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CONTENTS

VOL. 43, NO. 2



10

OREGON AFIELD

Best bets for SW spring bear & sage rats, and antelope hunts to avoid



16

TRADITIONS & BOWHUNTING

Traditional archery and trapping both can open doors for Oregon hunters



18

RITE of SPRING

A return to hunt spring bear in Hells Canyon with a young hunter to share it



24

PHOTO ESSAY: TAKE BETTER SHOTS

Some of your most memorable shots aren't taken with a gun or bow



28

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS

Reserve your spot now to hunt turkey on some of Oregon's best private parcels



42

OHA NEWS & VIEWS

OHA set to help build and maintain Oregon's first wildlife overpass on Interstate 5

FEATURES

18 Rite of Spring

By Kevin Farron

The author returns to hunt spring bear in Hells Canyon with a young hunter.

24 Photo Essay: Take Better Shots

By Chad Dotson

Focus on how you want to remember your hunting adventure.

28 Reservations for Turkey Dinner

By Brandon Dyches

Reserve your free spot now on some outstanding private parcels in Oregon.

36 North Bank Going South?

Compiled by OHA staff

Purchased to help delist whitetails, the area holds fewer deer than 25 years ago.

OREGON AFIELD

10 SPRING BEAR: So you drew a SW tag. Where you gonna hunt?

10 PRONGHORN: Avoid these awful Oregon antelope hunts.

11 SQUIRRELS GONE WILD! What to know and where to go.

DEPARTMENTS

6 FINDING DIRECTION

Expanding Our Hunting Horizons

8 OREGON HUNTING QUIZ

Know Oregon? Win a Work Sharp!

8 HUNTING CALENDAR

Buy that spring bear tag by March 31

12 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

OHA takes aim at gun control bills

14 TRADITIONS

Trapping opens doors to hunters

16 BOWHUNTING

Traditional archery offers unique hunts

42 OHA NEWS & VIEWS

OHA funds Blue Mountains projects

44 OHA CHAPTER NEWS

You're invited to an OHA banquet soon!

50 TRAIL CAM CONTEST

Enter to win a prize from Tactacam

52 FIELD TO TABLE

Spice it up with bear meatballs

54 SHARING THE HERITAGE

Fathers & daughters form bonds afield

56 ASK ODFW

Changes coming for mule deer tags

57 NOSLER PHOTO CONTEST

Your best shot could win a Nosler rifle!

62 PARTING SHOTS

Advanced Bear Hunter Math

Cover: Black bear photographed by OHA member Jeff Rich

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FINDING DIRECTION

BY MIKE TOTEY, OHA CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

Expanding our horizon and our hunting opportunities

In Oregon we are fortunate to have a multitude of game species that we can pursue. Big game, waterfowl and upland birds provide opportunities in every corner of our state. We can hunt on the coast, or in the high desert, or in the Cascades. We are truly blessed.

In OHA, we see even more opportunities that we could have with some added work and emphasis. We have a number of species with very limited opportunity and seasons. Species like Columbian white-tailed deer in western Oregon, brant along the coast, and sage grouse in the sagebrush are all “hunnable” now, but could really be improved. Other game species have no hunting opportunity at all. Some of this is because historic populations have declined. Others are on the edge of their natural range of distribution or have limited population numbers. And yet others are simply not hunted because of the social and political pressures at work in our state.

At the September Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, OHA staff highlighted one of those. Moose are found in the northeast part of our state. While they don’t get much attention, and few people have seen them, OHA would like to change that. As an example, Nevada has now authorized a new hunt for moose in their state, and it’s proven to be an immensely popular opportunity that hunters covet. Over 20,000 applications were received for just two tags. This shows us what a promising opportunity this could be here in Oregon.

Many of the game species that are limited in numbers are included in the State Wildlife Action Plan (formerly Oregon Conservation Strategy) – a key statewide planning document that addresses key conservation areas and habitat needs for a broad list of species found in Oregon that could use some help. The plan identifies 294 total “Strategy Species,” which are Oregon’s “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.” Strategy Species are defined as having small or declining populations, are at risk, and/or are of management concern.

Species like Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, black brant, Columbian white-tailed deer, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep are just a few of the game species identified in the strategy. The conservation strategy is currently being updated, and OHA has been invited to lend our perspective on the update.

It’s likely that a number of these different species will never be abundant enough to have a general hunting season, but strong conservation work focused on the habitat needs and population management of many of these species could improve the situation to afford new hunting opportunities for some of them, and increased opportunities for some that already exist.

We have species with very limited opportunity and seasons, and others with no hunting opportunity at all.



OREGON HUNTER

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WORK SHARP OREGON HUNTING QUIZ

HELPING SHARP OREGON HUNTERS HOLD THEIR EDGE

KNOW OREGON? WIN A WORK SHARP!

1. Which of these ducks is the smallest?

- a) mallard
- b) teal
- c) canvasback
- d) pintail

2. The Pueblo Mountains are in what corner of Oregon?

- a) northwest
- b) southwest
- c) northeast
- d) southeast

3. Which of these critters is fastest by far:

- a) ducks
- b) beavers
- c) cougars
- d) bruins

4. Which of these is the least harvested?

- a) turkey
- b) blue grouse
- c) ruffed grouse
- d) valley quail

5. Which spring bear hunt is on the coast?

- a) Wenaha
- b) Lookout Mt.
- c) Wilson-Trask
- d) Minam-Imnaha

6. Bears are most abundant in what corner of Oregon?

- a) northwest
- b) southwest
- c) northeast
- d) southeast

7. Which bay is not on the coast?

- a) Netarts
- b) Shoalwater
- c) Yaquina
- d) Haynes Inlet

8. Rocky Mountain bighorns dwell where?

- a) Snake River
- b) Owyhee
- c) Hart Mountain
- d) Steens Mountain

9. Deer are most likely to shed their antlers on which day?

- a) New Year's Day
- b) Valentine's Day
- c) April Fool's Day
- d) Income Tax Day

10. Which could you hunt on the Elkhorn Wildlife Area?

- a) mule deer
- b) Roosevelt elk
- c) blacktail
- d) Columbian whitetail



WHERE IN OREGON?

Identify this gorgeous gorge, be drawn from all correct entries, and win a Work Sharp Original Knife and Tool Sharpener! Some of you who guessed this gorge name in a recent issue and were wrong could be right this time. Send your guess to Oregon Hunting Quiz, OHA, P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501, or submit your guess at oregonhunters.org, where a larger version of the photo appears. One entry per OHA member.

ENTRY DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2025.



LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:

Rocky Morgan, Coquille

Rocky's name was drawn from among the OHA members who identified Diamond Lake in the heart of Cascade elk country.

OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

MARCH 6

Central Oregon Sports Show opens

MARCH 7

NW Hunt Expo opens in Hillsboro

MARCH 8

OHA Bend Chapter banquet, 541-480-9848

MARCH 14

Klamath Falls Sports Show opens

MARCH 16

OHA chapter banquets:

Capitol 503-990-2978

Union/Wallowa 541-786-1283

Yamhill County 503-490-2489

Rogue Valley 541-773-8736

MARCH 22

OHA Josephine County Chapter banquet, 541-761-1852

MARCH 31

Deadline to purchase spring bear tags

APRIL 1

Spring bear season opens

APRIL 5

OHA CHAPTER BANQUETS:

Baker 541-403-0402

Lake County 541-417-2983

Clatsop County 503-440-9934

Umpqua 541-430-7324

Tioga 541-294-7912

Mid-Willamette 541-971-3351

YOUTH TURKEY CLINICS:

White River 503-358-7821

Rogue Valley 541-857-2407

APRIL 12-13

Statewide youth spring turkey hunt

APRIL 15

Turkey season opens;

Harvest report deadline for late hunts

APRIL 26

OHA chapter banquets:

Klamath 541-891-3549

Curry 406-499-2234;

OHA Pioneer Chapter Spring Youth Day 503-936-4718

MAY 3

OHA Tillamook Chapter banquet

& A&H Statewide Elk Tag auction, 503-812-3832

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



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OREGON AFIELD

APPLGATE UNIT

SW Bear: Walk a Ridge Over

So you drew a Southwest Oregon spring bear tag, eh? Where ya gonna hunt, bunky?

According to ODFW data, the Applegate Unit has the highest total number of complaints about bears. We call that whine country.

But the units with the highest number of bears removed on damage complaints are the Sixes, followed by the McKenzie. Keep in mind that the most damage reports come from places where more people live and where timber damage mitigation occurs.

Statistics show the highest hunter effort in the 722A SW spring bear hunt is in the Siuslaw Unit. We wonder. Could it be because the Siuslaw is the closest game

management unit to population centers like Portland, Salem and Eugene?

We talked to Derek Broman, ODFW's game program manager, about the SW Spring Bear hunt. Broman is aware of the higher hunter effort in the Siuslaw WMU which is on the northern side of the hunt area. He reports the current harvest is not having a negative impact on the bear population in that area and hunter effort and success rates are also relatively good.

Broman suggests hunters get away from pressured units like the Siuslaw and Tioga.

"Focus on the more southerly coast units or in the Cascades." Broman recommends the Rogue, Applegate and the NE portion of the Chetco for good numbers of bear and fewer hunters.

"A lot of people think they need to glass far off canyons," Broman said, "when many successful hunters will walk along decommissioned roads to good bear habitat and then just sit. As long as they play the wind right, a bear could walk 20 yards in front of them, usually travelling the old road."

So where you gonna hunt? Let's remember what we are told about bear concentrations; they are highest closest to the breakers and the Bear Flag State. This is borne out by harvest success in 2023:



BEAR TRACKS ON THE BEACH/JENNIFER LEWIS

Far SW Oregon is tops for fall bears, but more spring bruins are taken in the Siuslaw Unit.

Chetco (82 percent public lands) boasts the best harvest numbers with 34 percent success and the Sixes at 24 percent. Those are good numbers, people.

—GARY LEWIS



BRYCE PURTZER

Pronghorn hunts like the E. Interstate, where most of the public land is timbered, can both challenge and reward a hunter toting a tag.

Avoid Oregon's awful antelope hunts

Any day in sagebrush country with an antelope tag in your pocket (or on your phone) beats work. But there are some brutal hunts to be aware (or beware) of that can rob you of your precious pronghorn points and leave you meatless and pointless. Here's the short list.

Surely the world's worst archery hunt is E. Slope (477R). In 2021, 14 archers spent 55 days in the Fort Rock Unit without luck. Five hunters spent 22 days in 2022 for zero percent success. In 2023, the most recent year of published stats, five hunters spent thirty-five collective days with zero success. I don't recommend hunting near Diamond Lake Junction or Crater Lake National Park. That's a joke, of course, just like the hunt. Just don't. The Gerber Reservoir (475R2) hunt is double tough, too, but at least you see animals.

There are several rifle hunt candidates, but E. Interstate (275A) is right up there. While it maintained over 50-percent suc-

cess from 2021-23, most of the critters are on private land or public land timber. You must really sell out, particularly scouting and map study. Get out your black book and be ready to make calls and knock on doors.

