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Cover: Central Oregon mule deer photographed by Ryan Hoeft

OREGON HUNTER

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SETTING OUR SIGHTS

BY DR. TODD ADKINS, OHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WALLA WALLA UNIT

Welcome to a new season for Oregon Hunters Association

As you open this issue of OREGON HUNTER, you're also opening a new phase in the life of our association. It's an honor to introduce myself as your new executive director, and to have this space to say hello and share a bit about where we're headed together.

My name is Dr. Todd Adkins, and I'm excited to join a community that has already accomplished so much through dedicated staff, volunteers, board members, partners, chapter leaders, and all our valued members. You are the ones who show up, year after year, to support our mission on the landscape, at meetings, and in Salem.

Our work is critically important, and the time has come to invest in growing our impact and strengthening our voices.

Creating this new role is a significant milestone for Oregon Hunters Association. It reflects a clear message from the board and our membership: our work is critically important, and the time has come to invest in growing our impact, strengthening our voice, and better supporting the hunters and conservationists who make up this association. This step signals that OHA is committed not just to maintaining what we've built, but to expanding and defending it for the next generation.

In the months ahead, my focus will be on three things:

- Listening and learning – I want to understand what you value most about OHA, what challenges you face in the field and in your communities, and where you see opportunities for us to do more.

- Building on our strengths – This association has a strong foundation of volunteer leadership, member initiative, and conservation stewardship. My role is not to replace that spirit and trusted legacy, but to support both with consistent, day-to-day resolve and direction.

- Clarifying our path forward – Working with the board, chapters, and members, we will sharpen our strategic priorities so we can align our programs, advocacy, and resources with what you need most. That means being crystal clear about where we're going, why it matters, and how we'll measure our progress.

You'll see some changes over time – perhaps in how we communicate, the kinds of education and opportunities we offer, and in the way we engage members across regions, ages, and experience levels. But one thing will remain constant: OHA exists to serve you and to advance hunting and wildlife conservation throughout Oregon. Our roots are deep, and our commitment to sound science, access, and opportunity will not waver one iota.

I have served the hunting community for nearly three decades, fighting to promote and protect our heritage and conservation legacy all across America. Now, I'm proud to call Oregon my home, and even prouder to serve you as OHA's executive director. This is more than a job to me – it's a responsibility I take very seriously.

I invite you to be part of shaping what comes next. In the coming weeks, I'll be reaching out through surveys, virtual listening sessions, and, whenever possible, in-person conversations at chapter meetings and events. If you'd like to share your perspective sooner, you can always reach me at tadkins@oregonhunters.org. Your ideas, concerns, and hopes will help define our path forward.

Thank you for welcoming me into this community. I'm excited to get to work for you and look forward to seeing you very soon.

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WORK SHARP OREGON HUNTING QUIZ

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1. Which of the following typically have bifurcated antlers?

- a) blacktail c) Roosevelt elk
- b) whitetail d) Rocky Mtn. elk

2. Which bird is known as a "Hun?"

- a) chukar c) Sechuan pheasant
- b) coot d) gray partridge

3. Which imported game bird is blamed by some for bringing chiggers to Oregon?

- a) chukar c) pheasant
- b) turkey d) gray partridge

4. Which plant is known as buck brush?

- a) current berry c) ceanothus
- b) service berry d) salal

5. The feet of a bandtail pigeon are:

- a) black c) orange
- b) pink d) yellow

6. Which of these ducks is the smallest?

- a) gadwall c) wood duck
- b) teal d) pintail

7. The Warner Unit is in which county?

- a) Klamath c) Harney
- b) Lake d) Malheur

8. Which unit does not touch the Snake River:

- a) Pine Creek c) Lookout Mountain
- b) Keating d) Snake River

9. You can use an artificial light to hunt:

- a) bear c) bobcat
- b) cougar d) none of the above

10. Which track shows five toes?

- a) bear c) cougar
- b) coyote d) wolf

TRUE OR FALSE?

11. The Keno Unit borders Crater Lake NP.

12. Pintails have red heads.



MONTY GINGERICH

WHERE IN OREGON WAS THIS PHOTO TAKEN?

