

The hunt was one for the memory books, especially considering my younger brother filled his tag on a deer with a nearly identical frame a couple hundred miles away here in Oregon (both bucks were tagged within 10 minutes of each other!). Mature bucks do still exist here, though they may be fewer and farther between, and with a stroke of luck, you may stumble into one.



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Steve Scott of Happy Valley
- **July 10: Ruger American 6.5 CR**  
Richard Vedder of Eugene
- **July 17: Sig Cross 6.5 CR**  
Ethan Cossitt of Prineville
- **July 24: Weatherby VG 6.5 PRC**  
Phillip Disney of Medford
- **July 31: Taurus Judge .45/410**  
John Shipley of Albany
- **Aug. 7: Christensen Mesa .28 Nosler**  
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# BLACKTAIL BUCKS

## You Got to Know When to Fold 'em

**A buck to skin, pumpkins to harvest and a fall gobbler that couldn't hold a tune. In the final hour, the author found an ace that he could keep.**

**BY GARY LEWIS**

ROGUE UNIT/RANDY SHIPLEY

*On a dry autumn morning,  
on a trail bound for nowhere,  
I met up with a forked horn,  
neck swollen with the rut.*

**I**t was a closed road, and when the deer popped out of the blackberries, it was at the spot I imagined I would see it, and my rifle was already up. The buck turned and picked its way toward the stand, lip curled, head held low. It was a young buck, and I told myself it could walk and maybe I would see it again in another year or two.

In the course of two long minutes, the buck walked 200 yards, straight to me, looked up, then turned and faded into the alders. I still had a few days left in the season.

I met the artificially tan Kenny Rogers once after he had polished off a Papa Murphy's pizza in Deadwood, S.D., and he gave me a word of advice. We had VIP tickets for the show that evening which included a handshake convo with the Gambler. You might say I met mister bake-and-fake at a meet-and-greet after a take-and-bake. Guess what he told me about deer hunting.

"You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em."

Sometimes all the stars line up. I was also in Deadwood, when I met Bill Cosby. I asked Bill Cosby for advice and all he said was, "Patience." I took that to mean I should either stand around and wait for him to think of something, or maybe that was all the advice he had. And you know what? You have got to have patience to be a deer

hunter, so he was at least partly right.

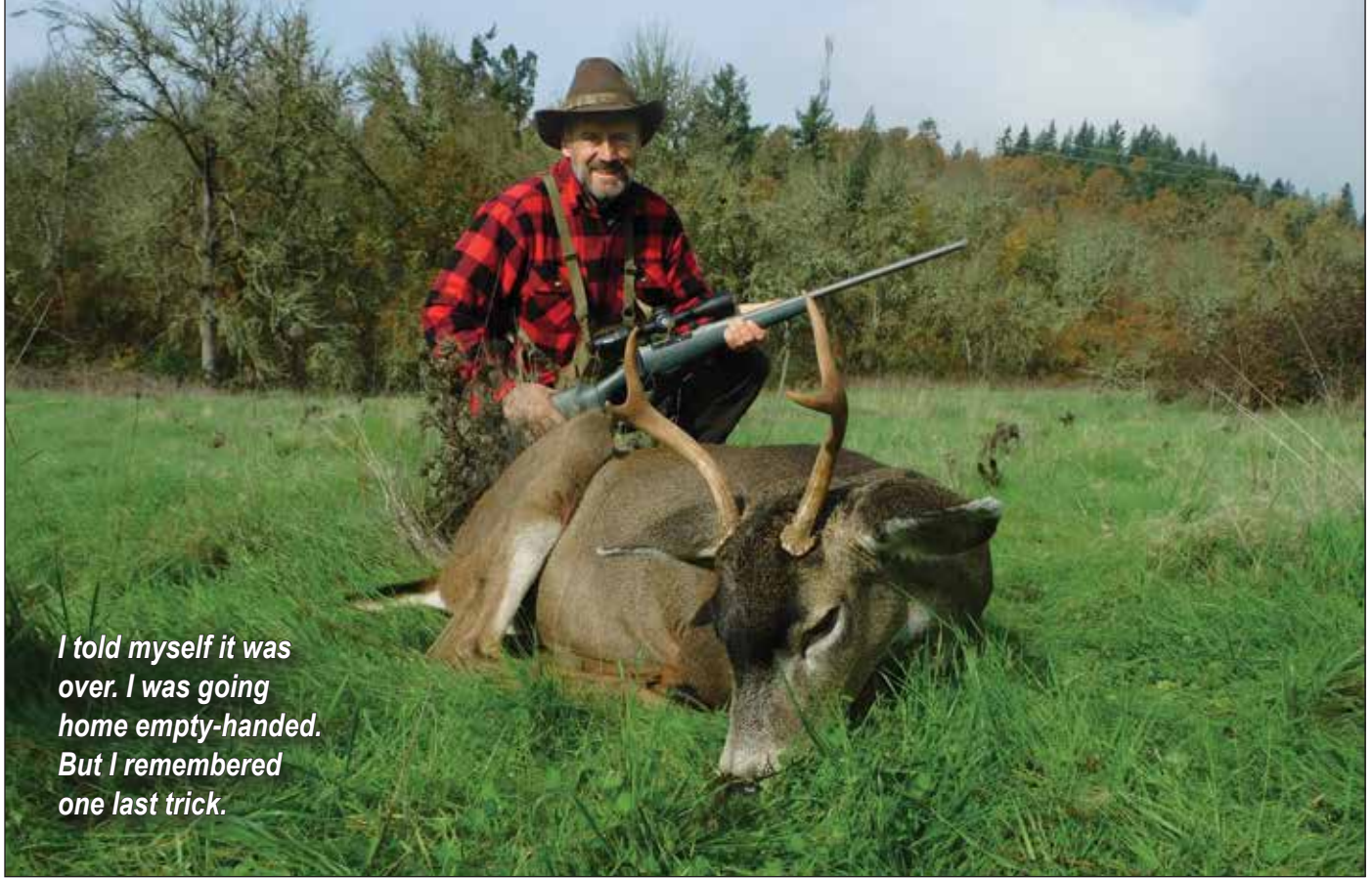
It's easy to get the stars to line up for big bucks, but the bucks we're interested in ... they ain't never going to line up. Sometimes you don't even see a buck in blacktail season, or like in my case, all you see are spikes and forked horns, no matter how hard you hunt. Last season when I looked at that Nov. 9 season ending date, I blocked out the last week and hunted on some of my favorite ground. By the second-to-last day, I had walked a number of young bucks.

#### **USE ENOUGH GUN**

A blacktail buck, when it shows itself, is seldom more than a bound away from cover. That's why I like to hunt with something on the order of a .270 Winchester or bigger. One of my favorite cartridges is the .27 Nosler, with which I have shot some of my biggest bucks. But the 7mm Magnum is also a favorite, and the .30-06 is just as good. In some patches of poison oak, something on the order of the .45-70 is the best choice.

In my early hunting career, I used a .243, and though it got the job done, I sometimes had to trail a lungshot buck for up to 60 yards. With a heavier bullet and more energy, a blacktail is more likely to drop in its tracks. And if it doesn't drop, or if it gets back up, shoot it again.





*I told myself it was over. I was going home empty-handed. But I remembered one last trick.*

*After passing up this buck the evening before, and after deciding to go home empty-handed, author Gary Lewis earned one more chance.*

For the 2023 deer season, I hunted with the .26 Nosler, a cartridge that served well in New Zealand on red stag and tahr, and tahr are as tough as they come.