Paulina (435M) is an awful tough muzzleloader hunt. ODFW will draw six tags this season and there were only 58 first-choice applicants in 2024. The unit is also 76-percent public land. Unfortunately, very few antelope were taken in the last three seasons. One doe and one buck were taken by smoke-pole in 2023. None were taken in 2022 despite hunters spending about 5 days each in the field. One buck was taken in 2021 when 7 muzzy hunters spent over 5 days each amongst them. Granted, you'll have less competition.

Visit MyODFW.com and check out the big game harvest statistics. The numbers don't lie, but remember, you only need one antelope. —JASON HALEY

Squirrels Gone Wild

Over the years a number of farmers have written to headquarters to ask for guidance on how to control ground squirrels on their fields. Since both of them are longtime OHA members, we can hardly afford to ignore them, so I tasked our interns with doing a rigorous internet research, which produced numerous solutions that the interns grouped according to the following types:

1. Ultrasonic solar animal repellents
2. Squirrel deterrent balls for garden
3. Squirrel repellent powder
4. Ground squirrel bait station + pellets
5. Giant destroyer super gasser for ground rodents, 4 bombs per pack
6. Critter getter wooden box trap

When I asked the interns to calculate the cost of each pest control solution on 1,000 acres of eastern Oregon farmland, one broke a nail and the other had to drive her to the salon for mitigation (her word). So we won't show our calculations, but suffice to say, it is still cheaper for farmers to allow shooters onto their property to control varmints at their own expense.

Imagine you are a farmer somewhere south or east of Bly, Bend and Burns with 1,000 acres of alfalfa in production, expensive irrigation systems and 20,000 squirrels living under said alfalfa, each equipped to destroy 14.55 pounds of alfalfa per season. Now imagine you're the feller with a scoped small bore rimfire and a brick of ammo that shows up and wants to shoot sage rats on a Monday in May. That sounds like good business. If you're a guy that can shoot. Which says to me the thinking hunter packs around a target for the last session at the range. If you can put five shots in a target the size of a squirrel's head at 75 yards, you're in.

Establish relationships with landowners before the hunt. Land managers may allow a traveling hunter a place to shoot, but permission should be obtained weeks in advance. Well-traveled highways carry the most hunters, and access might be easier to find away from main roads. Hang around a coffee shop in Christmas Valley. Tip generously at the restaurant. Stop at a feed store in Lakeview. Win friends and influence farmers. —UNCLE GEDDY



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According to the OSU Extension Service, 45 percent of the first harvest may be lost to ground squirrels. That's where hunters come in.

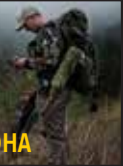
Most crop damage occurs before the first harvest, which takes place at the end of May.

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OHA takes aim at gun bills

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

As the 2025 legislative session begins, it is shaping up to be heavily focused on firearms. At the time of this writing, OHA is tracking 20 bills related to firearms ownership, with more expected over the coming weeks.

A few of the bigger bills, so far:

HB 3075 - Measure 114 return. This bill was killed by the Senate Republican walkout in 2023. The bill brings all of the components of Measure 114: the permit-to-purchase scheme, the registration of permits, the mandatory training course to qualify for a permit, a waiting period, and other added restrictions, including a stipulation that any legal challenge to the legislation can only be filed in Marion County.

HB 3076 - Gun Dealer Licenses study bill. Currently worded as a study bill, but thanks to a press release by the anti-firearms groups, we know that this bill is intended to be a vehicle for greater restrictions on firearms dealers.

SB 429 - 72 Hour Wait Time. This bill requires a background check to be completed, approval number returned to the gun dealer, and a 72-hour wait time before a firearm can be transferred.

SB 697 - Age Restriction for Firearms Ownership. Restricts firearms ownership below the age of 21.

SB 698 - Restricts Concealed Carry. Enables public buildings to limit the affirmative defense of concealed carry.

While many of these bills would be litigated should they pass, the fight to protect firearm ownership rights and mitigate the impacts to our hunting and sport shooting activities will be ongoing for the next six months of the legislative session.

Measure 114 continues to be on hold during the litigation process. The next ruling is due back at any time from the Oregon Court of Appeals as to whether it will continue to uphold the Harney County ruling that the measure's components are unconstitutional.

To donate to OHA's Victory Fund, visit:
<https://oregonhunters.org/donate>

ODF director resigns amid agency turmoil

Cal Mukumoto, State Forester and ODF Director, has announced his resignation. ODF has been stressed lately with an unprecedented wildfire season in 2024, a contentious planning effort for the more than 700,000 acres of state forests in western Oregon, and ongoing negotiations and work to implement the Private Forest Accord, which addresses management on private forestlands.

Kate Skinner will serve as the interim State Forester during the search to fill the position permanently. Skinner has been with ODF since 1995 and has served as district forester for the Tillamook District since 2014. She has been supporting the organization as the interim Deputy State Forester since August 2024.

—MIKE TOTEY

IP28 nets 34,000 signatures, \$10k from PETA

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

Initiative Petition 28 (IP28) is the latest iteration of the egregious initiative seeking to criminalize killing an animal in Oregon for any reason other than self defense.

This petition, previously known as IP13 and IP3, would make it illegal to hunt, fish, trap mice or gophers, teach using animals, raise and slaughter animals for food, and breed animals.

Since the initiative first came to Oregon in 2021 with the intent of making the 2022

ballot, it has not received attention or support from any major national animal-rights organizations.

That changed when they received a \$10,000 contribution from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). This development signals a major shift in support for such an outlandish idea and should concern everyone monitoring the initiative.

As of this writing, the initiative has gathered more than 34,000 signatures since it was approved to begin collection for the 2026 ballot in July. This is the largest num-

ber of signatures raised in the history of the initiative and is predominantly due to their ability to use paid signature gatherers. The PETA donation ensures that they will be able to continue paying signature gatherers on their way to the 117,000 signature threshold to gain the ballot.

OHA works with two opposition coalitions, one sportsmen's-focused and one focused on farming and ranching organizations. Our work to educate Oregonians to the detrimental effects of IP28 will continue in earnest.

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!



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.



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.

Oregon Hunters Association Special Funds Donations

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

Trapping can open doors for Oregon hunters

Long ago there was a farm pond that mallards stacked up in by the hundreds. I had been asking the farmer who owned it for permission to hunt it for several years. He was friendly, but always said, “Well maybe not now, but ask me again later.” And later I did, with much the same response. But finally he gave me the go ahead for one day.

I had a good duck shoot, but also noticed something that turned out to be very important. I saw that his earth dam had several nutria holes in it. When I mentioned that to the farmer he remarked he had been trying to shoot them without much success. At that point I offered to trap them. A quick handshake deal was done. Part of the deal was I was able to hunt the pond on a regular basis. Not only did I shoot a lot of mallards, I trapped the nutria along with otter, raccoons, and mink. The farmer passed away years ago, but remarkably I am still allowed to duck hunt there by his grandson, even if it has been years since I trapped the pond.

Along the same vein as trading trapping for hunting permission was the large ranch in eastern Oregon. The number of valley quail, pheasants, and chukars on that ranch needed to be seen to be believed in some years. Valley quail frequently combine groups during the winter, and a flush of over 100 quail is not uncommon. I once took a friend from Virginia to the ranch. Bill was an old bobwhite hunter dating back to when bobwhites were still found in Virginia in good numbers. I knew where a large covey of valley quail was likely to be, and on the first morning took Bill there. Our Labs started getting birdy and I warned Bill to get ready. He was totally unprepared when the surrounding sage brush erupted with birds. Certainly well over 100. He dropped one, but just stood looking at me in amazement.

The rancher by and large only allowed friends and relatives to hunt the ranch. He did allow my wife and I to hunt there a couple times a year for a reasonable fee. That situation changed when he started having problems with beavers. They were building dams in his irrigation canals and falling large cottonwood trees along a creek. When I mentioned the problems, he told me that the county

trapper was spread thin due to the many places he needed to trap and only got to the ranch infrequently. So I raised and waved my hand quickly like a kid in the back of the classroom who knew the answer to a question and offered to do the trapping.

Another handshake closed a very good deal. In exchange for trapping, my wife and I could hunt the ranch more than just a few times a year, and without payment. My schedule wasn't the most ideal for trapping. The ranch was almost 300 miles from our home. I would arrive with my truck and camper in the early evening. The next day I would spend the morning setting traps, then hunt in the afternoon.

On the second morning we would hunt, and I would check the traps in the afternoon. The next morning would be the same program. On the final day I would pull the traps and we would drive home. That meant the traps were only set for three nights, giving me limited success. But I managed to catch enough beavers to show results, and took a few mink and raccoons in the process. After a couple of years I managed to eliminate almost all of the beaver problems.

Then there was the beaver for goose hunting exchange. Until recently my wife and I lived on a small farm in the Willamette Valley. We were there for 31 years. The Valley winters tens of thousands of Canada geese. The region

around our farm had multiple fields that the geese favored, and there was stiff competition between hunters to shoot the better fields.

Lucky for me, there were three farms with prime goose fields that also had large hazelnut groves. Beavers love hazelnut trees, and at times the number of those trees they chew down look like a logger has been at work in the grove. I made deals to trap the beavers in exchange for sole permission to shoot the goose fields. The results couldn't have been better. On my top year I trapped 41 beaver and 19 came from the three farms. My wife and I shot a bunch of geese, year after year.

All the deals I have mentioned were much better than simply win-win!



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Sometimes the way to gain permission to hunt ducks on a farmer's pond is to offer to trap the furbearers killing his trees and putting holes in his dam.



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BOWHUNTING

By JIM AKENSON

Traditional bow hunts offer unique experiences

Bowhunting in Oregon has some deep roots, and for me it spans 55 years in Oregon and Idaho. Oregon has the second-oldest archery season in the United States, dating back to 1935 in the old Canyon Creek Area near John Day. At that time, all bows were “traditional” by today’s definition, as they were either self-bows, longbows or recurve bows. The modern compound bow has taken archery efficiency to a new level, which has brought about a fitting comparison that, “traditional archery is to modern archery as muzzleloaders are to modern rifles.” In other words, the killing efficiency range of a traditional bow is about half that for a compound. Like with specific muzzleloader hunts in Oregon, ODFW has recently allowed bowhunters using traditional bows to have some unique and exciting new opportunities.

In more modern times, specific traditional bow hunts have occurred starting with the Canyon Creek archery area in the 1990s. The old 35-square-mile Canyon Creek area was within the Murderers Creek Unit, and until recent years was traditional bow only for deer and elk the first week of the September season. Unfortunately, the Canyon Creek hunt was discontinued a handful of years ago. However, in recent years, a few more traditional hunts have been added and the total is now up to five – two deer and three elk.

On the calendar, the first traditional buck deer bow hunt is the Trout Creek Mountains area. This is a September hunt,



BUCK DAVIS

The author took this Melrose buck during a late archery hunt using a Liberty longbow.

and last year 110 tags were offered in this high desert region. There’s a newer traditional blacktail deer hunt in southwest Oregon in the Powers Unit. This is an over-the-counter general late tag, which starts one week earlier than some other western Oregon archery unit hunts.

For elk, there are three hunts to consider. Probably the most popular is the North Fork Traditional bow tag, which includes three full units (Ukiah, Desolation and Sumpter) and allows a bowhunter an additional five days into early October for a bull elk. This can be especially useful given recent fire closures in September. This hunt has 110 tags available, and hunters have a decent chance of drawing as a second choice.