Identify this Oregon mountain, be drawn from all correct entries, and win a Work Sharp Original Knife and Tool Sharpener!

Submit your guess on OHA's app, or website at oregonhunters.org, where a larger version of the photo appears. One entry per OHA member.

ENTRY DEADLINE: JANUARY 15, 2026.



LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:

Donald McGuire, Cloverdale

Donald's name was drawn from among the OHA members who identified Eagle Cap.

OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

DECEMBER 31

Seasons end for pheasant, cougar, bear

JANUARY 1

2026 license required;
Cougar season opens

JANUARY 3

Tualatin River NWR youth waterfowl hunt

JANUARY 11

Sauvie Island youth waterfowl hunt

JANUARY 17

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JANUARY 25

Duck season, Zone 2 snipe
& most goose seasons end

JANUARY 30

Eugene sportsmen's show opens;
Albany sportsmen's show opens

JANUARY 31

Harvest reporting deadline, most tags;
Most upland bird seasons end;
Veterans & military waterfowl day

FEBRUARY 6

Douglas County Sportsmen's
& Outdoors Recreation Show opens

FEBRUARY 10

Deadline to apply for spring bear tags

FEBRUARY 11

Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's
Show opens in Portland

FEBRUARY 20

Spring bear draw results available;
Jackson County Sportsmen's
& Outdoor Recreation Show opens

FEBRUARY 21

OHA chapter banquets:
Columbia County 971-225-8013
Ochoco 541-410-5050

FEBRUARY 28

OHA Redmond banquet 541-419-7215

ANSWERS: 1-a; 2-d; 3-b; 4-c; 5-d; 6-b; 7-b; 8-b; 9-c; 10-a; 11-T; 12-F.

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OREGON AFIELD

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

CHUKAR: IT'S BOOM & BUST

January offers some of Oregon's best chukar hunting of the year. With a fresh snow or a hoar frost, scent conditions are good for dogs, and birds are generally well distributed through the habitat that the birds seek in the wind and rain and when temperatures drop into the teens.

We saw chukar populations boom in 2024 and early '25, and I, for one, was hoping for a blow-off top to follow. Let's take a look at what we can expect in our favorite chukar haunts.

Out of Wallowa County, chukar numbers are not disappointing. ODFW biologists counted more birds in their late summer surveys. Bird numbers appear to be up in the breaks of the Snake and the



'It's definitely not the same number of birds we saw last year or the year before.'

Chukar numbers are up in some parts of eastern Oregon, but down from last year in Harney County.

Imnaha. Quail numbers, too, are high in the Wallawas, reportedly above the 10-year average.

In Umatilla County, biologists reported a good chukar hatch and likewise in Grant County, where public land access can be found on the South Fork John Day River.

Baker County chukar numbers are good with what should be better-than-average numbers. Abundant birds last year and good chick production in the spring and summer should translate to sizeable coveys this last month of the season.

In Harney County, from Beulah Reservoir to Steens, chukar numbers are well down from last year. Attribute it to winter loss and a dry spring, and probably a

hailstorm when eggs were on the ground.

Matt Hardinge, a student of the chukar who makes his home in Bend, was hunting the same deer unit I hunted in October. He and I observed small coveys of chukar (and gray partridge, too) all composed of what looked like adult birds with no young of the year.

"It's definitely not the same number of birds we saw last year or the year before," Hardinge said.

Other Harney County chukar hunters made similar observations in the early part of October. Lots of coveys, but few or no young birds. That is the nature of chukar hunting. Boom and bust. This January promises some of each. —GARY LEWIS



SOUTHERN OREGON/RANDY SHIPLEY

Recent burns, followed by above-average moisture, have provided good quail habitat.

Winter valley quail are in fine feather

Valley quail are on the rise this year, and they offer some excellent wing shooting opportunities throughout the state. Recent above-average habitat conditions have nurtured their numbers. Fair amounts of moisture throughout this past summer have aided in better-than-usual brood success, especially in habitats near and adjacent to recent burns.

"Small burns that create fresh feed and cover are an excellent aid to bolster local bird populations," says Mikal Cline, ODFW Upland Game Bird Coordinator. Prescribed burns in and around valleys have enhanced habitat this past year. Coveys of quail love berry brambles and will forage and feed near them around field edges where they can quickly dart into the cover to avoid predators.