#### **EVERY HAND'S A WINNER**

I had a tree stand in a good spot in the Alsea Unit, but when a friend called and said I could hunt his property, I jumped at the chance. I spent the afternoon of the second-to-last day perched on a hillside and when the shadows began to lengthen, I started to see deer. Does stood up from beds and stretched and began to feed.

I remembered the old hunters' admonition: Never pass up the buck you would be happy to get on the last day. A thing to keep in mind, because the secret to surviving is knowing what to throw away, and knowing what to keep.

A forked horn stood up out of the blackberries and walked toward me and down the hill and stopped and stretched and shook itself. The range was under 125 yards. The drag would have been easy. I let it walk. A spike walked out in front of me then disappeared in the oaks.

I hummed that Kenny Rogers tune.

At dusk I hunted the edge of a patch of poison oak and blackberries and a buck walked past. It was a forked horn, smaller than the other forks I had passed on earlier. And it was mad with the scent of the females in the stickerbushes. It was chasing one doe in particular. She turned back and turned back again, never letting the buck see her. I watched the chase till five minutes before the end of legal light, when I decided to see how close I could get to the buck. I got close. Five yards. The buck looked at me and then went back to chasing the doe. I walked out under the stars.

In the morning, I was back, still looking for the big buck. Maybe a 4-point had jumped the fence onto the property in the moonlight the night before, I told myself.

After several hours of sitting and watching, it was time to try to jump a deer. This was it, I told myself. The last hour on the property. I was prepared to go home empty-handed, but there was some bedding area I had not looked into. In and out and around and through, I hunted the deer beds like I never would have done early in the season.

And then I told myself it was over. I was going home empty-handed. But I remembered one last trick. It's when you walk out of cover and stand in the open. And that's what I did. And a buck stood up.

Now that my hunt was all but finished and here was a legal buck, the same legal buck I had walked up to the night before. I told the buck if it would stand for me, I would lay down and shoot it.

I took off my pack, laid it on the ground, nestled the rifle in, got my feet right, snicked safety to fire, put fingerprint whorl on arc of trigger and touched it gently. The forked horn buck folded like a hand of cards.

It was a day of harvest. After the skinning, there were things left to do. Pack out of camp. Load the truck full of Rodakowski pumpkins and maybe shoot a turkey. I had a Mossberg pump shotgun and a load of No. 9 tungsten I dearly wanted to try. And there was a gobbler with an 8-inch beard that didn't know when to walk away. Or when to run.

Bill Cosby would have counseled me about patience. But I reckon I don't take Bill Cosby advice. Like the music man says, "You got to know when to fold 'em."



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



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# OVERLOOKED UPLAND BIRDS

FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, THESE THREE BIRDS ARE UNDERHUNTED HERE.

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT HAUGEN




In Feb. 4 of this year, I noted the first band-tailed pigeon arrival near my home up the McKenzie River Valley. When I was in high school, back in the early 1980s, pigeons typically arrived in mid-May. In recent years, bandtails have been thick in the Cascade foothills by late March.

Whether it's seeing them in the off-season, or when perched on a ridge with my 83-year-old dad and our dogs during hunting season, I never tire of watching bandtails. Our daily limit used to be seven pigeons. Now it's two, and a special permit is required. The season is brief, Sept. 15-23. Dad and I will hunt it every day together, just as we have over the past several years.

While limits are low, pigeons are plentiful, as bountiful as I recall them being back in the 1970s and early '80s. Today, the hunt is more about tradition and pleasure. I love watching my dogs mark flocks of bandtails as they fly down the ridges of the Cascades. Echo and Kona often see them before Dad and I do. I revel in watching birds swiftly lose elevation to land in treetops, their large wings folding tight against their tapered bodies and proportionally undersized heads. At times they look like little superheroes.



A large, shaggy brown dog, possibly a Mastiff or similar breed, stands on a mossy rock. The dog is holding a mountain quail in its mouth. The background shows a blurred landscape with mountains and trees, suggesting a high-altitude or mountainous environment. The lighting is bright, indicating a sunny day.

Finding mountain quail - dead or alive - is tough without a faithful canine companion.



**Bandtails are doing well in many parts of their historic range. It's a short and sweet season, and a permit is required.**

Bandtails can be easy to hit when their pace slows. But when they dart and dive, they can be one of the toughest targets out there. They're excellent eating.

Some of the same areas pigeons frequent, mountain quail are near. Oregon offers what many consider to be the best mountain quail hunting in the country. Both female and male mountain quail sit on a nest. Upon hatching, the male and female bring the two broods together. This explains why you might see a covey of 20 mountain quail hanging out on the Sept. 1 season opener on the west side.

This year's mountain quail numbers could be good in the Cascades. The spring was cool but not overly wet. Moisture content led to great cover and excellent

food in the form of grass and weed seeds, as well as insects. As long as they can elude predators, mountain quail flourish. Holding tight in cover allows them to evade aerial predators, and they can drive you and your dogs crazy.

Last season my dogs got on a covey of early season mountain quail. Kona stuck a mid-stride point where his droopy ears flopped at his nose, mere inches from the ground. He looked straight down into four-inch tall salal. Echo did the same, five paces away, where the salal was over a foot tall. I approached and saw nothing. It wasn't until the second circle I made around Kona, kicking at the noisy, stiff-leaved cover, that mountain quail erupted. The birds were so close I couldn't shoot,



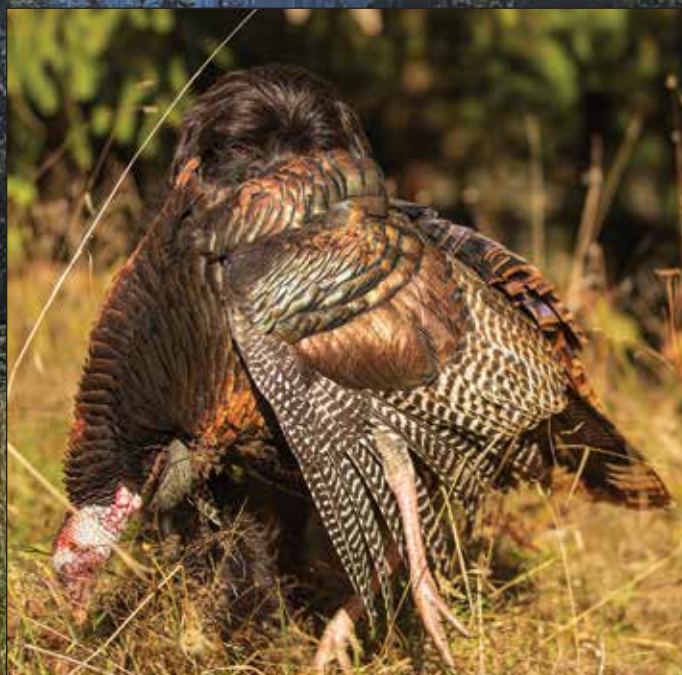
**Though other game birds grab more attention this time of year, fall turkey hunts can be every bit as exciting as spring hunts.**

even with light loads in my sub-gauge. Finally, I shot and missed, missed again, then connected on the third shot. I reloaded and lucked into a double. It took the dogs a while to find the birds in the six-foot tall cover of salal and sword ferns, but they prevailed. We gathered our birds and left, looking for another covey. I try to never push a covey from their home turf, or shoot more than a few from each family unit early in the season.

In October the dogs and I dropped below where we hunted pigeons a month prior. We were low in the Cascade foothills, where turkeys thrive this time of year. They were never there when I was a kid. Maybe that's why they're one of my favorite birds to hunt now, in both spring and fall.