Another September controlled bull elk tag is the Eagle Cap Traditional Bow, hunt which offers 200 tags. The advantage of this tag is that it has been a guaranteed draw for residents and allows the bowhunter to hunt a larger zone of five units (Catherine Creek, Minam, Imnaha, Pine Creek and Keating).

The final traditional bow elk hunt is the Santiam Unit, which is a shorter five-day hunt, extending into October, which allows any elk on non-USFS lands and is bull-only on the National Forest. The additional advantage of the Santiam traditional hunt is that you can also hunt the general archery elk season.

My recent bowhunting has included hunting the new Powers traditional bow area for blacktail deer. Since this traditional hunt only requires a general season tag, I still have the option to hunt my old favorite Melrose general archery unit. Regardless,

I hunt with a recurve and/or a longbow wherever I bow hunt. I do have friends who cross over between compounds and traditional bows. For them, applying for a traditional bow tag on a second or third choice helps assure that they have some opportunity come archery season.

Traditional bow offers greater challenge with limited range and no let-off for string tension holding. Traditional bowhunters simply

are less successful than compound hunters, which equates to lower harvest on the hunted resource. Therefore, it seems likely that opportunities will increase for stick-and-string users looking into the future.

The Traditional Archers of Oregon (TAO), and with OHA support, have been advocates for these expanded opportunities that benefit all bowhunters in our state.

As a side note, a traditional bow with a full arrow quiver weighs about half that of a compound bow, and because we spend 98 percent of our time carrying the bow, maybe that makes up for the lack of range and ease of holding at full draw.

Traditional bowhunters simply are less successful than compound hunters, which equates to lower harvest on the hunted resource.

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RITE OF SPRING

“Can’t you hunt black bears like 10 minutes from your house?” my friend asked, semi-perplexed. “Why are you driving all the way to Oregon and paying for an out-of-state tag?”

“Fair question,” I smiled. “And yes. I can. But please, don’t point that out to my wife.”

My desire to hunt black bears in a draw unit two states away had little to do with hunting black bears. I’m drawn to the challenge and solitude found in the deepest river gorge in North America. It’d been nine years since I’d last been there, which was long enough for me to forget the pain and discomfort, but the rewards from hunting the grueling country of the Hells Canyon Wilderness were still palpable. I needed to get back.

• • •

Three of us jetboated into our camp along a swelled Snake River. We were hoping to catch bears riding the green wave of forage as winter gave way to spring at ascending elevations.

Karl Findling, the AARP-eligible hunter in our group and a former OHA State Board member, was a big reason we were here. He introduced me to the addictive challenge of backcountry hunting, and gave me my

first exposure to Hells Canyon – a weeklong archery elk hunt in 2015, back when I was still an Oregon resident. Karl’s enthusiasm for hunting is contagious, and he makes it a point to welcome new hunters to the sport. He did this with me, a friend, and now I was watching him do this for his nephew, Owen, who was joining us for his very first bear hunt. I was no longer the newbie, but fully prepared to be humbled by the canyon once again.

As we climbed the canyon, the scenery simultaneously dropped our jaws and raised our chins. By then, in early May, the tidal line of fresh grass and forbs was much higher than we envisioned, about 3,000 feet above our camp, making for some long, punishing days. My tracker says we did 10-13 miles four of the five days, climbing (then dropping) between 3,000-4,000 feet daily. It’s hard to say if the uphill scrambles or the shaky leg descents were more challenging.

• • •

During the first afternoon lull, I asked Owen about his effective range. “So, say there was a bear in that parallel ridge,” I said pointing across the canyon. “Would you be able to shoot him?”

He scrunched his face and thought. “How far is it?”

I pulled out my range finder. “Three-fifty,” I told him.

“That’s probably too far,” he sheepishly responded. “I was only able to practice out to 200 yards, so anything more than that I’m not really comfortable.”

After 10 years, the author returns to Hells Canyon with a young hunter to share in its wonder.

**STORY & PHOTOS BY
KEVIN FARRON**



**Owen, all smiles, with his first bear, a hard-earned wilderness bruin.
Photo by Karl Findling**



Tucked out of the wind, hunter Owen glasses for bears with a rainbow signaling good luck.

I nodded in silence. I respected Owen for being honest about his range time and corresponding comfort level, but as I looked at the country we were in, my confidence in our ability to get him his first bear dwindled. In Hells Canyon, seeing a bear and killing a bear are two completely different things, and his self-imposed limit widened that gap even more. This isn't gonna be easy, I thought.

Hours later, my eyes wandered up the drainage. A blond bear was feeding in a clearing near a patch of ponderosas and Douglas firs. "Bear." I exclaimed with audible confidence, and muted glee.

"Where?" Owen asked. "Is it a shooter?"

"It's out in the open, no cubs." I said calmly as I looked through my binoculars. "Doesn't appear to be a monster, but it doesn't look tiny either. It's a shooter in my book."

We took our time sizing up the bear and getting some phone footage through the spotter. I acted like we had all the time in the world. Most feeding bears I've encountered stay put; I didn't see the urgency. Owen, who was first up, was less patient, understandably so.

By the time we packed up and moved, the bear was nearly 1,000 yards above us, and lumbering higher. We were never able to catch up. It climbed faster than we could, ducked out of sight in the timber, and we never laid eyes on it again.

Humbled by the terrain and the effortless speed at which the bear disappeared, we sat and glassed and wondered aloud how long the descent down to our camp would take, and if the longer creek bottom route with an unknown number of crossings – where Karl was – or the ridge we hiked up would be more challenging. Neither was appealing. We stuck with the devil we knew, and headed back down the steep ridge.

Hiking down, we could see an impressive but incalculable number of the 216,981 acres that make up the Hells Canyon Wilderness. The Idaho side of the Snake River looked just as rugged, though 61 percent of the wild lands designated in 1975 are on the side we were hunting. Outside of the river, motorized use isn't allowed in the Wilderness, a great equalizer for hunters and the hunted alike. Protected from development forever, these lands provide habitat for wildlife, sustainable recreational business for river and hunting outfitters, and countless opportunities to humble anyone willing to strap on a pair of boots and venture into the aptly named canyon.

• • •

The morning of day two, we all felt it.

"You boys have a good hunt today," Karl said before our coffee was even ready. "I'm gonna sit this one out and rest."

Looking up at the moonlit canyon walls above us, crawling back into my sleeping bag sure sounded good to me at the time, too. Nah, I can take a nap on the mountain. But I really didn't want to climb that steep rocky face again.

"Owen, let's take the creek this time," I suggested.

"Sounds good," he responded eagerly.

Perhaps it's the young father in me, maybe it's a progression that every hunter goes through, but the only thing better than me experiencing this wild country again for myself was watching Owen get to live it for the first time. The polish of the canyon had worn off a bit for me. The plants were thornier and the hillsides steeper than I remembered. My legs and back hurt more, too. Owen didn't seem to notice. He was wide-eyed, his attitude positive. On multiple occasions he let out an audible "whoa." I smiled each time he did. I know the feeling, kid.

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The creek was raging. It was just wide, deep and fast enough to prevent us from jumping or rock hopping across. And the narrow canyon trail was primarily used by horses; there were no foot bridges. Our only option was to throw on hip waders, hold on tight to our trekking poles and stumble across.

This wasn't a big deal for the first crossing. Or the second. But by the 20th ford in three miles, Owen and I were over it. "Now I see why Karl didn't recommend this approach," I said.

"Yeah, this sucks," Owen responded. "Though I'm still not sure what is worse: this or the ridge?"

It was clear that I had changed in the last decade, but the canyon had not.

As we stopped to put on waders yet again, so wet and covered in mud now from our boots that it was tempting to cross without them, I thought to myself that Karl sure picked an interesting place to take people on some of their first hunts. There's gotta be an easier way to hunt. Yet for how uncomfortable the canyon country can be, the challenge was addictive and quickly forgotten, while the little victories were immensely gratifying and memorable. I wondered how many times Karl had gone through this cycle of in-the-moment misery, followed by the endorphins that lasted years. Maybe he knew something I didn't know about how to hook a new hunter. Maybe I was proof.

...

Afternoon on day three, with all of us glassing together, Owen spotted a bear a half mile up the canyon, this one jet black. "Let's move," I said, not wanting complacency to get the best of us twice.

We hustled to get set up on the parallel ridge. 440 yards. Way too far. Owen and Karl backed out, climbed higher before cresting



Past OHA State Board member and conservation staffer Karl Findling packs out meat along a canyon trail in a labor of love.

out of view, dropped back down, crossed a creek and climbed once more to get well above the bear. Not needing all three of us to accomplish the stalk, I sat back and watched.

I had a front-row seat to a dramatic show starring the hunter and his uncle. They hugged a rimrock canyon above the bear, playing the uphill thermals perfectly. Seeing both the predator and the prey, I was filled with nervous anxiety. All I could do was watch. Suddenly, they froze.

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After spotting the bear at 440 yards, Owen stalked to under 100 for a clean, one-shot kill.

Karl stretched his arm out to point. Then Owen slowly took aim. Through my binoculars, I watched the single shot punch through the boar's chest, the exit hole emitting a lethal vapor.

I knew it was a dead bear, even before the echo of the gunshot reached me. The bear quickly spun, and tumbled to a stop.

The college student executed a textbook stalk ending with a 77-yard, one-shot kill. The kid did it!

...

As we hiked down that evening, hands bloody and packs heavy, we enjoyed yet another captivating sunset. I – for just a second – forgot about the day's aches and pains. The curved skylines went on for eternity. It was clear that I had changed in the last decade, but the canyon had not.

Watching Owen find hard-earned success that afternoon, along with the assurance that this wild place will remain untamed and unforgiving, ready to inject reverence and humility into anyone who accepts the challenge, made my decision to take a rest day the following day an easy one. I'd gotten what I'd come all this way for. And more.

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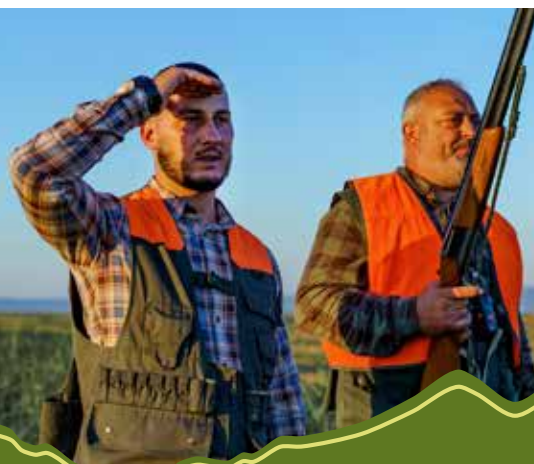
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STORY & PHOTOS BY CHAD DOTSON



Some of your most memorable shots aren't taken with a gun or bow.



These two photos of the same subject each create a different emphasis.



First and foremost, let me begin with this disclaimer: I am NOT a professional photographer, and this is NOT a technical article on the science and art of photography. There is a steadfast skill and a natural talent that accompanies most professional photographers. They dedicate their lives to studying their craft. Thousands of dollars are spent on equipment and travel, endlessly searching for the perfect shot. I

highly respect those who make a living by capturing incredible images.