Having a good dog helps more than anything, locating birds — dead or alive — in the thick cover. I like to work my German

Shorthair into the wind where he will pick up scent well ahead of time, giving me a clue that coveys of birds are nearby.

Quail migrate to spots with seeds from plants that have begun to senesce going into winter so they can fill their crops quickly during breaks in the stormy weather. Hunters should invest some time obtaining permission from landowners and scouting properties ahead of time. Most quail in the valleys are found on private property and usually are not pressured much, especially late in the season.

"Mountain quail will start moving down in elevation as the snow levels come down, while California quail will stick to brushy cover and forage under trees and shrubs where the snow doesn't pile up in and around the lowlands," added Cline.

Find cover, such as brush piles where quail avoid nasty weather, and you will tip the odds in your favor. —TROY RODAKOWSKI

Coyotes: Think global; act local

Driving into one of my favorite mule deer haunts, I saw a coyote get up and lope off over the top of a hill. Over the next five days I noticed dozens of coyote dens. Each night, coyotes sang from the tops of the buttes.

There was a time when the cattlemen in these parts kept coyote numbers down. But the nearby ranches have changed hands, and predator control seems not to be a top priority.

While *Canis latrans* is our favorite fuzzball, I do ascribe to him and his ilk the blame for low fawn recruitment in this game management unit.

"We should come back and hunt coyotes," my hunting partner said. We should. But it's a 5-hour drive. Instead, I say think global and act local.

I can hunt closer to home and reduce the number of coyotes that make their living on the outskirts of nearby ranches and farms. For me, that's the Paulina, the Upper Deschutes and the Wagontire units – or whatever ODFW has decided to call them for 2026.

Wherever cattle are raised, fed or held for market, packs of coyotes can make a living.

Locate public land near feed lots or cattle winter range.

Find a dirt road with places to hide the truck. Plan a route where six to eight call stands can be made, each one two to three miles apart.

Set up to watch upwind and downwind approaches. Employ a motion decoy and use mouth calls or electronic calls to simulate deer distress, elk calf or rabbit distress. Camouflage hands and faces, and keep the muzzle of the rifle or shotgun held toward where the coyote is expected. Stay in place for at least 20 minutes before moving to the next stand. If the coyote approaches and stops and goes sideways, you have about three seconds before it turns tail.

—GARY LEWIS

Wherever cattle are raised, fed or held for market, packs of coyotes can make a living.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR



This fat feedlot coyote acts like it runs the ranch.

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JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

OHA efforts help hunters get CWD test results faster

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

OHA's diligent work in the Capitol has produced important results for Oregon's hunting community yet again. This fall, the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) at Oregon State University began testing deer samples collected in Oregon for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), with elk samples to be online soon.

In 2023, OHA worked with Oregon legislators to author the original funding bill to establish in-state testing at the OVDL. It took two sessions of work to pass the bill in 2024 and allocate \$2.7 million in state funds toward monitoring and testing for CWD. Of that funding, \$1.9 million went to the OVDL for personnel, training, and equipment to set up their laboratory for CWD testing; the remaining funds were directed to ODFW for sample collection and monitoring efforts.

With in-state testing at the OVDL, hunters no longer must wait 7-8 weeks for results, as was previously the case when samples were sent to Colorado State University. Now, the OVDL has the capacity to turn around results within a week of receiving the samples. The speed of the results not only benefits the hunting community but also allows for a much faster response time from ODFW, should a positive sample be found.

OHA will continue to advocate for funds to maintain and expand the OVDL's capacity to assist the hunting community and to ensure our wildlife populations remain healthy.

New ODFW Commissioners confirmed

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

With the confirmed appointments to the Fish and Wildlife Commission in November, the Commission is back to full capacity after nearly a year of operating with a vacant position.

Dave Moldal and Hugh Morrison were appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the Commissioners from the Northwest Region. They replaced Commissioner Kahlil, who stepped down in January due to moving out of state, and Commissioner King, who was not reappointed for a second term.

The sportsmen's community participated in the appointment process, working with the Governor's office to provide input on potential candidates. During the process, the new Commissioners met with stakeholder groups and sportsmen's organizations with none of the groups voicing concern at their appointment.