In the fall, we can hunt turkeys using dogs in Oregon – not all states allow that. My favorite way is to spot a flock feeding uphill, into the trees, then send a dog to scatter them. Then I'll call the dog back, we'll approach near where the turkeys landed in trees – staying out of sight – and then start calling 15 minutes later. Few bird hunts are as exciting as calling a 20-pound tom into spitting distance of where you and a well disciplined dog sit stone still.

With big game seasons upon us, and admittedly more glamorous birds to hunt, it's the pursuit of these three that I find myself most looking forward to during the early fall months. I've learned to never take for granted all the blessed opportunities we have in this great state.



**One of the author's most cherished hunts is going after fall turkeys in western Oregon with one of his dogs.**





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# Women of OHA Weekend AWAY



*Improve Habitat and Hunt Chukars!*

**October 25-27, 2024**  
**Black Butte Resort, Sisters, Oregon**



Join us for the first ever Women of OHA Weekend Away with a day of planting bitterbrush seedlings followed by a day of chukar hunting!

**LODGING INCLUDED**

Meet at Black Butte Resort on Friday evening (10/25/2024). OHA has reserved 2 large homes.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Saturday (10/26)

Volunteers will carpool from Black Butte Resort to the Crooked River Nat. Grassland to plant bitterbrush.

Sunday (10/27)

OHA will provide 100 chukars for volunteers with a put and take chukar hunt on OHA's conservation easement, adjacent to the Crooked River National Grassland.



**WIN:** Volunteers will be entered to win a Citadel M1911 .380 donated by Legacy Sports International and more!

**ALL MEALS INCLUDED:** Dinner Friday evening, Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner provided on Saturday, Breakfast & Lunch provided Sunday.

**LIMITED CAPACITY:** Only 30 Women - Register Soon!

**CONTACT:**

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



**OHA MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED:**

If not a current member, add \$35 for an annual OHA membership, or buy a 2025 Gun Raffle Calendar (\$50).



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

<https://oregonhunters.org/2024-oha-womens-weekend/>



OHA THANKS OUR PROJECT PARTNERS

# TACTACAM TRAIL CAM CONTEST

See rules and enter your best shots at [oregonhunters.org](http://oregonhunters.org) for a chance to win a great Tactacam prize!



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



**WINNER:**  
OHA member Jerry English from Oakridge is the winner of a Tactacam Reveal trail camera for his image of a Lane County black bear.

## HONORABLE MENTION:



*This band of Murderers Creek bighorns is an Honorable Mention and OHA hat winner for OHA member Oliver Wisseman.*



*This Marion County blacktail photo nabs an Honorable Mention and an OHA hat for OHA member Darrel Wilson of Happy Valley.*



*Prineville OHA member David Hardwick garners Honorable Mention and an OHA hat for this photo of a mother red fox and her kits.*



*Bend resident and OHA member Brent Wright earns Honorable Mention and an OHA hat for his photo of a Deschutes coyote.*

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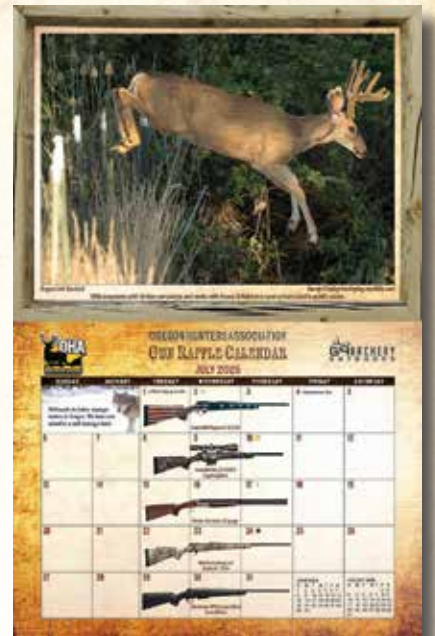
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🎯 1-year OHA Membership  
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or \$35 toward pledge life membership).

3,500 offered. Drawing:  
Dec. 30, 2 p.m., OHA State Office,  
301 Crater Lake Ave. Suite C, Medford, OR.  
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# Please Support OHA's Special Funds

Your tax-deductible\* contributions help protect Oregon's wildlife, habitat and hunting heritage.

## Hunters' Victory Fund

Your tax-deductible\* donation to the Oregon Hunters Association Hunters' Victory Fund will be dedicated for fighting legal and legislative battles to protect hunting rights in Oregon. **Petitioners are gathering signatures to place a ban on hunting, trapping and fishing on Oregon's ballot!**

In the coming months we face legislative challenges where we must fight to protect your right to hunt, trap and own firearms!



## Youth Heritage Fund

Tax-deductible\* donations to OHA's Youth Heritage Fund help train tomorrow's hunters & conservationists who will carry on our proud hunting heritage.



## Wildlife Super Fund



OHA GUZZLER/JERRY HOLBROOK

Tax-deductible\* donations to the Oregon Hunters Association's Wildlife Super Fund will be dedicated for critical projects and programs aimed at advocating for wildlife and enhancing habitat right here in Oregon where you live and hunt.

Members who contribute \$20 or more to OHA's Special Funds receive a Silver Edition OHA Supporting Member decal. Donors of \$100 or more receive a Gold Edition Sustaining Member decal.



### Oregon Hunters Association Special Funds Donations

P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501  
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[www.oregonhunters.org/donate](http://www.oregonhunters.org/donate) ONLINE!



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Please accept my contribution to OHA's Special Funds:

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\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### OHA Wildlife Super Fund:

\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### OHA Youth Heritage Fund:

\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Unrestricted Gift to be used where needed most:

\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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WALLOWA COUNTY/TYLER DUNGANNON

\* OHA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The OHA Hunters' Victory Fund is not a PAC. Please consult your tax preparer.



OHA's Bend Chapter has sponsored a billboard to raise public awareness about poaching.

## Chapters beat the heat in projects for OHA's mission

### BAKER

CHARLIE BRINTON 541-403-0402

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

### BEND

REX PARKS 541-480-0230

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

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

**Update:** All Hands, All Brands for Public Lands event was held June 28-30. Our chapter will be hosting its Youth Upland Bird Hunt on Oct. 19. Contact Kevin Borst at 541-480-7323 for details.

### BLUE MOUNTAIN

KEVIN MARTIN 541-969-6744

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

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

**Update:** Our chapter has donated to five different high school trap clubs and awarded three scholarships to different students from the clubs.

### CAPITOL

DANNY SOUTH 503-577-6033

**Chapter Meetings:** See chapter newsletter.

**Update:** Congratulations to Rich Stutheit who received a framed photo in appreciation of his hard work in the Ochocos.

### CLATSOP COUNTY

TROY LAWS 503-738-6962

[ClatsopCountyOHA@pacifier.com](mailto:ClatsopCountyOHA@pacifier.com)

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



Participants in a recent OHA Learn to Hunt field day learned field dressing and practiced hunting for targets.



### COLUMBIA COUNTY

JORDAN HICKS 949-533-7271

**Chapter Meetings:** 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m., Elks Lodge, 350 Belton Rd., St. Helens.

### CURRY

JAMIE BADGER 541-499-2245

[Badgergirls3@gmail.com](mailto:Badgergirls3@gmail.com)

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

**Update:** Congratulations to our new chapter president, Jamie Badger.

### EMERALD VALLEY

TONY HILSENDAGER 541-729-0877

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

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

**Update:** Thanks to everyone who attended our Family Day event on July 27. Our most recent guest speaker, ODFW biologist Chris Yee, spoke about our local habitat and deer and elk populations.