Do my hunting and fishing photos look like they were taken by a professional? No, they do not, and I'm guessing most of yours don't, either. That said, I have found one secret that will instantly improve your field photography, and that is you must care enough to take the photo in the first place. Some say it was Wayne Gretzky, others give credit to Michael Jordan, but

both knew "you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take." The same mindset accompanies taking photos. A camera does no good if it stays buried in your backpack, and the extra money you spent on a cell phone with a good camera doesn't help you if you keep it in your pocket.

Prior to embarking on a trip, a professional photographer generally compiles a "shot list." Most of us won't take the time to write these down, but a little bit



Action always makes photos more compelling.



Close-ups win contests, but wider shots literally show the big picture.



Even if it's elk or birds you're hunting, you shouldn't pass up a shot like this one captured by the author in Wallowa County.



If it's the country that brings you back year after year, be sure to capture it.

of pre-thought can go a long way. Taking photos of your camp, rugged mountains, long hikes and beautiful streams all make for great subject matter. Above all else, in every setting, be sure to remember that the human element is the single most important subject matter you can capture. Because we aren't professionals, our rugged mountain shot likely won't get blown up and hung over the mantle, and truthfully, how many scenery shots can your friends and family bear to look at, anyway?

The people along for the adventure are what make the memories last. Classic group shots where everyone stands in front of the wall tent and says, "cheese" are great, but remember to also take candid action shots to help tell your story. Nothing tells a story like human emotion. Laughter after a funny joke, discomfort while hunkered under a tree waiting out a snowstorm or sweat rolling off the forehead of your

buddy who just summited the peak are all opportune moments to capture.

Another important trick is to remember diversity in your shots. Changing the eye angle to something different than what you normally perceive can add some artistic creativity, and with modern digital cameras and phones, you can hold the phone at any level and see what you're capturing instead of holding that old point-and-shoot over your eyeball. Think about what will define the shot. What are the nuances of the hunt that you will notice in the moment and want to remember forever?

The trophy field photo is generally where most people focus (pardon the pun) their hunting photography efforts. If this is the only photo you take the entire trip, here are a few tips to help you get it right. Remember, you are only here once, so make it count. I try to depict the animal I just had the good fortune of harvesting by show-



Glassing shots are easy to get, but with a lighting effect or a compelling angle, you can turn the image into something special.



ing it in the most respectful way possible. Clean the blood around the mouth and wound channel as best as you can. Tuck the tongue back in the mouth. Remove or cover any blood or gore around the animal or drag the animal away from a bloody scene. Like it or not, hunters are constantly judged by the non-hunting community. Be aware of the photos of your successful harvest prior to posting pictures to social media; are they photos that show respect to the animal that you can proudly use to re-live the moment? Or are they photos that will add fuel to the anti-hunting fire?

Taking the time to try and remove any grass, shrubs or obstructions directly in front of the animal can be very helpful. Look closely at the photos as you take them and enlarge them. How many times – especially in low light – have you had photos compromised by grass you didn't see with the naked eye?

I always try to avoid moving the camera closer to make the animal look bigger than it is. The animal is the same size as he was when you decided to pull the trigger. Also, it's disappointing to hear people say in person, "gosh, he sure looked bigger than that in the photo!"

Finally, I encourage folks to print photos. The digital world is amazing and taking hundreds of photos is a great way to make sure you get some great shots. That said, hundreds of photos do very little good if they are stuck in a file folder on your computer where no one ever sees them. My father has always done a great job of keeping photo albums from his hunting and fishing trips. I love to look back and see the adventures that his generation had.

Hunters have been story tellers since the dawn of time, when they drew petroglyphs. Use great photography to help tell your story well.



Interesting landmarks and light make for intriguing photos.



Great country, company and camaraderie all make your adventures memorable, so record those elements in your photos. An extra effect like sepia or black & white can make the image even more extraordinary.



Make Reservations for a Turkey Dinner



Author and program founder Brandon Dyches took this tom on one of the participating properties.

Private Land, Public Good:

An Insider's Perspective on ODFW's Hunt by Reservation Program

BY BRANDON DYCHES

Most of Oregon's turkeys are killed on private land. But getting access to private land is like asking a neighbor if you can borrow their shiny new truck for a Home Depot run. You approach with optimism, maybe a rehearsed pitch about how careful you'll be, only to get a polite but firm, "Yeah, no. Who are you?"

Many hunters avoid the hassle of permissions and stick to public land. Oregon's public lands offer lights-out turkey hunting, but can come with their own challenges: fussy crowds, long drives, and scattered birds. Success on public land is possible but hard-won.

This spring, consider Hunt by Reservation, which is one of Oregon's lesser-known gems for turkey hunting access. Because sometimes, it's easier to just rent that truck. Especially when it's free.

What is Hunt by Reservation?

ODFW launched Hunt by Reservation in 2018 to connect hunters with private landowners through a digital reservation system. Think Airbnb, but instead of a cozy rental with throw pillows, you get to hunt private property with strutting toms.

The program complements other ODFW initiatives like Welcome to Hunt and Hunt by Permission and offers more than 500 reservations annually across 15 properties, totaling over 4,500 acres of spring and fall hunting access. These opportunities span from Mt. Hood through the Willamette Valley to Clatskanie, providing hunting options for turkey, upland birds, waterfowl, and big game. Most reservations are one-day hunts.

Full disclosure: I created Hunt by Reservation and managed it for six years. What started as a scrappy pilot project with spreadsheets evolved into a streamlined digital platform. Though I left ODFW last May, the program remains strong under my teammates' leadership. With spring season approaching, here's an insider's take on why you should give it a try.



A Hunt by Reservation sign greets visitors at the Soap Creek Ranch, one of the participating properties in the ODFW program.

How to Get a Reservation

Securing a Hunt by Reservation spot is simple and, at this time, completely free. First, visit the Hunt by Reservation homepage (<https://myodfw.com/reserve-your-hunt>) to see available properties, hunt dates, and draw deadlines. The website explains step-by-step instructions, so I'll spare you the play by play. Then, enter a monthly lottery through ODFW's Electronic Licensing System (<https://odfw.huntfishoregon.com>). Draw odds hover between 20-30 percent, depending on your hunt choices. Not bad, but not a guarantee.

If you miss a lottery, you have a second chance with first-come, first-served bookings, which open after each lottery and when other hunters cancel. Cancellations are somewhat common – sick kids, soccer games, or Oregon's infamous rain. On average, 5-10 hunts are canceled each month. Savvy hunters watch the site and snag last-minute spots. I've seen people book a hunt the night before and tag a turkey the next morning.

What to Expect

Hunt by Reservation properties offer high-quality, fair-chase turkey hunting. I won't promise you'll bag a bird, but I can almost guarantee you'll hear or see one. Or lots of them. Six years of post-hunt surveys don't lie. Over 80 percent of hunters report bird encounters.

Spring harvest success rates align closely with unit averages. In 2023, hunters in the Alsea Unit took 0.12 birds per hunter day, while Hunt by Reservation properties logged 0.11. Fall hunts, however, are a different story. These properties consistently produce 2-3 times the unit average, a trend likely to increase with ODFW's new fall hen permits.

Once you secure a reservation, ODFW provides a permit and detailed maps in onX and PDF formats, showing property lines, safety zones, and parking spots. Study these closely and plan your hunt. Most reservations allow you to bring up to three guests and hunt all day, so share the experience and make the most of your day afield.

Picking the Right Property

There's no "best" property. It really depends on what kind of hunt you want. Prefer big cattle farms with lots of birds but don't mind mud, poison oak, and hopping barbed wire fences? OSU Soap Creek Ranch is your spot. Want easy access and amenities like a nearby bathroom but don't mind lower draw odds? Try Bald Hill. Into the big challenge of tiny properties? Coyote Creek and Hayden Bridge deliver consistently every year. Choose your own adventure.

What I'll Miss the Most

It's trite but true: what you miss most is the people. During hunting season, I'd talk to a dozen or more hunters and landowners each week. Most conversations were routine – harvest reports, tips for navigating properties, or swapping short hunting stories. Some moments, though, stick with you and spark a good chuckle. Like the



The author's buddy Connor O'Brien took his first turkey on a Hunt by Reservation property.

landowner in her 80s who wouldn't allow Saturday hunts because she liked to deer hunt from her back porch, but Sundays were OK since she'd be at church anyway. Priceless.

Or the time two OSU students woke me up with a FaceTime at sunrise after killing their first turkey. "So how do we clean it?" they asked, vibrating with that unselfconscious energy of a first kill. Half-awake, I talked them through gutting a bird while my wife slept beside me. "OK, reach inside the cavity and feel for the gizzard.

It's a big hard lump. Pull on it. Yep, that's it. Keep pulling." It was a strange but fitting moment that defined what Hunt by Reservation was really good at: using modern technology to guide new hunters through timeless rites of passage.

Where Innovation Meets Tradition

When I created Hunt by Reservation, one of my goals was to bring fresh ideas to ODFW's hunting access programs. Modern software touches like digital booking, automated emails, and customized onX hunt maps were transformative. They made land access easy and enjoyable for hunters and landowners, too.

But those features were just a new dashboard on a classic rig. What fueled Hunt by Reservation were timeless conservation tools like handshakes, smiles, skilled biologists, volunteer workdays, collaborative landowners, and leadership open to new ideas.

The growth of a small project like Hunt by Reservation, along with the tremendous success of ODFW's excellent Electronic Licensing System, both show the agency's ongoing commitment to letting innovation and tradition coexist.

Book a Hunt This Spring

I've hunted turkeys from deep South Carolina swamps to a California ranch in the Gabilans so old and big that the land deeds are hand-written in Spanish. Trust me – Hunt by Reservation offers experiences just as magical.

My buddy Connor got to feel that magic this fall. He won a reservation for a November hunt at OSU Soap Creek and invited me along. The morning was quiet. Suddenly, we caught up to a flock, put on a stalk, and missed our best chance. Literally, boom whiff. Both of us.

At noon, I had to head home, leaving Connor to hunt alone.

As I drove off, I heard a distant shot but dismissed it as target practice.

Seconds later, Connor texted me a photo of a stunner tom. He'd done it. His first turkey.

Seeing my friend succeed on his own made me smile. It felt symbolic – proof that Hunt by Reservation is thriving, even as I step away. I'm excited to see what lies ahead for the program and the hunters who participate.

If you're thinking about turkey hunting this spring, give Hunt by Reservation a look. It's worth it.





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**Drawing: May 3, 2025, 7 p.m., OHA State Convention, Chinook Winds Casino, Lincoln City, OR.
NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN.**



Buck Deer Hunt

Bull Elk Hunt #1

Bull Elk Hunt #2

NOTE: #1 and #2 are NOT necessarily the order of the hunts. All dates TBD.



Proceeds support OHA's mission, hunter access and habitat improvement.



Each raffle is for a 3-day guided rifle hunt for 1 hunter on the 33,000-acre Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in Wallowa County during the fall 2025 season (dates TBD), including lodging at a fully functioning facility at the Preserve. Hunter may bring up to 2 guests who do not hunt. Hunting is all on foot and hunters should be in good physical condition. Recent hunter success rate has been close to 100%. Mature bucks and bulls are common with trophy potential.

The Preserve is part of the largest remaining intact Pacific Northwest bunchgrass prairie in N. America.