Both Moldal and Morrison have backgrounds in conservation, wildlife management, and working with private landowners. Both have experience in hunting, fishing, and the outdoors. OHA looks forward to working with them in their new capacity as Fish and Wildlife Commissioners.

Budget shortfall won't deter gun bills

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

Oregon's financial woes remain the primary concern for the 2026 Legislative Session. The state budget remains in a financial shortfall, even with the recent revenue forecast, which legislators will have to decide how to balance.

The revenue forecast posted on Nov. 19 shrank the previous \$373 million deficit to \$63 million. It will be up to legislators how to address the remaining shortfall, whether through agency reductions or by dipping into the two reserve funds the state has kept for such an emergency. Regardless of the solution, most bill concepts requiring new state funding will have a low probability of success.

While this will likely hinder beneficial concepts like continued funding for chronic wasting disease efforts, it appears it won't have the same effect on costly firearms bills. Bills from the 2025 session intending to enforce Measure 114 and to create a state-level firearms dealer registry

appear to be poised for a return in the 2026 session, regardless of the costly ramifications for Oregon taxpayers. These bills have been estimated to cost Oregonians between \$6 and \$15 million, respectively, to implement – a high price tag during a session when state agencies are being asked to reduce their budgets to account for the economic shortfall.

In addition to defending against these recurring firearms restriction bills, OHA's legislative priorities heading into the 2026 session remain strongly focused on wildlife and habitat.

While not directly tied to the legislative session, Measure 114 remains an issue to be watched closely. The Oregon Supreme Court heard the appeal

case on Nov. 6, but it may take anywhere from 3 months to a year before the ruling is filed.

You can continue to support OHA's ongoing work in the Capitol and on legal issues by donating to the Hunters' Victory Fund: <https://oregonhunters.org/donate>

***The Oregon
Supreme Court
heard the
Measure 114
appeal case on
Nov. 6, but a
ruling may take
up to a year.***

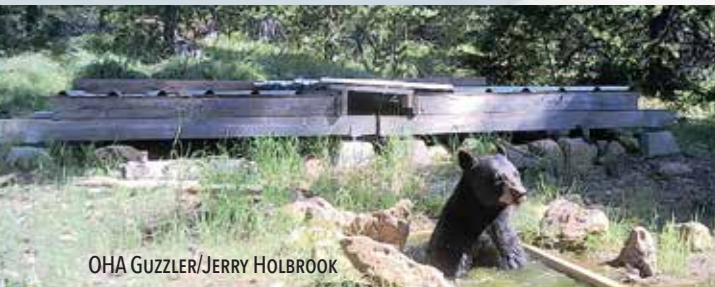
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Your tax-deductible* contributions help protect Oregon's wildlife, habitat and hunting heritage.

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 2026 ballot!

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



OHA GUZZLER/JERRY HOLBROOK

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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.

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BOWHUNTING

By RICHY J. HARROD

MELTED CANDY BARS BRING BACK ARCHERY ELK HUNT MEMORIES

Cool nighttime air gently drifted down the creek bottom, raising the hair on the back of our necks. We hiked in silence toward a ridgeline saddle above us. My brother Ron and I were hoping to intercept some elk moving from sagebrush feeding areas to daytime beds in dense juniper and pine. It was opening day of archery elk season in eastern Oregon.

Sweat rolled down our faces as we climbed the dry hillside. “I’ve got to peel my jacket,” Ron said. “Me, too,” I replied. “Feels like it’s going to be hot today.” The creek bottom coolness was a tease. It was a typical start to the archery elk season: hot August temperatures persisting into September, making tough hunting conditions. I was already thinking that my snack bag would be a melted mess from the heat.

Cow elk mews were heard nearby as we crested the ridgeline in the soft morning light. We noticed a light breeze on our backs, but it was too late to change our approach. Within a couple of minutes, breaking branches and heavy thumping of hooves divulged the elk herd took flight from our scent.

We climbed higher to the top of the mountain. Ron bugled to locate other elk. The rising sun shone through a layer of smoke from a nearby wildfire, turning the tops of pine trees a brilliant orange. The woods were eerily quiet as the temperature increased.