### HOODVIEW

KELLY PARKMAN 503-706-7481

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

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

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

**Update:** Our chapter has a new meeting coordinator, Daniel Larsen. If you have any meeting ideas or would like to speak at a chapter meeting, he can be reached at 971-706-4392, [seadlarsen@aol.com](mailto:seadlarsen@aol.com).

### JOSEPHINE COUNTY

DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511

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

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

**Update:** We are working hard to update all our chapter member emails; if you

don't receive our chapter newsletter via email, please reach out so you don't miss anything.

### KLAMATH

DENNIS WIARD 541-891-3549

<https://oregonhunters.org/klamath-chapterdtward@charter.net>

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

**Update:** The annual Gerber Reservoir Youth Antelope hunt and BBQ was held on Aug. 23. Join us on Oct. 26-27 for the Youth Chukar Hunt in the Klamath Hills. Call for details, 541-883-8326.

### LAKE COUNTY

LARRY LUCAS 541-417-2983

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

**Update:** Our chapter invites you to join us on Oct. 26 for our annual guzzler project. Call 541-417-2983 for details.

### LINCOLN COUNTY

TODD THOMPSON 541-270-2393

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

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

**Update:** Congratulations to our scholarship winner, Aliviah Mode of Taft High School, who is a 4.0 GPA Valedictorian, three-sport athlete and will be studying forestry in college.

### 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 chapter Youth Shotgun Shoot event was held on Aug. 10 at the Snake River Sportsman Complex in Ontario.

## MID-COLUMBIA

TONY WHITE 541-490-2980

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

**Update:** Our chapter is looking for officers to continue our great strides in the past year.

## MID-WILLAMETTE

KEN MCCALL 541-602-1819

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

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

**Chapter Meetings:** 2nd Thursday of odd-numbered months, board at 6 p.m., general meeting at 7 p.m., Old Armory, Albany.

**Update:** We thank our guest speaker, Sgt. James Halsey of the Oregon State Police, who spoke about some of the many poaching cases in our area. Join us when our chapter helps out at the E.E. Wilson youth bird hunt on Sept. 28 and 29.

## OCHOCO

JAMES COX 541-408-4816

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

**Update:** No September meeting; our next chapter meeting will be Oct. 1.

## PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 503-266-2900

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

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

**Update:** Our chapter will host Sight-In Days at Canby Rod & Gun Club on Sept. 14-15 and 21-22.

## REDMOND

K. C. THRASHER 541-419-7215

OHA line 541-383-1099

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

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

**Update:** All attendees at monthly Redmond Chapter meetings will be entered into a drawing for two OHA Gun Raffle Calendar tickets. You could win a gun just for showing up.

## ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

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

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

**Update:** Our chapter hosted a pint night and an archery event in June.

## TILLAMOOK

JOHN PUTMAN 503-842-7733

**Chapter Meetings:** 2nd Monday, is Board Meetings at 6:30, 3rd Monday is General Meetings at 7, ODFW Tillamook Office

**Update:** We hope everyone was able to come by our chapter booth at the county fair, and thanks to all the volunteers who helped out in the booth.

## TIOGA

MARCEY FULLERTON 541-294-7912

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

**Update:** The last Hunter Education Field Day of the season will be held on Sept. 7 at the Millicoma Recreation Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call Allen Fanno at 541-297-6085.



OHA's Blue Mountain Chapter recently assisted with duck banding at Wanaket Wildlife Area.

## TUALATIN VALLEY

TONY KIND 503-290-6143

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

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

**Update:** We thank guest speakers Dustin Collman and Ed May from Ducks Unlimited, for coming to our meeting to speak about the history of Ducks Unlimited.

## UMPQUA

TADD MOORE 541-580-5660

<https://www.umpquaoha.org>

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

**Update:** Congratulations to Robert Luck for winning a Citadel Trakr .22 Long Rifle at our chapter meeting.

## UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

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

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

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

**Update:** Our chapter held our annual Youth Shotgun Shoot on Aug. 17. Chapter meetings will resume on Sept. 13 after the summer hiatus.



OHA members and others built beaver dam analogs that will enhance riparian areas for a variety of wildlife at the annual All Hands All Brands for Public Lands project in the Ochoco Mountains.



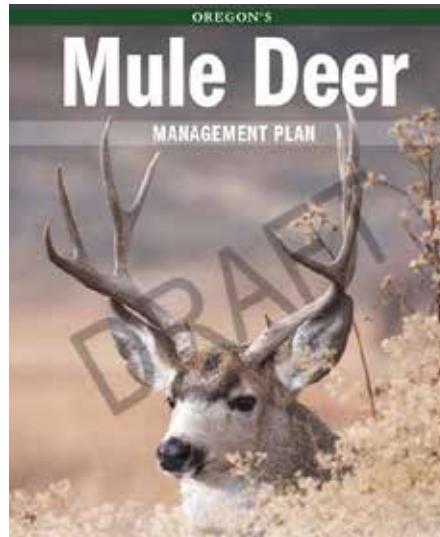
JOHN MCFARLAND III

# OHA helps refine Mule Deer Plan

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

Oregon mule deer population trends are cause for major concern, with many herd ranges continuing to decline, despite already abysmally low population sizes. OHA has been working with ODFW for several years to develop a revision to the Oregon Mule Deer Management Plan. This plan was approved by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in June.

OHA regarded the development of the new Mule Deer Management Plan as a top organizational priority, and OHA was



unquestionably the leading conservation organization throughout the effort to shape the new plan for the benefit of mule deer, their habitat and hunters. State OHA submitted 10 separate formal comment letters vetted by the OHA deer sub-committee of experts on the draft mule deer plan, and OHA staff met with ODFW on numerous occasions to express concerns with the initial plan and offer support where appropriate.

OHA challenged ODFW to make the plan actionable and asserted that the goals in the plan must be measurable with a

rigorous and specific to-do list for each individual herd range.

OHA efforts had a tremendous impact on the end product, and in direct response to our comments, ODFW integrated: specificity and stronger language to action items, clarification of the necessary steps to implement predator control efforts, resolution (and an extreme concern category) to herd range management concern levels, an expanded intermountain west section (i.e., sage-steppe), thorough ODFW recommendations for land managers, and a level of ODFW accountability by providing specific 2-3 year goals for each individual herd range.

Now that we have a solid mule deer management plan, OHA will turn its focus to plan implementation and identify areas where we can help ODFW and land managers improve conditions on the landscape for mule deer.

For more information on the plan, see [https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/management\\_plans/mule\\_deer/index.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/management_plans/mule_deer/index.asp).

We recommend that you scroll to the bottom of the management plan, where it lists herd range reports. Here you will find mule deer population trends and herd range priority action items associated with each herd range.

# Women of OHA slate conservation, hunting weekend

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

OHA's newest outreach program, Women of OHA, is planning a women's weekend away for both conservation work and hunting. Scheduled for Oct. 25-27 in central Oregon, the weekend will be split between a day of planting bitterbrush seedlings and a day of chukar hunting.

OHA is renting two large homes at Black Butte Resort for the weekend and will provide meals. OHA's Mid-Willamette Chapter donated \$750 toward meals.

Saturday will be a full day of conservation work with planting bitterbrush seedlings on the Crooked River National Grasslands as part of a larger planting effort by the Ochoco National Forest. USFS will provide the seedlings and OHA will provide the planting equipment.

Sunday will be a chukar hunt on OHA's conservation easement adjacent to the Grasslands. OHA is purchasing 100 birds for a put and take hunt and will also provide

several working dogs to assist the hunters.