Food, beverages, gear & gratuity not included. Transportation to Preserve not included (once there, guide will provide transportation). Tag is guaranteed, but hunter is responsible for ODFW license & tag fees. Hunt takes place during fall 2025 season only.

Landowner tags generously donated to OHA and local charities by The Nature Conservancy (nature.org)

NORTH BANK GOING SOUTH?

The North Bank Habitat Management Area remains a critical component to keeping Columbian white-tailed deer delisted, but degraded habitat, predation and recreational disturbance have diminished deer numbers enough that biologists are concerned.

COMPILED BY OHA STAFF

PHOTOS BY JOHN WHELAND

The North Bank Habitat Management Area near Glide in Douglas County was acquired in the late 1990s to fulfill one of the requirements to delist the Columbian white-tailed deer, but some conservationists question whether federal management of the property has served the deer's best interests. Formerly the Dunning Ranch, the 6,581-acre property held more whitetails 25 years ago than it does today.

OREGON HUNTER editor Duane Dungannon was one of the first to hunt the public property for blacktails in January 1999.

"In my first day of hunting there, I saw more than 60 deer, about two-thirds of them whitetails," he said. "On my last couple of hunts there – which likely will be my last hunts there – I was lucky to see a total of 6 deer. Both small groups of deer that I saw were scared off the property by approaching horseback riders."

The property is managed by BLM, which lists recreation as a secondary use behind CWTD management in its management plan for the property. That included

construction of a horse trailer parking area – complete with a pavilion, picnic tables and barbecue grill – which draws considerable use from horseback riders, hikers and bikers. Literally everyone and their dog, whether the dog is on a leash as required or not.

Bobcats were once found to be the leading killer of fawns on the property. Dungannon himself reported seeing three in his hunts there.

"When you see three bobcats in an area in a few visits, you've got a lot of bobcats there."

Out of concern that CWTD could be listed again if the resident deer population on the area dips below the threshold, OHA asked a pair of wildlife biologists, who have conducted extensive research on the property, whether the property is still meeting its primary management objective.

Whitetails could be listed again if the resident deer population on the area dips below the threshold.

Q: Does it still have the number of whitetails it once did?

A: The only tools we have to monitor CWTD numbers in NBHMA are the annual spotlight routes, hunter harvest, trail cameras and the FLIR flight done several years ago. Spotlight routes have been problematic due to vegetation growth along the routes, which limits visibility. However, without examining the spotlight data in depth, CWTD numbers appear to be lower than what they used to be and in particular, the low fawn ratios are concerning.

Q: Does it still have enough CWTD to keep them off the list?

A: NBHMA was acquired to secure habitat for CWTD, one of the necessary requirements for delisting the species. The number of CWTD in NBHMA combined with deer numbers in the surrounding core CWTD area would have to be low enough to warrant consideration for an ESA listing. In the summer of 2016, there was a huge die-off of CWTD in the Roseburg area due to an outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease. There were over 300 deer carcasses recovered and likely many more



Invasive blackberries provide security and forage for Columbian white-tailed deer on the North Bank Habitat Management Area, but they may have become too dense in places. Some say the property was better deer habitat when it was a private ranch, but managers face federal regulations that restrict disturbing soil and planting non-native forage.



Riders approach a deer on the North Bank Habitat Management Area. Wildlife biologists are concerned that too much disturbance from recreation may displace Columbian white-tailed deer.

that were not reported. Since then, CWTD numbers have been slowly recovering in those hard-hit areas, which include areas surrounding NBHMA. The CWTD numbers in NBHMA, as low as they may be, do not bring CWTD to the level of ESA consideration based on the numbers found throughout the core area.

Q: Are bobcats still the top killer of CWTD fawns on the area, and if so, why does the plan say they can trap bobcats if they're causing a problem for adjacent landowners but not for the benefit if the imperiled species for which the property was purchased?

A: Bobcat predation on fawns was documented by ODFW wildlife research several years ago and there has not been any monitoring of this since. The NBHMA Management Plan was written to address concerns by adjacent landowners who might have depredation issues to their livestock. However, from a wildlife management perspective, a healthy functioning habitat would allow for an element of predation to exist (within the NBHMA). That said, when ODFW implemented the East Umpqua Cougar Target Area, the NBHMA was included in that removal area and ODFW volunteer agents made a few trips into the area looking for cougars but had no success due to road access limitations. Conducting bobcat removals within NBHMA would begin with discussions with BLM and USFWS. There would need to be good documentation that bobcats were limiting CWTD numbers and that a limited removal of bobcats would benefit CWTD in the area at least for a short term.

Q: Have the secondary uses of the area infringed on the primary?

A: NBHMA has become a recreational destination area for an increasing number

of the public. As the human population of Douglas County continues to grow, so does the recreational use of NBHMA. Its proximity to Roseburg along with the expansive network of roads and trails make it an attractive and convenient destination for recreationists. There is a sign-in sheet found at the two main entrances of NBHMA, but it is not used by much of the visiting public. There are several BLM trail cameras situated throughout the area that do a better job of documenting detailed public use – hunting, biking, hiking, horseback, and dogs – over the years. This would include number and type of recreation as well as how much of the area is being used by those user groups. Another measure of increasing recreation in the area is the growing number of complaints made to ODFW over the years by hunters regarding the number of encounters with recreationists in the area and the impact it had on their hunt. Although recreational use of NBHMA is higher on weekends, there appears to be regular use during the weekdays, as well.

Q: Have horses, dogs, hikers and bikers run the deer off?

A: All of these have an impact on wildlife to some degree. There have been papers written that document the impact of hikers, mountain bikers, dogs, etc. on wildlife. This is happening on NBHMA. Over the years, there have been deer fawn carcasses found in NBHMA that were killed and left by dogs and photos of dogs harassing deer that were captured in deer clover traps. Although the main entrances have signs telling the public that dogs must be leashed, many dogs are not leashed as evidenced by the deer carcasses and photos taken by trail cameras, as well as

direct encounters with daily walkers with unleashed dogs. There is an attitude maintained by much of the public that NBHMA is simply a BLM recreation area and they do not realize that its acquisition is tied to the wellbeing of CWTD. Former BLM staff also believed that NBHMA could be enriched recreationally since CWTD were no longer on the ESA list.

Q: Has the quality of deer habitat declined in the quarter century that the property has been out of farm production?

A: BLM has tried to manage the habitat, but it's difficult. Riparian habitat is important to CWTD. A couple years ago when grazing was occurring, the cattle escaped the hot wire paddock and moved into the riparian area, where they seriously damaged the upper reaches of Jackson Creek and it is still recovering. Other obvious changes are the continued growth of blackberries and poison oak stands. Both provide security, as well as forage during the summer dry period, but there may be too much of a good thing. Also, there are several grass stands that are dense and by mid-summer very tall; these don't provide forage for CWTD. BLM has scheduled some burns, which, if done correctly, would be good to set the vegetation back.

Q: Is this plan ever updated?

A: It should be; it's probably time. As it stands, the BLM, USFWS and ODFW meet quarterly to discuss ongoing plans for NBHMA, and that is where important items are brought up to the group. The USFWS is involved with these discussions because the CWTD population status is in the post-delisting monitoring phase. This phase usually lasts five years after delisting a species to monitor its progress as a recovered species. However, there were enough concerns about the CWTD on NBHMA that it triggered an extension of the post de-listing monitoring phase by the USFWS. It got the attention of the BLM to look at trying other management options in the NBHMA. At that time, it was a return to livestock grazing. When confronted with the concerns over management actions within NBHMA, BLM staff were quick to point out the direct impact that hunting has on CWTD by the various hunts offered by ODFW. Those CWTD controlled hunts were limited to bucks only, which did not affect the population. Other hunts in the area are directed at reducing blacktail deer competition with CWTD as outlined in the NBHMA Management Plan.



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Saturday, May 3, 2025 • Chinook Winds Casino, Lincoln City

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**3 TNC Zumwalt Prairie
DEER & ELK DREAM HUNT
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- 8 Special Raffle Tickets
- 72 General Raffle Tickets
- 8 Early Bird Tickets**
- 1 Commemorative Gift

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- 2 Party Starter Raffle Tickets
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- 2 Early Bird Tickets**
- 2 Commemorative Gifts

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- 12 General Raffle Tickets
- 1 Early Bird Ticket**
- 1 Commemorative Gift

*** OHA member prices. Nonmembers add \$35 for 1-year OHA membership.**

**** Early Bird tickets must be ordered by April 3, 2025.**

Party Starter: 2 guns (\$599 & \$569). Max 1,900 tickets.
Special: Rifle (\$800); Knife (\$40). Max 1,760 tickets.
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Early Bird: Rifle (\$599); Knife (\$40). Max 1,900 tickets.

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To order your tickets, call (541) 772-7313
or visit oregonhunters.org





An artist's rendering shows the future wildlife crossing over Interstate 5, which will be Oregon's first wildlife overpass. A similar new overpass in Idaho is already showing impressive results.

OHA to help build massive wildlife crossing over I-5

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator
TD@oregonhunters.org

Oregon's first wildlife overpass will be built on I-5 at milepost 1.7 south of Ashland, thanks to a coalition of conservation groups, including OHA, and agencies that successfully obtained a \$34,000,000 federal grant.

State OHA has been working with the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition since 2021 on this effort to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity. Since the early stages of the project, OHA has played a critical role in providing relatively small amounts of funding for the project's feasibility study, attaining support from Jackson County Commissioners, supporting state legislation, and committing to oversee minor fence repairs associated with the new structure.

Every year across the western United States, wildlife-vehicle collisions account for an estimated \$10,000,000,000 in vehicle damage, medical expenses, and hundreds of thousands of dead animals. These staggering numbers are derived from reported crashes, so the actual estimated costs are likely much higher. Wildlife-vehicle collisions are a major problem for Oregon's deer and elk populations, and we are hopeful that this project will pave the way for construction of additional structures across the state.



OHA has helped keep key wildlife areas like migration corridors safe from development.

BLM opens 1 million acres in Oregon to solar development

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director
mtotey@oregonhunters.org

The BLM's updated Western Solar Plan expands the area that the BLM considers available for solar development to cover all 11 western states, including Oregon. According to a press release from the BLM, "The updated Western Solar Plan identifies the availability of over 31 million acres of public lands across the 11 western states for utility-scale solar project applications."

This includes over one million acres in Oregon.

While the plan doesn't specifically authorize the development of a solar farm, it does address the growing emphasis to allow more renewable energy development on public lands. OHA and other conservation organizations pushed hard to make sure that any solar development on BLM lands minimized the impact on wildlife and access. For example, specific areas like big game migration corridors will not be made available for development.

The Western Solar Plan EIS is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc3jj9yj>

OHA funds Blue Mountains Elk Initiative projects

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator
TD@oregonhunters.org

OHA and ODFW funded the entirety of a Bridge Creek Wildlife Area project that will treat 512 acres of annual grasses through aerial Rejuvra (herbicide) applications. OHA

funded \$16,000 toward this project to cover the project cost. The goal of these treatments is to help improve winter range by restoring perennial grasses which should ultimately help retain elk on these public lands and reduce elk damage issues in the Gurdane area.

Mule deer will also benefit from this project. Across the West, annual grass invasion is reducing the forage quality of once productive landscapes. Invasive ventenata (annual grass) is competing with native perennials on the wildlife area and reducing habitat quality for ungulates and other wildlife. Bridge Creek Wildlife Area and its associated rangelands are critical winter range for many elk in the Ukiah and Heppner units.