“It’s a weird morning – seems like the elk are already hiding from the heat and smoke,” I said as we glassed the expansive, remote basin.

By 10 a.m., we’d hiked a couple miles and climbed 500 feet of elevation. No bugles were heard, and no fresh sign was found. The shade of a large juniper was a welcome place to rest and watch for possible elk movement. It was time to pull out the snack bag.



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

A snack break on an elk hunt offers a pause to reflect on past hunts – some sweet, some sour.

It’s ironic that we pursue the healthiest meat, yet our snack bags are full of sugary candy bars, toaster pastries, cookies, and other unhealthy items. Snacks like these are a tradition and indulged while burning thousands of calories chasing elk.

“What do you know, my Snickers are melted,” Ron said with a snicker. “Yeah, never fails. Must be elk season!” I replied laughing.

Milk chocolate always melts on the hike, then later seems to return to a solid, whitish mass not resembling chocolate.

We wondered if our candy bars had not melted any time in the past 36 years of archery elk hunts. Wildfire smoke and hot temperatures are not unusual for many consecutive days, but there were years with no breaks in the hot weather.

“Remember how smoky it was the year I shot that 5-point over there?” Ron asked as he pointed in the distance.

“That was a tough year – hot and smoky for two weeks straight,” I remembered. Nearby fires in 2017 kept the woods choked with dense smoke.

“Do you remember when I got dehydrated packing that bull to the top of the ridge before you and Riley got back to me?” I asked.

“Oh man, you were in bad shape. That was the year we shot two bulls the same day,” Ron laughingly replied.

In 2011, I shot a 4x5 and Ron killed a 4-point a few hundred yards away on the same morning. The downhill pack would have been long and difficult, so we decided

to pack meat out up and over the ridgetop. Uphill pack-outs are never a good idea. Ron and our lifelong hunting partner, Riley, packed out two quarters from Ron’s bull while I moved my quarters to the ridgetop pending their return with a cart. It took them longer than anticipated and I ran out of water and snacks. By the time I packed the entire elk to the top, I was dehydrated and a little deliri-

ous, but they rescued me with liquids, and of course, more melted candy bars.

No matter the conditions of our candy bars, snack time on the mountain has produced some cherished memories. We often “horse trade” the most desired candy. I mean who can resist a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup or a Cinnamon Pop-Tart? It’s a time to share incredible experiences or most challenging moments. The time together has strengthened our brotherly bonds.

On this day, we sat in the shade of the juniper for nearly an hour reminiscing about past hunts while devouring our melted candy bars and crumbling Pop-Tarts. I gathered all the wrappers and zipped them up in the plastic bag along with another memory. I knew that the next time we open our snack bags, those special memories will pour out like melted candy.

No matter the conditions of our candy bars, snack time on the mountain has produced some cherished memories.



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TRADITIONS

By GARY LEWIS



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

This L.C. Smith 12 gauge was manufactured in 1928 and would have retailed for something like \$73. Today it is back in service for chukar and quail hunts.

Enjoy a new season with old side-by-sides

Pepper, my one-year-old pudelpointer, trotted ahead. Before she rounded the turn in the trail, I whistled her back. We turned and retraced our steps 50 yards. She looked up and I gestured her into the tall great basin rye grass. She walked right into the scent cone of a pheasant, locked up, three feet on the ground, one tight against her breast, tail horizontal, nose pointed right at the rooster.

Many of us have inherited guns from family or friends who only wished we would remember them after they were gone. This is how we do that.

The young dog screwed her eyeballs up at me to make sure I was in position. I had not seen the bird, but then there it was, rattling its wings, clawing for the sky. I let it get out a bit, thumbed the safety and stroked the front trigger. The bird folded and crashed in the stubble. Pepper was right behind it. She made the retrieve, stopped halfway back, dropped the bird, spit feathers then picked it up and dropped it at my feet.

The pudelpointer is an old German breed, brought over to the United States about the same time as Operation Paperclip, which brought more than 1,600 German officers, scientists and engineers, including many Nazi rocket and warfare researchers (and their families and maybe a

couple dogs) to these shores. While I hunted Chinese roosters with a German dog, I was also hunting with a German-made J.P. Sauer & Son 12 gauge for the first time.