Participants will be entered to win prizes, including a Citadel M1911 .380 pistol donated by Legacy Sports International.

The weekend is limited to 30 women and there is a registration fee of \$75. OHA membership is required for participation, so any participant who is not already a member will need to purchase a membership in addition to the registration fee.

The event received a donation from the Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's Outdoor Fund.

For more about the event or to subscribe to the Women of OHA newsletter, please see Page 39, scan the QR code or visit:

<https://oregonhunters.org/hunting/women-of-oha>

## Why a hunting program for women makes sense

OHA rolled out the Women of OHA program in 2024 to a growing audience of women in the hunting community. The

program will focus on building community among women, teaching skills, and prioritizing conservation efforts.

The impetus behind the program's development is a recognition that women are an important and growing demographic of our hunting heritage. In fact, according to a 2022 study by the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports, women are the fastest-growing demographic in both hunting and sport shooting, making up 27 percent of hunters, 32 percent of sport shooters, and 37 percent of overall gun ownership.

In addition to the demographics, it's clear that women have unique hunting experiences and concerns. Creating an opportunity for women to discuss specific topics such as personal safety, hygiene, and correctly sized gear provides a much-needed outlet for women.

The program is supported by funding from the Leupold & Stevens Foundation.



## ODFW names Clements deputy director

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



ODFW has selected Shaun Clements as the Deputy Director for Fish and Wildlife Programs. He began in this position on July 15. In this role, Clements will oversee the fish, wildlife and habitat divisions and field offices, as well as agency's state legislative activities. Clements fills the deputy director position that was formerly held by Debbie Colbert, who was selected to fill the agency director position in May.

Clements holds a BS and MS in biology and a PhD in Fisheries.

While Clements has spent most of his time with ODFW working on fish-related topics and issues, in 2023 he stepped into the deputy position temporarily while Colbert was on assignment at the Governor's office. OHA looks forward to working with him on all things related to wildlife and habitat in Oregon to meet both OHA's mission and that of ODFW.

## OHA funds key research on ecological benefits of elk and early seral habitat

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

It is known that early seral (i.e., young generating forest) habitat is critical for deer, elk, and thousands of other wildlife species, including more than 300 listed species in the Pacific Northwest.

Unfortunately, early seral habitat is declining largely because forest practices have changed dramatically over several decades favoring late seral (i.e., old growth) forests.



OHA is working to affect how our forests are managed by amplifying the importance of reducing conifer stand density for ungulates and other wildlife. In order to achieve our objectives, non-ungulate wildlife species dependent on early seral habitat and reduced stand densities will need to be a part of the equation.

OHA recently contributed \$10,000 to an Oregon State University research project in northeast Oregon quantifying benefits of thinning treatments, and elk density on pollinators and flower abundance. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation also contributed \$10,000 to this study, which spans several western states.

Initial analyses show elk herbivory is increasing flower abundance and diversity, which benefits pollinators and species of conservation concern.

Additionally, thinning treatments that open the forest canopy have led to a shift in flowering plant composition, which benefits species dependent on early seral habitat.

All wildlife species are important, and we will need all of our early seral obligate species to right the ship of forest management in Oregon.

## 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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## OHA pays out \$4,400 in rewards in 6 cases

In the last two months, OHA issued six reward checks to informants in six cases totaling \$4,400 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund. Charges included: Possession of falsely applied for tag – elk, exceeding the daily limit of trout, hunting on another's cultivated land, unlawful take/possession of bull elk, waste of game mammal, no big game tag, take/possession of buck deer, no hunting license, no deer tag, fraudulent purchase of a resident combo hunting/fishing license. One man pled guilty to three criminal charges, had his hunting privileges suspended and must pay \$7,500 to the TIP fund for taking a trophy mule deer.

# OHA honors volunteers with awards

OHA recently recognized outstanding volunteer efforts with the announcement of statewide annual awards. Chapters, state board members and staff nominate deserving individuals for awards, and then vote from the nominees on the ballot.

## MEMBER OF THE YEAR - WILDLIFE

**Scott Jones, Pioneer Chapter**

Scott manages guzzler projects for 15 total guzzlers and coordinates a yearly family campout when the majority of guzzler maintenance is done, and has initiated a 10-year project to rebuild all guzzlers. He works with local landowners to ensure access to guzzlers and submits monthly guzzler reports to ODFW during maintenance season. He also helps with duck box maintenance and volunteers to work at fairs and rodeos, and has played an essential role in getting donations for his chapter's annual banquet.



*The Bend Chapter's Bill Littlefield is as talented with mega bits as he is with megabytes.*

## MEMBER OF THE YEAR - ORGANIZATIONAL

**Kolin Theil, Pioneer Chapter**

Kolin has been a Family Life Member since 2019, and in a relatively short amount of time he has become a hands-on leader for his chapter. Kolin is eager to sell OHA Gun Calendar Raffle tickets, as well as educate people of the joys of hunting and managing our wildlands. He heads up chapter events such as the sports show, fair, rodeo and sight-in days, and manages outreach and member retention.

## CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

**Chase Brown - White River Wildlife Area**

Chase is instrumental in coordinating amazing volunteer projects. 2023 saw him orchestrate the OHA regional conservation project. Multiple chapters sweated side-by-side with Chase, his sons, and several staff members on a two-day buck and pole fencing project. The fencing protects the first aspen stand to flourish since the devastating fire of 2020. Deer and elk can hop over or crawl through, but cattle can't. Aspen is a highly desirable winter forage.

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

**Garrett Clark, Tualatin Valley Chapter**

Garrett currently serves on the OHA State Board as our Youth Ambassador. As a voting member of the Board, Garrett is actively engaged in a vast array of issues. He brings enthusiasm, passion and a valuable perspective reflective of our youth

membership. He has demonstrated his commitment to the OHA Board by taking on additional responsibilities, such as the liaison to Collegiate Club program and most recently OHA social media posts.

**Christina Hammond, Klamath Chapter**

Christina has been an OHA Life Member for 18 years. She has been the secretary for the Klamath Chapter for the past 16 years and is very dedicated to all aspects of OHA. She is a team player who is always willing to lend a hand to others and to take on additional responsibilities whenever necessary. Christina helps plan and participate in nearly every project or activity that her chapter tackles.

**Wendy Borst, Bend Chapter**

Wendy is the Bend Chapter's secretary, as well as its newsletter editor. Wendy and her husband Kevin organize and run the chapter's annual Youth and Family Outdoor Field Day and Annual Youth Upland Bird Hunt. Her attention to detail has ensured the smooth running of both of these events.

**Bill Littlefield, Bend Chapter**

Bill is one of the key members of Bend's annual Mule Deer Classic Fund-raiser committee. Bill's extensive computer knowledge and technical expertise enables him to solve problems as they arise. He tracks banquet items so they can all be listed in the program that he produces.



*Garrett Clark brings a youthful perspective to OHA's state board and manages our social media.*



Bill also produces the power-point slide show that runs during the event that lists donors, past year's chapter activities and auction items with descriptions. Bill is also a regular participant in his chapter's habitat work projects that include checking and repairing the wildlife crossing fences.

**LANDOWNER OF THE YEAR**  
**Port Blakely**

Port Blakely is a fifth-generation, family-owned company that believes healthy forestlands and the natural resources they generate can sustain our families, neighbors, and communities. They continue to keep their land open free of charge. Port Blakely is continually planning and thinking about the future of the forests and community for generations to come.