OHA also funded the Indian Prairie Aspen Restoration Project with \$10,000 to restore aspen habitat by thinning 51 acres of encroaching conifers and installing fencing to protect 15 acres of aspen. This project will occur in the Ochoco Unit and will benefit elk and mule deer.

Aspen stands provide wallowing areas, lush cover during calving, and a very palatable forage resource. This important habitat type has decreased by as much as 80 percent in Oregon's Blue Mountains. This project aims to restore aspen habitat in large, high elevation meadows, and increasing and protecting this integral habitat should result in more elk on public land.

OHA funds will help treat invasive annual grass and restore aspen.



Elliott plan favors owls over elk

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director
mtotey@oregonhunters.org



The Oregon Department of State Lands has developed a habitat conservation plan (HCP) for the Elliott State Forest in Coos and Douglas Counties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reviewed the HCP and released a final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the HCP. The HCP supports forest research and some reduced management activities to support the conservation of ESA listed species and their habitat on the Elliott.

The 83,000-acre Elliott State Forest was managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry for decades under an agreement with DSL, producing timber, jobs, and recreational opportunities for the community. After the northern spotted owl and marbled

murrelet ESA listings in the 1990s, priorities began to change. The new focus of the forest, now called the Elliott State Research Forest, will be toward research and preservation, with more restrictive timber harvesting.

This heavy emphasis on late seral conditions are not favorable for deer and elk, which need strong components of early seral habitat for browse.

The final EIS is one of the last steps before USFWS decides whether to issue an 80-year incidental take permit to DSL for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet based on the HCP. A separate decision whether to issue an incidental take permit regarding Oregon coast coho would be made by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.

A&H will fund burn seeding

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

The ODFW Access & Habitat Program has prioritized funding for four reseeding projects to assist landowners in rehabilitating habitat damaged by wildfire. A total of 3,500 acres will be seeded to ensure erosion control and soil health, as well as establish important forage components for wildlife.

The projects are located in central and eastern Oregon with multiple ownerships and properties that were impacted by numerous wildfires in the past year.

For more about the A&H program, go to <https://myodfw.com/articles/hunting-private-lands-access-habitat-program>.

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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 \$7,800 in rewards in 8 cases

In the last two months, OHA issued 10 reward checks to informants in 8 cases totaling \$7,800 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund.

Charges included: Unlawful take of buck deer, hunting from a highway, taking snagged Coho salmon, no salmon harvest tag, take/possession of buck deer, hunting the enclosed lands of another, take/possession of mule deer doe, waste of game animal, waste of game bird, borrowing a big game tag, failure to validate big game tag, hunting with the aid of artificial light, unlawful possession of deer, attempt to exceed the annual bag limit of deer, unlawful take of a 5x6 bull elk, felony level unlawful take of black bear and felon in possession of firearm.

In 2024, OHA issued more than \$30,000 in rewards to informants.

CHAPTER NEWS



OHA 2025 banquets feature a Coastal Farm & Ranch Raffle for a Wby Vanguard First Lite Specter .300 WM

HELLS CANYON MULEY

OHA chapters host banquets to fund projects for our mission

BAKER

CHARLIE BRINTON 541-403-0402

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

2025 Fundraiser: April 5, Community Event Center, Baker City.

BEND

REX PARKS 541-480-0230

oregonhunters.org/bend-chapter

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Wednesday, 6 p.m., VFW Post 1643, 1503 NE 4th St., Bend.

2025 Fundraiser: March 8, Bend Riverhouse Lodge, 541-480-9848.

Update: We have a new meeting place with much better parking. The bar has a limited menu, but there are food carts available close by. Visit OHA's booth at the sports show March 6-9 at the Deschutes Expo in Redmond.

BLUE MOUNTAIN

KEVIN MARTIN 541-969-6744

ohabluemountainchapter@gmail.com

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

2025 Fundraiser: May 14, Chapter Pub Event, 5:30 - 9:30, Backfire Restaurant.

CAPITOL

DANNY SOUTH 503-577-6033

<https://oregonhunters.org/capitol-chapter/>

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

2025 Fundraiser: March 15, Oregon State Fairgrounds, 503-990-2978.



ERIC BROWN

OHA Bend Chapter members responded when elk were trapped on Highway 97 in January after the fence funneling wildlife into the underpass had been damaged. OHA also has committed to maintaining fences at Oregon's first wildlife overpass. See story on Page 42.

Update: New in 2025, our banquet tickets are available online; order yours now at oregonhunters.org/capitol-chapter

CLATSOP COUNTY

TROY LAWS 503-738-6962

ClatsopCountyOHA@pacifier.com

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

2025 Fundraiser: April 5, Clatsop County Fairgrounds, 503-440-9934.

Update: We are looking for volunteers to help organize and gather donations for the chapter banquet in April.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

JORDAN HICKS 949-533-7271

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

2025 Fundraiser: May 10.

CURRY

JAMIE BADGER 541-499-2245

Badgergirls3@gmail.com

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

2025 Fundraiser: April 26, Event Center on the Beach, 406-499-2234.

EMERALD VALLEY

RON MARTIN 541-954-5459

EmeraldOHA@live.com

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

2025 Fundraiser: July 19, Cascadian Bowmen, 91714 Poole Creek Rd., Noti.

Update: We hosted an OHA booth at the Eugene sportsman's show Jan. 31-Feb. 2.

HOODVIEW

KELLY PARKMAN 503-706-7481

oregonhunters.org/hoodview-chapter

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

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

2025 Fundraiser: Feb. 22, Monarch Inn, Clackamas, **SOLD OUT!**

Update: We will host the annual youth turkey clinic on April 5 at the White River Wildlife Area. Call 503-358-7821 for information.

JOSEPHINE COUNTY

DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511

ddowns2646@gmail.com

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 6:30 p.m., dinner 6 p.m., Black Bear Diner, Grants Pass.

2025 Fundraiser: March 22, Josephine County Fairgrounds, 541-660-5861 or 541-761-1852.

KLAMATH

DENNIS WIARD 541-891-3549

dtwiard@charter.net

<https://oregonhunters.org/klamath-chapter>

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

2025 Fundraiser: April 26, Klamath County Fairgrounds.

Update: We are hosting a booth March 14-16 at the Klamath Falls Sportsmen's & Outdoor Show, dedicated to former chapter and state OHA president Ken Hand, who passed away recently a year after he helped launch the first Klamath sports show. The Klamath PLAY (Promoting Lifetime Activities for Youth) Outdoors event, another tradition that Ken helped start, was held on Jan. 18. Our chapter's annual project at the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge is set for May 17.

LAKE COUNTY

LARRY LUCAS 541-417-2983

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

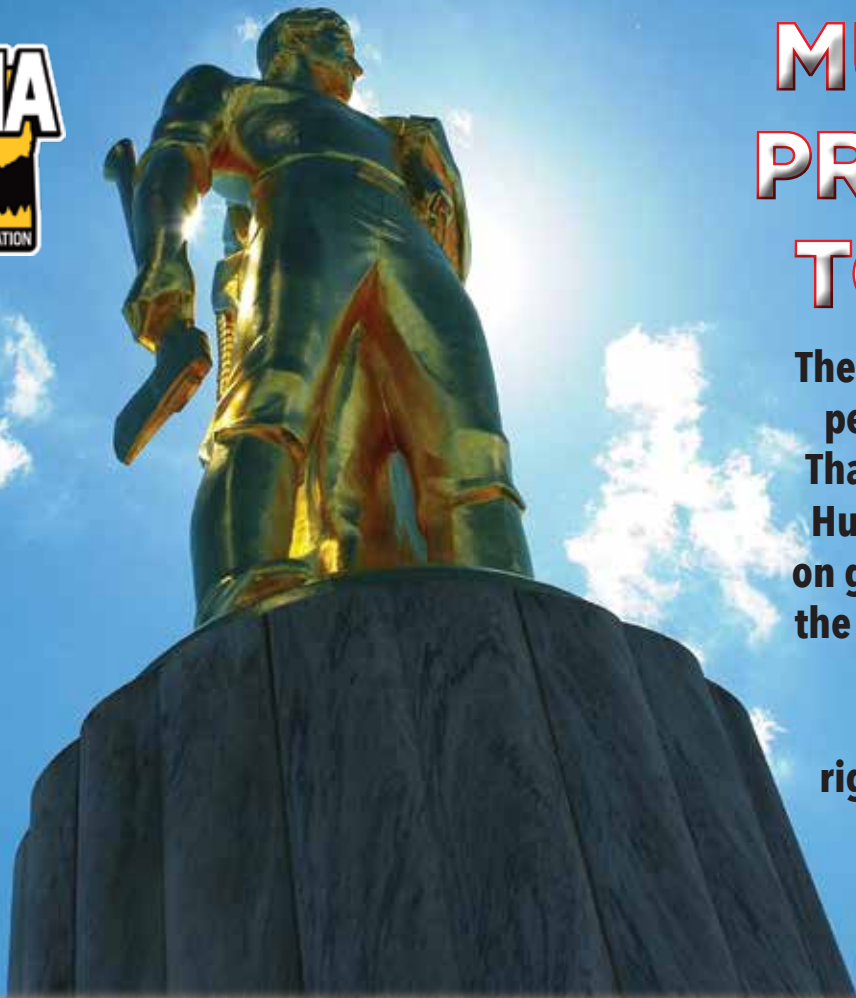
2025 Fundraiser: April 5, Lake County Fairgrounds.

LINCOLN COUNTY

TODD THOMPSON 541-270-2393

tjaz@charter.net

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



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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.

MID-COLUMBIA

TONY WHITE 541-490-2980

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

Update: Join us for the annual youth turkey clinic on April 5 at the White River Wildlife Area.

MID-WILLAMETTE

KEN MCCALL 541-753-8588

kenemccall@gmail.com

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

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Thursday of odd numbered months, Board meets at 6 p.m., general meeting at 7, Old Armory, Albany. **2025 Fundraiser:** April 5, Albany Boys & Girls Club, 541-971-3351.

Update: We hosted an OHA booth at the Willamette Sportsman's Show in Albany Feb. 7-9. Join us at our March 13 chapter meeting as Trever Gelling, CWD surveillance biologist with ODFW, will speak about efforts to stop the fatal disease.

OCHOCO

JAMES COX 541-408-4816

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

2025 Fundraiser: Held Feb. 15.

Update: Visit OHA's booth at the Central Oregon sports show March 6-9 at the Deschutes Expo in Redmond.

PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 503-266-2900

oregonhunters.org/pioneer-chapter

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

2025 Fundraiser: March 1, Mt. Angel Community Festhalle, Mt. Angel, **SOLD OUT!**

Update: Join us at Canby Rod & Gun Club on April 26 for our annual youth day event; 503-936-4718.

REDMOND

K. C. THRASHER 541-419-7215

OHA line 541-383-1099

oregonhunters.org/redmond-chapter

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

2025 Fundraiser: SOLD OUT! Feb. 22, Deschutes County Expo, with an Access & Habitat Statewide Deer Tag auction.

Update: The Redmond Chapter holds an attendance drawing at every chapter meeting. Be sure to attend and see what you might win. Visit OHA's booth at the sports show March 6-9 at the Deschutes Expo in Redmond.

ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

Firepmt29@gmail.com

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

2025 Fundraiser: March 15, Ashland Hills Inn, 541-773-8736.

Update: We hosted a booth at the sports show Feb. 21-23, and we will host the annual youth turkey clinic at Denman Wildlife Area on April 5; call 541-857-2407.

TILLAMOOK

JOHN PUTMAN 503-842-7733

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

2025 Fundraiser: May 3, Tillamook County Fairgrounds, featuring an Oregon Access & Habitat Statewide Elk Tag Auction, 503-842-7153.

TIOGA

MARCEY FULLERTON 541-294-7912

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

2025 Fundraiser: April 5, Coquille Community Building.

TUALATIN VALLEY

KIRK NOLAN 503-701-2852

oregonhunters.org/tualatin-valley-chapter

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

2025 Fundraiser: March 29, Wingspan Event Center, **SOLD OUT!**

Update: We will host a booth at the NW Hunt Expo (NWHuntExpo.com) on March 7 in Hillsboro. Our chapter has sadly lost our President, Tony Kind, who has passed away. He will be greatly missed.

UMPQUA

TADD MOORE 541-580-5660

<https://www.umpquaoha.org>

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6 p.m.

Backside Brewery.

2025 Fundraiser: April 5, Seven Feathers Casino.

Update: We hosted an OHA booth at the Douglas County Sports Show Feb. 7-9.

UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

Chapter Meetings: La Grande Library, next date TBA.

2025 Fundraiser: March 15, EOU Field House, 541-786-1283.

YAMHILL COUNTY

ANDY BODEEN 503-490-2489

ohayamhill.com

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

2025 Fundraiser: March 15, Yamhill County Fairgrounds, 503-737-9483.

Update: 2025 Yamhill Chapter Scholarship deadline is May 2.

In Memoriam

Contributions made recently to the

OHA Memorial Fund

In memory of
CRAIG STARR
from Sharon Starr

In memory of
ROD MAYFIELD
from Mark Irwin



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Pioneer **SOLD OUT**

MARCH 8

Bend 541-480-9848

MARCH 15

Capitol 503-990-2978
Rogue Valley 541-773-8736
Union-Wallowa 541-786-1283
Yamhill County 503-490-2489

MARCH 22

Josephine Co. 541-761-1852

MARCH 29

Tualatin Valley **SOLD OUT**

APRIL 5

Baker 541-403-0402
Clatsop County 503-440-9934
Lake County 541-417-2983
Tioga 541-294-7912
Mid-Willamette 541-971-3351
Umpqua 541-430-7324

APRIL 26

Klamath 541-891-3549
Curry 406-499-2234

MAY 3

Tillamook** 503-812-3832
OHA State Convention,* Chinook
Winds Casino, 541-772-7313

MAY 10

Columbia Co. 949-533-7271

* A&H Statewide Deer Tag auction
** A&H Statewide Elk Tag auction



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**FOR MORE INFO:
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**The event will also be livestreamed starting at 2:00 p.m. on May 27th.
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OHA member Calvin Davis of Pendleton is the winner of a Tactacam Reveal Trail Camera for his image of a Union County bull elk this past August.

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SCAN



HONORABLE MENTION:



Baker City OHA member Brian Rabe captures two Honorable Mention spots and an OHA hat with his photos of a 6x6 bull and his harem last September in Baker County.



Bly OHA member Marty Dillavou lands an OHA hat and two Honorable Mention photos with Klamath County black bears last summer.

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Slow-Cooked Italian Bear Meatballs

Sneaking through the dense jungle of the Oregon coast range or climbing the steep ridges of northeast Oregon isn't easy work. Hunting throughout Oregon my entire life, I have come to realize that there are portions of our great state that are nearly impossible to access. These places often are so difficult to navigate that even the most fit and experienced hunters dare not visit. Some of the biggest and smartest bruins take up residence in these hideaways and travel near these places in search of food and other bears as breeding season approaches.

For hunters who follow, all that effort, sweat and energy can produce some exquisite protein for the freezer.

Folks are always looking for better ways to cook their wild game. I have had bear prepared many ways, steaks, roasts, broiled, slow-cooked and more. I have always liked to turn a good portion of my bear meat into Italian breakfast sausage. Why? Well, the sausage goes well with lasagna and spaghetti, and makes for nice additions to my venison when making meatloaf, stroganoff, and other dishes. Last season I experimented with a new idea that came to me when actually trying to use up some items in my refrigerator. This is what I came up with:

Ingredients:

- 1-2 pounds ground Italian bear sausage
- ½ cup minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- ½ diced onion
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons sriracha or tabasco sauce
- 1 farm fresh egg
- 1 bottle favorite BBQ sauce

In a large mixing bowl, incorporate ingredients and mix thoroughly, but leave the BBQ sauce out and add later. Once ingredients are mixed, form 4 to 6 meat rounds approximately 3 to 4 inches in diameter. These are larger size because they will cook down, and of course you can make them smaller if you prefer. Pan sear meatballs for 1 minute in hot olive oil to encrust and brown outside. Place meatballs into slow cooker or crock pot. Now add a full bottle of your favorite BBQ sauce and cook on low for approximately 6 hours.

Once finished, remove meat from slow cooker and let sit for 5 minutes. Garnish plates with fresh sprouts or steamed vegetables or your choice of greens. Add sliced farm grown tomatoes and top with herb infused feta. Place meatballs onto the plate and drizzle sauce from slow cooker over the top of the meat. Serve with your favorite wine and bread. Enjoy!

The author is an award-winning outdoor writer and avid bear hunter who enjoys cooking all of the wild game he is blessed to harvest. Follow Troy on Instagram @troyoutdoors or on Facebook Troy Rodakowski. E-mail: troyoutdoors@hotmail.com



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

How do I become a Certified Instructor?

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



Hunter Education

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





SHARING THE HERITAGE

BY BROOKE WATSON

Forging father & daughter bonds in Oregon's outback

As a daughter, I've always looked up to my dad, but when he asked me if I wanted to start hunting, I wasn't too sure. Killing an animal? Hmm... seems a little barbaric for a young girl, doesn't it? After my first hunt, I realized it was quite the opposite. There was so much I loved about that experience, spending quality time with my dad, being away from the pressures of social life, and connecting with the outdoors in a way I never had before. And so began our adventure as a father-daughter hunting team.

We've now been hunting together for 16 years, and every trip has been uniquely special. Aside from a few trips, all our hunting has taken place near our family ranch in Mitchell, which brings a wonderful familiarity to the experience. There's nothing like hunting in our great state and being close to home.

The times I appreciate the most aren't always when we have had success, but just when it's quiet and my dad begins to tell stories or offers his life's wisdom – nothing compares to those moments. We often forget our time here is limited and we spend so much of it on our phones or in our own world. Being away from these distractions opens the door to a new opportunity for connection.

My advice to all the girls out there is to take a chance and ask your dad to take you on a hunt. Use this time to ask him about his experiences – something we as kids often forget to do. If the actual act of harvesting an animal is not for you, there may be other ways to be involved – videotaping or photographing during the hunts, cooking at camp, etc. You may be surprised that you'll find a lot of peace in the world of hunting and you'll make unforgettable memories with your pa! Listen well and take in all the advice he has for you; after all, it has taken him many years to learn all he has, and you get to be the beneficiary of all that useful wisdom.

To all the dads out there, don't discount your little girl just yet; she may love the outdoors more than you could ever imagine.

I sat down one night and asked my dad what his tips are for a father who wants to introduce his daughter to hunting. His first comment was, "Start 'em young and make it fun!" He then talked about building blinds, looking for rocks and bones, buying a cheap set of binos, and encouraging them to help with spotting.

"When it comes to preparation, practice shooting off a good sturdy pair of sticks as well as in a prone position to build con-



The author's dad guided her to this wide Fossil Unit bull a few years ago.

fidence," he said. "When you do have opportunities to get an animal down, get her close and don't take risky shots. Once you have an animal down, teach blood trailing/tracking even when the animal is visible. Then, enjoy the process of gutting and show her some of the anatomy!"

He rounded his advice out by advising fathers and daughters to do everything hunting together; shoot, take photos, gut, skin, cut meat, and maybe even cook a yummy meal.

As he told me all these things, I realized how much of an effort he had made all those years. It's so important to remember hunting is a way of life and not a quick experience. As your daughter shows more interest, continue to encourage her, and maybe buy better equipment or hunting clothing for birthdays and holidays.

Most importantly, always allow her to be honest about how she's feeling throughout the process, whether it's moments of sadness or great joy, and share in those emotions. Hunting is a family affair, a time for parents and children to get to know each other better.

It's not always easy hunting together, and there will be arguments; my dad and I have had our fair share – like the time I argued with him about shooting prone as a bull elk stared at us from 200 yards away. Or when I questioned him about a buck, thinking it was a forked horn as he assured me it was a four-point. Of course, arguments aren't ideal, but they can teach us to trust each other more.

Through all the good and even some bad, we have become a dynamic duo, capable of incredible things and keen on bringing home fresh, wild meat to the family. The bonds we have made are indissoluble and I thank God every day that my dad took a chance on his little girl even when hunting seemed rarely encouraged for women.



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Transitioning from Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) to Mule Deer Hunt Areas

Key Information About the New Deer Hunt Areas

Big Thanks to Hunters!

ODFW thanks Oregon hunters for their invaluable input in shaping the updated Mule Deer Management Plan! Your voices and dedication to conservation are making a real impact. Starting with the 2026 season, we're transitioning from Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) to Deer Hunt Areas to better align hunting boundaries with Oregon's mule deer populations and management goals. Your support helps ensure a strong future for mule deer and hunting in Oregon.

The change, set to be adopted in September 2025, will affect how you apply for mule deer hunts and navigate hunting regulations. Changes may also affect where you can hunt once you have drawn your tag.

What's Changing and Why:

In June 2024, ODFW finalized the state's Mule Deer Management Plan. One focus of the plan is on harvest of mule deer based on herd ranges, which were identified through extensive monitoring efforts. These efforts led to the identification of 22 unique mule deer herd ranges in eastern Oregon.

Most herd ranges encompass more than one of the traditional WMUs, while some WMUs contain portions of 2 or 3 distinct herd ranges. These differences in alignment make it challenging to manage and monitor harvest as it relates to a distinct mule deer population.

By re-defining our Deer Hunt Areas to reflect natural herd range boundaries, ODFW can improve harvest and herd monitoring and management, set more accurate tag totals, and more effectively assess population responses to management actions.

Questions?

Your local district wildlife staff is your best resource for information. If you're unsure about access or how changes may affect your favorite hunting spots, don't hesitate to reach out. More information will be posted online as it becomes available.

What Hunters Need to Know: —

New Boundary Descriptions: New hunting areas will come with new detailed boundary descriptions. Hunters will need to review descriptions carefully when desiring to hunt their favorite spots.

New Naming System: Deer Hunt Areas will use a new alphanumeric system to identify hunt areas within herd ranges. For example, hunt area #1 within the Northeast herd range would be NE 01.

Larger Hunt Areas: Expect hunting areas that are larger than the traditional WMUs. Large herd ranges will likely still contain more than one hunt area.

Fewer Total Hunts: Larger hunt areas mean fewer individual hunts overall.