Over the years, I have developed an affinity for side-by-side shotguns and especially like the pre-WWII era guns, both with Damascus barrels and the early nitro-proof tubes. And from time to time have added to the collection. This season, hunting with my new dog, I have purposed to put these guns back in the field.

This gun is an import, a pre-WWI side-by-side manufactured by the oldest maker of Prussian sporting guns circa 1910. It sports a boxlock action, twin underlugs and an engraved Greener crossbolt. Every screw head is timed perfectly to the orientation of the barrels, and each screw head is engraved with a sunburst. Rosettes and flourishes mark the bottom metal, trigger guard and breech, while the rib is sighted with two beads. The pistol grip tells me the gun was made for an American sportsman, likely one who hunted with setters or retrievers. And since I know a little about the man who hunted with this gun, I can picture him in grouse coverts in upstate New York walking and whispering to his dogs. That was before he moved his family to a place called La Grande where there were pheasants in the fence rows.

The same gentleman hunter also owned a Made-in-America L.C. Smith Ideal grade 12 gauge, which has come down to me. A little research revealed this gun was built in 1928 and would have sold for \$73 that year. There were 60 others con-

figured like this one in '28, engraved with oak leaves, its frame and lock color case hardened with smoky browns and blues, 30-inch barrels and a splinter fore-end.

For my second hunt of the young season, I carried "Elsie" for chukar along a rimrock. The wind was rising, but I managed to shoot half a limit of chukar and miss another half a limit in the 40-mph gusts.

I called the dog back time and again to go over the places I knew the birds liked to tuck into. While the wind was howling, Pepper worked out scent trails and locked up to show me where I should look. In one corner of rimrock below a spring, I walked in on point while two bald eagles drifted over my locked-up dog and the pointed bird. I saluted the eagles and then walked in and shot the chukar when it cleared the top of the sage.

Many of us have inherited guns from family or friends who only wished we would remember them after they were gone. This is how we do that.

This tradition of walking behind dogs for rising birds came to us out of France and was passed on to the Germans and the Scots and the Welsh. At its highest purpose, the hunt reinforces the best impulses of manners, etiquette and conservation. In a nod to the gentlemen and gentlewomen who carried these guns before us, we can pay our respects if we dust off their old shotguns and take them afield once more.



To contact author Gary Lewis, visit www.GaryLewisOutdoors.com

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WHAT'S NEW

in Oregon

for 2026

New mule deer hunt areas highlight changes for the new year.

BY JIM YUSKAVITCH

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission signed off on the 2026 big game hunting seasons and regulations proposed by ODFW staff at its Sept. 12 meeting in Ontario.

Those proposed regulations contained the usual mix of changes, which for next year include tag number adjustments, new fair chase rules and a controlled hunt tag application fee increase. But the big one, to put it mildly, is a change in mule deer hunt boundaries based on years of field research that will fundamentally change eastern Oregon mule deer hunt areas and substantially improve the accuracy in collecting deer herd data for management and conservation purposes.

Here's a look at the major changes for 2026.

Mule Deer

Replacing wildlife management units with deer hunt areas for determining hunt boundaries is the major news for next year's mule deer seasons and beyond, and marks a fundamental change in how ODFW manages mule deer populations and hunting harvest.

Over the past several years, ODFW conducted extensive mule deer research that included capturing and collaring more than 1,400 deer to track their seasonal movements. In the process, biologists identified 22 distinct herd ranges for mule deer in eastern Oregon. Identifying those ranges, defined as areas that deer herds use over the course of a year, allowed for developing significantly improved population models that integrate key variables, such as buck and doe ratios comprising each herd, along with more accurate abundance and harvest data. An important factor is that to more accurately evaluate mule

deer herds, it is critical to study each herd within its year-round range, rather than within the somewhat arbitrary boundaries of wildlife management units.

This shift to providing hunts based on management unit boundaries to deer hunt areas that take into account seasonal herd movements will allow ODFW to better monitor deer herd size, competition and health, and place hunters in areas where greater numbers of deer are more likely to be present during hunting seasons.