**YOUTH MEMBER OF THE YEAR**  
**Caden Thrasher, Redmond Chapter**

Caden has an unwavering passion for OHA and a genuine commitment to preserving our hunting heritage and wildlife conservation. From a young age, Caden has demonstrated an eagerness to contribute, attending events, actively participating in conservation efforts, and fostering a sense of camaraderie among fellow members. His enthusiasm is infectious, and his dedication to OHA's mission is truly commendable. Caden's story of resilience



*White River Wildlife Area manager Chase Brown spearheaded an OHA aspen fencing project.*



*Award winner Wendy Borst rings the lunch triangle at the Bend Chapter's youth bird hunt.*

and triumph over adversity serves as an inspiration to us all. As he continues to embody the spirit of OHA, he is not only a valuable member, but also a beacon of what makes our association strong and vibrant.

**CHAPTER OF THE YEAR**  
**Pioneer Chapter**

Pioneer Chapter members in 2023 protected wildlife habitat by managing 21 water guzzlers and 50 bird nesting boxes in central Oregon throughout the warm weather months. The annual family campout encourages family participation and provides an opportunity for youth to experience creating a clean and sustainable water source to a variety of wildlife.

The chapter continued its work maintaining 130 duck boxes above the Clackamas River.

Members showed their support of our hunting heritage as well as hunter education and safety by teaching Learn to Hunt classes for adults and volunteering at a variety of local functions, including the Clackamas County Fair, the Molalla Buckaroo, Sight-In Days at the Canby

Rod & Gun Club, and Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show. The chapter created an opportunity to sell tickets to its annual banquet, enlisted new members, educated the public on current hunter awareness issues, and sold more than 400 Gun Calendars, helping grow OHA throughout the state and increase the chapter's membership from around 675 to just over 840 in just one year.

The Pioneer Chapter mentors young hunters through its annual youth day event, where kids are taught hunter safety, participate in trap shooting, .22 range, and archery, interact with hands-on wildlife displays, and enjoy lunch with other young aspiring hunters. In the past year, 46 kids participated and left with an OHA Junior Membership and an OHA hat.

The chapter awarded two college scholarships to students who are pursuing a field of study that is aligned with OHA's mission.

In addition, Pioneer increased its donations to local high school trap clubs, supporting all four high schools within its district that have trap teams.



**GAME ON THE GRILL**  
 BY HANNAH MOBBETT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



*These sweet rolls can be enjoyed at breakfast or as a dessert.*

# Huckleberry Sweet Rolls

If you hunt the High Cascade buck season or bowhunt back-country bulls, you know that hunters can sometimes go home empty-handed unless they adapt to being gatherers, as well.

Last year we had a particularly wet spring, and the huckleberry bushes produced some of the largest and most flavorful berries I have ever seen. I was able to take time to pick for a couple days in August, and that was plenty to fill three gallon bags.

These deliciously tart berries make a stunning pie, are perfect blended into a milkshake, or in a balsamic reduction for various cuts of game. There may be hundreds of ways to use them, though arguably one of my favorite ways is baked into sweet rolls. These can be enjoyed at breakfast or as a dessert, and are perfectly reminiscent of a cinnamon bun (without the cinnamon, of course).

Among my most requested sweets from hunting clients and a couple of the guides, these are relatively easy-to-make breakfast buns. I generally make them the night before, refrigerate, and let rise for a couple hours the next morning. They are soft and sweet, and who doesn't like huckleberries?

**Rolls:**

- 2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 packet instant yeast
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large egg

**Filling:**

- 1 1/2 cup huckleberries (frozen)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp cornstarch
- 1 tsp lemon juice



**To make the rolls:** Set aside 1/2 cup of flour. In a large bowl, toss the remaining flour, sugar, salt and yeast together. Set aside. Heat the water, milk, and butter together in the microwave until the butter is melted and the mixture is hot to touch. Add this to the flour mix with the egg, combine, and add enough of the reserved flour to make a soft dough. I only needed 1/3 cup, but you may need the full amount. It's ready when it gently pulls away from the bowl.

On a lightly floured surface, knead the dough for about 5 minutes. Place in a lightly greased bowl and let rest for about 15 minutes. While it's resting, add all the filling ingredients together in a separate bowl, making sure the berries are coated.

**Filling the rolls:** Once the dough has rested, roll into a rectangle (about a 9x13). Pour the sugared berries on top and evenly spread them to cover the dough. Roll tightly. Cut into 11-12 even pieces and place in a lightly greased 9-inch round pan. I use a pie dish, and greased with butter. Loosely cover with foil and allow to rise for a couple hours, or cover and refrigerate overnight and do this in the morning.

Bake uncovered at 375° for 15 minutes, then top with foil for another 15 to keep from browning too heavily. Eat as they are, or top with a glaze. An easy glaze is 1/2 cup powdered sugar, 2 tbs milk, 1/4 tsp vanilla extract, and a dash of lemon juice. Mix to combine and pour over the top. Enjoy!



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# Pheasant hunting Bond forged at Sauvie Island

*Newcomers need more than opportunity; they need you*

**A** 16-year-old named Bond had joined a skeet shooting club, and they told him about a youth pheasant hunt happening at Sauvie Island.

When he and his mom arrived at the Sauvie Island Wildlife Area on a Saturday, they realized what a challenge lay before them. It was one of those moments that can make or break a first-time hunter. Bond had a hunting license, a hunter education certificate and a borrowed shotgun (mine), but he was not sure whether or not he was old enough or confident enough to hunt successfully.

It was about this moment when a pickup pulled into the parking lot and the fellow rolled down his window. He asked if he could help when he saw mother and son and read the disappointment in their faces.

“Tell you what,” he said, “I live on the island, and I’ve been training a new hunting dog named Sadie. I’ve never hunted with her, but if you can give me a half-hour, I can run home and get my gear and take you out. We’ll get you checked in.”

And just like that, Bond was going hunting – a first-time pheasant hunter headed afield with a first-time pheasant hunting dog and a mentor.

Whether or not there was a communication gap, or whether steps were missed in the process, here was a mentor and here was a dog and a place to hunt. And if there were pheasants, maybe they could get close enough for a shot.

In fact, Sadie found two roosters and they both flew and Bond shot them and filled his first limit.

After the hunt, Bond was not sure



*Bond and Sadie enjoy the moment of their first pheasant, thanks to a mentor who took them afield. OHA chapters will be helping young guns earn their wings at youth upland birds hunts across the state in September and October. Contact your local OHA chapter or ODFW office to join us in running clay shooting stations, cooking food or taking kids afield with dogs.*

how to clean the birds. He watched a few YouTube videos, but none of them inspired any confidence. On Sunday morning when I stopped by to pick up my shotgun, Bond showed me his trophies.

“Well, let’s get to it,” I said. I had just gotten back from church and still had on my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes, but I had a pocket knife and showed him how to field dress and prep a rooster for a tasty meal.

Then I shared two simple recipes that people new to wild game can enjoy.

“Okay,” I said, handing him the knife. “Now you clean the next one.”

Bond said, “Wow, this is so much simpler than all those YouTube videos. I can’t believe how clean it was to process – all those videos were so messy and you couldn’t tell what they were doing.”

Be sure to take a YouTuber hunting with you, so they can learn.