Tag Adjustments: In the short term, there may be slight tag reductions to manage hunter pressure. Tags could increase later if there's no biological need to maintain lower levels.

Use Your Points Wisely: If you've been saving points for a specific mule deer hunt, a thorough review of proposed hunt areas and tag numbers will be important. If your hunt area is changing dramatically, consider using your points in 2025.

Landowner Preference Tags: These tags may also change based on how properties fall within new herd ranges and hunt areas.

Tips for Finding the Best Hunting Spots:

The methods for choosing your hunting location remain the same. Use ODFW's publicly available deer harvest data, including harvest statistics, success rates, buck ratios, and habitat conditions, to guide your decision-making.



To view the new map, scan the QR code or visit:

go.MyODFW.com/MuleDeerPlan



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2025 PHOTO CONTEST

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Prizes will be awarded in general and youth categories.

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3RD PRIZE: Leupold Scope

4TH PRIZE: Danner Alesia Hunting Boots

5TH PRIZE: Benchmade Altitude Hunting Knife

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

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

ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

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

PHOTO CATEGORIES

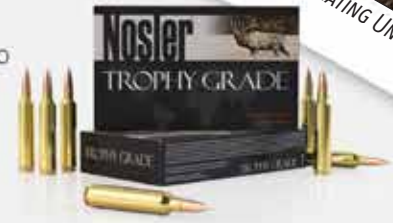
GENERAL: Any aspect of hunting, including but not limited to preparation, camping, hunting situations, game and packing.

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

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year



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SCAN



NOSLER[®] PHOTO CONTEST

GENERAL CATEGORY FINALISTS



OHA member Roger Stanley of Prineville garners a finalist spot in the 2025 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his 2024 opening morning photo of grandson Colton Avila and mule deer buck with a Snake River sunrise as a backdrop.

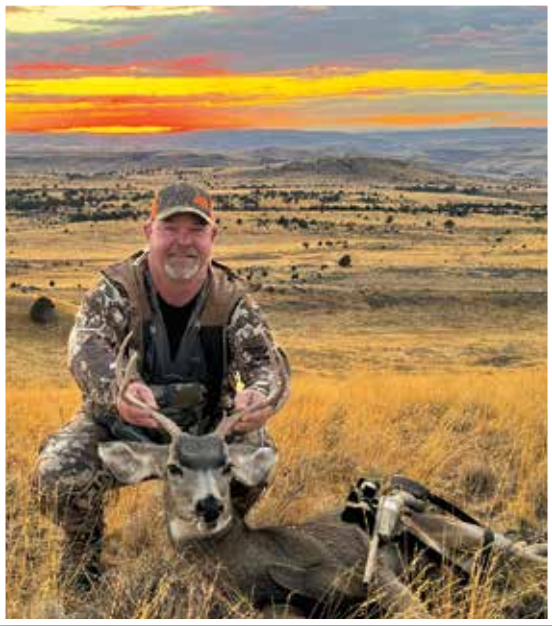


Anchorage OHA member Bob Mumford is a finalist in the 2025 Nosler Photo Contest and winner of an OHA Coast knife for his photo of Alaska Unit 14 Dall sheep this past November.

MT. ASHLAND SUNSET/DUANE DUNGANNON

NOSLER[®] PHOTO CONTEST

GENERAL CATEGORY HONORABLE MENTION



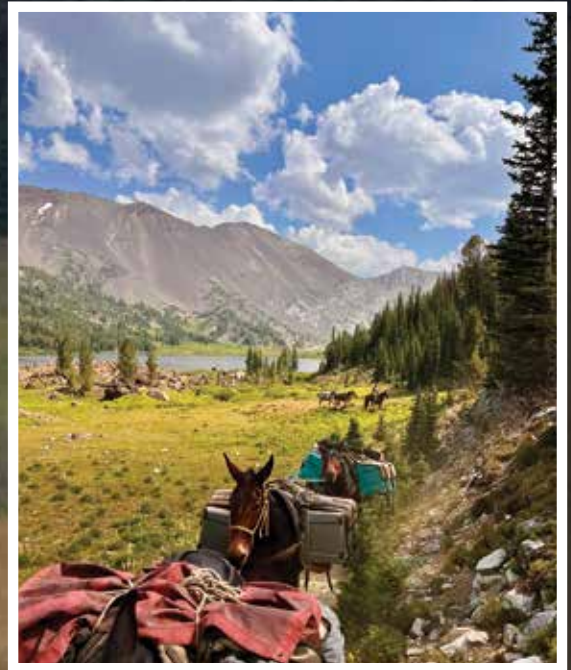
Todd Thompson, an OHA member from Newport, wins a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for this photo of Ryan Bancroft with a 2024 Malheur County mule deer taken with a Browning Hells Canyon X-Bolt won in OHA's Coastal Farm and Ranch raffle.



Prineville OHA member Brooke Smith nabs Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for her photo of a British Columbia caribou this past October on what she called the hunt of a lifetime.



OHA member Arnold Fox of Prineville receives Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his 2024 Fossil Unit bull elk taken with a .28 Nosler.



Ashley Spaur lands a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for her photo of husband Jacob Spaur and a mule pack string in the Eagle Cap Wilderness during the 2024 archery season.

NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

YOUTH CATEGORY FINALISTS



Roseburg OHA member Jaysen Dunnavent is a finalist in the 2025 Nosler Photo Contest and the winner of an OHA Coast knife for this photo of 12-year-old Josi Dunnavent and her Whitehorse pronghorn this past September.



OHA member Veda George of Hermiston wins a spot in the 2025 Nosler Photo Contest finals and an OHA Coast knife for this photo of an August 2024 Steens Mountain pronghorn.



REMEMBER,
if a youth's hunt requires wearing hunter orange, it must be visible in the photo to be eligible.

NOSLER[®] PHOTO CONTEST

YOUTH CATEGORY HONORABLE MENTION



Astoria OHA member Heidi Waisanen is an Honorable Mention recipient and the winner of a Nosler hat for this photo of Addilyn Waisanen and her October 2024 Malheur mule deer. This was Addilyn's first deer, taken with a Remington 7mm-08.



OHA member Bradlee Smith of Springfield grabs Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of 11-year-old Grayson Smith's McKenzie blacktail taken through the Mentored Youth Hunter Program.



Tony Jeffries, OHA member from Dundee, wins a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for his photo of 12-year-old Paisley Jeffries and her opening-day November Douglas County blacktail.



OHA member Rob Duncan receives a Nosler hat and Honorable Mention for his photo of Tessa, Hallie, and Amelie and three Sled Springs turkeys in May 2024.

BAKER COUNTY SUNRISE/DUANE DUNGANNON



Advanced Bear Hunter Math

You're about to get super into numerology

I was talking to Bill Haltz before one of our monthly meetings down at Charlie's Fish & Chips. Sometimes we like to get there a bit early and pour back a little of the dark and frothy. This time it was honest-to-goodness sarsaparilla Charlie had mixed up and it was going down smooth and Bill decided to spill one of the secrets of his success.

Bill is one of those fellers that you check the time when you hear his gun go off and it is always like one or two minutes before the end of legal light and you don't know how a guy that old can see bears that good.

He said he picked up a hitchhiker back in '73 and when he let her out of the car three days later, she said "it was not unusual, it was just that the moon was full." She left him one piece of advice: "If a possum is crossing your path, it means it is passing its gift of night vision on to you."

As everyone should know, possums are not native to these parts, having been brought here by homesick southerners. Bill said he never really understood what the mysterious hitchhiker meant till one night he rolled a possum under a bias-ply in the Van Duzer Corridor. "That was the night I drove old Dixie down," he said. "And I killed a black bear that next rainy evening right before full dark." Bill says he will drive over a dead possum even today just to keep his eye sharp. It got me thinking.

There was the time we were in Unit 59 off the 39 Road with my offspring who was 12, but her birth number is 11 and we were with Tod, the Hawaiian (50th state) and the first bear came to the call in one minute and Tod's bear came to the call in 15 minutes.

Then there was the time we were hunting the Pine Creek Unit and believe me all the numbers matched up including the one on the guardrail and I eighty-six'd a bear with my dirty-ought-six.

I opened the regulations book to the spring bear chapter and reduced the hunt numbers to their essences. Take No. 759, Snake River, and add the numbers $7+5+9$ and you get 21. Add

$2+1$ and you get 3 which is an optimistic number and means you know you are going to see bears. And if you get pessimistic, you won't see any.

But how does a person find their unique bear path number? You take your birthday and add the numbers and reduce them. But don't include the 19 (or 20 if you were born in the new millennium). Let's use Bill Haltz as an example. Bill was born April 4, 1955, so his birth number is calculated $4+4+(5+5)$ for a life path number of 9. And 9 is the mystical path, which leads me to find the most mystical spring hunt for Bill which would be No. 756, the Wenaha.

Of course, Bill might want to hunt somewhere other than the Wenaha, in which case, he might look at Highway 27 in the Ochocos which reduces to 9. Or he could go back to his old stomping grounds west of Newberg and drive down Highway 18 which by now you realize reduces to 9.

Highway and forest road numbers are like angel numbers. Angel numbers are the ones you recognize everyday that seem to pop up when you aren't thinking about bear hunting. You might see 1:01 on the clock. You might see it on a map. You might see it on a sign, especially if you live in Tillamook. You might see 217 every day or 2:17 twice a day if you have insomnia. Especially if you live in Tigard. But good luck getting a bear.

I could tell you where I think you should look for bears, but you really have to work out the details for yourself. There are really good places to hunt, and places to definitely stay away from. Like Clackamas Town Center.

Here are the meanings: 1 is the creative, 2 is the cooperative, 3 is the optimistic, 4 is for stability, 5 is sensual, 6 is intuitive, 7 is prepared, 8 is prosperity, 9 is for wisdom or experience,

10 reduces to 1 (creative) and 11 and 22 are master numbers, meaning if your birth number reduces to 11 or 22, you could be a bear hunting guide if you like big tips.

So here's a big tip. You arrive at your life path number, consider your angel numbers, then scan the spring bear hunts, the unit maps and the highway numbers for alignment. A couple of weeks before the season you want to drive the highways and look at the mile markers.

Let's say your life path is a 2 (cooperative) and you live in Astoria at the top of the Saddle Mountain Unit. Since you are a cooperative, you want to hunt with someone you can share spotting and driving duties with while you hunt the clear-cuts and walk the grassy two-tracks. Highway 101 is your conduit to bear hunting success and Highway 202 is in alignment if you use a ground blind.

Lil Sassy says Highway 101 is about spiritual growth and personal alignment. And it's about black black bears and no color phases, but you will probably see brown elk. And Dalmatians. You might even spot an albino Dalmatian. It's the least you can do.



If numerology gives you a headache, Uncle Geddy says to take Cruella Ad Vil.



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HOURS: THURS. - FRI. 12N - 8PM | SAT 10AM - 8PM | SUN 10AM - 4PM



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LIGHTEN UP. QUIET DOWN.

Designed specifically for hunters, the SR-30K measures 5.834" in length and weighs just 7.2 oz. Lightweight and compact, the SR-30K offers superior handling and balance, making it perfect for backcountry hunts, spot and stalk scenarios or busting through brush. When space and weight matter, choose the SR-30K for effective noise and blast reduction.



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