*The author is a lifelong avid conservationist, hunter and fisherman, as well as the author of the newly released Boys Hunting Journal – Activity and Log Book*

## YOUTH UPLAND HUNTS & SHOTGUN CLINICS

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Fern Ridge Wildlife Area

**September 14 & 15**  
Denman Wildlife Area  
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Central Oregon (Madras)  
White River Wildlife Area

**September 21**  
Irrigon Wildlife Area

**September 28 & 29**  
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OHA Bend Youth Bird Hunt,  
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**October 26**  
Klamath Wildlife Area

**October 26-27**  
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**OHA IN ACTION**  
**BY TYLER DUNGANNON**

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

*A doe checks out the wildlife-friendly fencing installed by OHA members.*



*OHA volunteers recently fenced the second of three Cascade meadows in a three-year project that will protect the areas for use by wildlife.*

## OHA protects Willow Prairie; more regional projects on the horizon

**O**HA recently installed 2 miles of new wildlife-friendly fence and removed 2 miles of old dilapidated fencing around Willow Prairie in the southwest Cascades. A total of 38 OHA volunteers put in close to 300 hours of work and made the trip from nine OHA chapters around the state, including Rogue Valley, Umpqua, Josephine County, Yamhill County, Klamath, Bend, Tualatin Valley, Emerald Valley, Pioneer and Mid-Willamette.

The local U.S. Forest Service District wildlife and range staff had been trying to find the means to implement this project for many years. OHA attained grant funding, provided all materials and equipment, and completed the project with excellent support from USFS. The estimated value of this project based on quotes received by USFS was between \$80,000 and \$110,000 for labor and materials.

OHA is working to protect and enhance meadow systems in the southwest Cascades for the benefit of wildlife, their habitat, and hunters.

Meadow systems are important for deer and elk, and across the Cascades, meadows are at risk of loss, degradation, and fragmentation due to conifer encroachment, heavy use by domestic livestock, illegal OHV use, wildfire suppression and other factors. Many meadow fences in the Cascades exist but are dilapidated,

not wildlife-friendly, and do not effectively protect the meadow. OHA is working to change that.

OHA has now completed 2 of the 3 large scale wildlife-friendly fences under the umbrella of our Southwest Cascades Meadow Protection Regional Project. In April, we completed our first project near Whiskey Springs and Fourbit Creek, and in the Summer of 2025, OHA will shift its efforts to Short Creek Prairie, where we will protect an additional 2 miles of meadow.

With collaboration of multiple chapters, State OHA, and an open invitation to OHA members and partners at these projects, we have and will continue to implement landscape-scale projects that offer a significant benefit to wildlife. Great food, amazing prize drawings, satisfying work, and a great social experience with fellow hunters have become staples of our regional projects, and we look forward to increasing our volunteer capacity and impact for wildlife in the future.

OHA conservation staff procured a \$50,000 grant provided by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund to fence three large meadows in the southwest Cascades.

In addition to OCRF and USFS, OHA thanks partners ODFW, Coastal Farm & Ranch, Legacy Sports International, OnX and North American Taxidermy.





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\*voucher for building a custom rifle to your specifications via Blagg Custom Rifles LLC. All entries must provide proof of non-lead ammo purchase and a valid Oregon Hunter ID



**ASK ODFW:**

# Q&A with New ODFW Director

*Based on Debbie Colbert remarks made at OHA Leadership Summit*



**Now that ODFW has adopted a Mule Deer Plan, will hunters see changes to hunts?** In 2026, hunters may see some changes in hunt structure to better align hunt boundaries and tag allocations with herd ranges. An incredible amount of work went into the new Mule Deer Plan that incorporates years of GPS collar data and other research. Moving forward, population information and management objectives will be based on biologically relevant herd ranges encompassing the year-round habitat use and movement of each herd. Thanks to all OHA staff and members for their extensive involvement in the Plan and for valuable feedback which was incorporated.

**What's the outlook for the 2025-27 Budget?** It's been nearly 10 years since ODFW asked the Legislature for a fee increase. The cost of doing business has gone up due to inflation and the increasing complexity of fish and wildlife management in the face of a changing climate, meeting ESA listed species requirements, increasing development and water use demands, renewable energy needs, and other landscape-scale impacts.

The agency proposed budget (ARB) that goes before the Legislature next year adjusts both recreational and commercial license fees. Recreational fees will again be staggered over a six-year schedule starting with an approximately 12 percent increase in 2026. The ARB maintains the current Wildlife Division level of service without adding more program, except for increased CWD surveillance. In response to feedback from OHA, the ARB keeps cougar, bear and turkey tag fees flat. Youth licenses remain \$10 and Pioneer licenses will also be \$10 under the proposal. Overall, the agency has received public support for the fee adjustment including from OHA.

Long term diversification and stabilization of agency funding will be a high priority for the agency during the 2025 legislative session. The burden of funding fish and wildlife management needs to be shared.

**Why is CWD such a concern?** With detections in California and Idaho, CWD is close now. Effects of this slow-burn disease often don't appear for decades and by then it's too late. Once it hits a certain prevalence, survival rates are reduced, meaning fewer deer and elk and fewer mature bucks and bulls. Early detection is our best and only chance to slow its spread and limit impacts. Partnerships with taxidermists and meat processors and drop bins at offices have made it easy for hunters to submit a sample. We thank OHA for leading the charge to raise awareness and help secure funding for surveillance.

**You have said species resiliency is a high priority for you, can you talk about that?** Climate change and development is impacting the ability of habitat to support species. Fragmentation from more homes, buildings, roads and solar farms is a huge threat to wildlife. Good habitat is the first line of defense and our focus will be protecting or restoring habitats that species need to persist and thrive. I'm really proud of all of our work in mapping habitat for 54 species using geospatial data and identifying the priority connectivity areas to protect as they will provide maximum benefit for the most species. We appreciate OHA being on the front lines of this effort by supporting connectivity projects including highway overpasses and for the habitat restoration work OHA members do.

**Anything closing words, Debbie?** I just want to thank hunters and anglers for showing up for conservation. Whether attending a meeting about a land use decision, putting up wildlife -friendly fences, cutting juniper, or planting native forage, OHA members are always showing up for wildlife. Hunting and conservation go hand and hand. Growing up in a big outdoorsy family, I also know how hunting connects people to each other through shared experiences at elk camp or in the duck blind. Thank you to all OHA members for showing up for wildlife and sustaining the culture of hunting in Oregon.



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**3RD PRIZE:** Leupold Scope

**4TH PRIZE:** Danner Alesa Hunting Boots

**5TH PRIZE:** Benchmade Altitude Hunting Knife

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

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

### ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

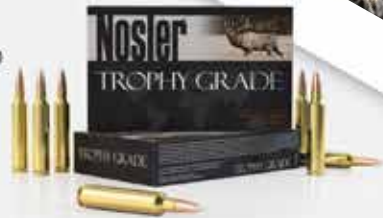
Go to **OHA's website at [www.oregonhunters.org](http://www.oregonhunters.org)** Click on **OHA CONTESTS**. Read the rules, and fill in the required fields. Click **CHOOSE FILE** and attach your photo. Click **SUBMIT**. That's it! You will be entered for a chance to win more great prizes courtesy of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

### PHOTO CATEGORIES

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

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

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year



**ENTERING IS EASY  
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# NOSLER<sup>®</sup> PHOTO CONTEST

## GENERAL CATEGORY FINALISTS

OHA member Levi Hutchins is a finalist in the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and wins an OHA Coast knife for his photo of a Lake County pronghorn.



Hayden Miles, an OHA member from Florence, captures a spot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his blacktail buck from a hunt he says "I won't soon forget."

# NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

## YOUTH CATEGORY FINALISTS



Umatilla OHA member Jasper Baker earns a spot in the finals of the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his photo of duck blind buddy and daughter Audrey with a Umatilla County banded mallard drake.

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**REMEMBER,  
IF A YOUTH'S HUNT  
REQUIRES HUNTER  
ORANGE, IT MUST  
BE SHOWING IN  
THE PHOTO**



OHA member Chris Schnider of Junction City is a finalist in the 2024 Nosler Photo Contest and wins an OHA Coast knife for this photo of Lucas and his Steens Mountain pronghorn.

ROGUE VALLEY SUNRISE/TERI DUNGANNON

# NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

## HONORABLE MENTION



OHA member James Shannon snags Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of Bryan Shannon and an Oregon bull elk.



OHA member J.D. Peterson was in the right place at the right time. While turkey hunting in the Wenaha Unit, he photographed this mountain goat, earning Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat.



OHA member Dylan Wheeler from Culver earns Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of a Whitehorse Unit pronghorn.



Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat belong to OHA member Jen Strohmaier for her photo of a Steens Mountain bighorn.

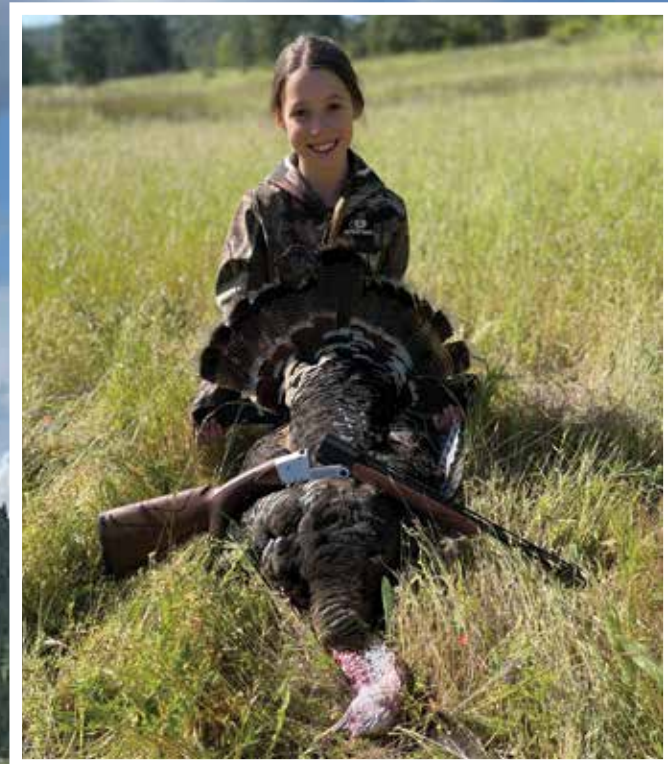
BRIDGE CREEK WILDLIFE AREA/TYLER DUNGANNON



Turner resident and OHA member Chad Privratsky wins a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for his photo of son Devin and his first bear taken in the Santiam Unit.



Douglas Hopper, OHA member in La Grande, captures Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for this photo of a mule deer taken on an Idaho hunt with his son Craig last October.



OHA member Jacob Perdue from Central Point wins a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for this shot of Baylee, her .410 shotgun, and a turkey from a mentored hunt this past spring.



OHA member Greg Foster of Vancouver, Wash., grabs a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for his photo of his son and son-in-law with a mixed bag of Klamath ducks and geese.

# PARTING SHOTS

BY UNCLE GEDDY

## Lawyers, Huns & Money

A pudelpointer and a toy poodle team up to snatch a trophy from the jaws of defeat.

They were the best of times (it was a banner year for chukar) and the worst of times (high gas prices). I was driving north to hunt chukar with a couple of friends when a familiar song came on the radio and I listened again to the words.

*I went home with a shorthair the way I always do;  
How was I to know, she was with Cabela's too?*

Isn't that the way? You get a dog and there is always something else you need to buy for it. A shotgun. A GPS collar. Arugula.

*I was rolling thru Juntura, I took a lil risk;  
Send lawyers, Huns and money. Dad, get me out of this.*

Well, I knew what that song was about. Sometimes you get deep in the backcountry and you've got a couple of friends along and there are no birds.

*I'm just a travelin' bird hunter,  
And somehow I got my truck  
Between the rock and the hard place  
And I'm down on my luck.*



I guess the late Warren Zevon was a bird hunter, too.

That verse reminded me of the time I wedged my 4Runner on a two-track hunting grouse in the Cascades and I had to get it off high-center. I had to rock it, and all I had was Johnny Cash in the tape deck.

That's what we want when we can't find chukar. We want something to save the day. Like Huns. Or maybe a couple pigeons. And you can keep the lawyer unless he is bringing the gas money.

On this trip we were, besides me and my pudelpointer Liesl, an airline pilot (40 years old) and a used car salesman (32 years old) and a toy poodle named Bob. Only two of us knew what a chukar looked like. The pilot and the used car salesman had all the enthusiasm of youth. And Bob had all the enthusiasm of a toy poodle that has finally found his calling.

We kept bumping into the chukar like bumbling didgeridoo musicians and making them skitterier and skitterier until finally we outfoxed them and fumbled our shots like old pros.

It was a time to pause and reflect and feel what the mountain was trying to tell us. The mountain was trying to tell me I am too old for this. But sometimes the mountain is wrong, I reminded myself, like when it told me north was this way, not that way like happened on a mountain in the Malheur. Or when, chukar hunting in the Steens, the mountain told me we had parked the camo 4-wheeler at the bottom of this canyon, not that one.

Then I had a feeling. The mountain told me we were going to



Pilot Dastardly Dustin Williams, Liesl the pudelpointer and Bob conspired to stop that pigeon on a windswept ridgetop outside of Tygh Valley.

find an antler. A mule deer antler. And I told the guys so.

"Hey, we're going to find an antler. Keep your eyes peeled."

And I told my pudelpointer we were going to find an antler, and she just shrugged. She likes antlers, but not as much as she likes chukar. It wasn't 10 minutes later, I spied it. Last year's drop was lying alongside the trail, a very nice 4-point shed with a gnarly eye-guard. Liesl ran right by it, and Bob recognized it for the trophy it was. And I claimed it because I had foreknowledge. I would have let the pilot have it if it had been a forked horn.

Whenever there is a lack of chukar, I hope to bump into a Hungarian partridge to save the day. Of course, the Hungarian partridge is never by itself. The Hun is in fact a gregarious bird, every bit as sporting as the chukar and likely to be in a covey of 7 to 10, usually with a hawk in attendance.

We drove west out of Grass Valley to Tygh Valley and another series of cliffs and canyons where the used car salesman had seen birds that might have been chukar, and we parked right on top and walked around and wore ourselves out and scared a big wolfy coyote that had been hanging out under the rim.

Still humming the song, I thought this would be a good time to bump into a covey of Huns.

*Now I'm hunting in Tygh Valley,  
I'm a desperate man;  
Send lawyers, Huns and money  
The (shtuff) has hit the fan.*



That's when it happened.

The coyote must have been eating his way through a flock of pigeons when we interrupted him, because there was only one left.

A glorious meaty pigeon came out big and bouncy from under the rim and floated up into the wind, and beat its wings hard but wasn't getting an advantage against a 20-mph gust when I told the pilot, "Stop that pigeon!" And the pilot shot it down. My hotshot pudelpointer, who would not pick up an antler, flashed out and snatched up the pigeon and brought it back to the pilot and laid it at his feet, as if to say, "That's what a chukar looks like, dude."

We adjourned to the Rainbow Tavern in Maupin, where we all ate burgers and patted ourselves on the back.

That's as good a chukar hunt as you can ask for unless your dad can send a couple of lawyers, some gas money and a crateful of pen-raised Huns.



*Dedicated to the memory of a very brown dog. To contact the author, visit [www.GaryLewisOutdoors.com](http://www.GaryLewisOutdoors.com)*



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