Some deer hunt areas will encompass a deer herd's entire range, while others have been split into smaller hunt areas based on such factors as where they move across the landscape, different types of habitat and land uses within their ranges, fire history of those areas and other variables that impact the herds. The result is that quite a few herd ranges have been divided into multiple hunt areas.

Mule Deer Tags and Hunts

This new paradigm required ODFW biologists to essentially delete most previous hunts and replace them with new hunts to account for the new herd movement-based hunt boundaries. The final results for 2026 eastern Oregon mule deer hunts provide similar offerings as in the past – although there may be some major differences in individual hunt areas – but will provide for fewer tags due to the continuing low deer population levels. Overall, hunters will have 9 percent fewer mule deer tags for 100-series buck deer hunts throughout eastern Oregon, and an 8-percent reduction in 600-series antlerless deer tags statewide.

Because of these big changes in mule deer hunts, it will be extremely important for hunters to review hunts offered and their adjusted boundaries when deciding



JACKSON COUNTY/RANDY SHIPLEY

Several elk hunts have been eliminated for 2026, while a few new hunts have been added.

which hunts to apply for to ensure that they will end up hunting in their desired area. More information can found on the ODFW website at: <https://myodfw.com/articles/eastern-oregon-deer-hunts>

Mule Deer Population

Having developed improved techniques for estimating mule deer numbers, ODFW now has more accurate population data. The 2025 mule deer population is now

estimated to be about 171,700 throughout their eastern Oregon range. This is an increase of less than one-tenth of a percent from 2024, and an increase of 1 percent from 2023. The bottom line, although there has been some small improvement, is that Oregon's mule deer population is still very much at-risk. Of the 22 identified herds, 14 are classified as of "extreme concern" and 5 at "very high concern."

Black-tailed Deer

No changes are in store for black-tailed deer hunts for 2026. While there is no population estimate or specific management objectives for black-tailed deer, recent, more accurate monitoring methods indicate the population is no longer declining.

Elk

Changes for 2026 elk seasons are primarily some reductions in tag numbers, including deleting five cow hunts and a reduction of tags for the NW Santiam cow hunt, Hunt 216, from 50 to 22 because of concerns about population numbers and a decrease in elk-human conflicts. Deleted western Oregon antlerless elk hunts include: Pengra, Mosby, Santiam Late Bow, McKenzie Late Bow and North Indigo Late Bow.



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Two eastern Oregon hunts (North Wagontire and Umatilla Youth) are deleted, but three new hunts (Ukiah Youth, Walla Walla Youth, The Dalles Watershed Bow) have been added.

Overall, there will be a 1 percent decrease in available elk tags for 2026.

Oregon's eastern Oregon Rocky Mountain elk population continues to do very well. Of 35 eastern Oregon units with elk population data available, 24 have elk numbers at or near objectives, and 14 units have numbers of more than 110 percent above objective. The current Rocky Mountain elk population is estimated at 70,600.

Western Oregon elk continue to struggle. Only six of 19 units are near or above management objectives. At an estimated 52,507 animals, Roosevelt elk are only at 74 percent of the 70,850 objective.

Pronghorn

The only change for the 2026 pronghorn season is an additional 12 tags for a total of 2,059 in 52 hunts.

Oregon's pronghorn population remains stable at 16,000 to 19,000.

Bighorn Sheep

A total of 136 bighorn sheep tags will be offered in 2026 – 81 California rams, 50 California ewes and 5 Rocky Mountain



LAKE COUNTY/JOHN MCFARLAND III

Pronghorn tag numbers increased slightly for 2026.

rams in 27 California bighorn hunts and three Rocky Mountain bighorn hunts. Six ram tags and three ewe tags will be available to non-resident hunters.

The tag available for the 556 Wenaha Rocky Mountain bighorn hunt is rotated between Oregon, Washington and the

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation each year. Oregon was allocated this hunt in 2025, so will not offer it this year.

Oregon's California bighorn sheep population is estimated at 4,000 to 4,200 in 32 herds. Rocky Mountain bighorn

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sheep numbers are 800 to 1,000 animals in 11 herds.

Rocky Mountain Goats

Hunters can apply for 21 Rocky Mountain goat tags offered in 12 hunts, with two tags allocated for non-resident hunters.

Oregon's Rocky Mountain goat population has been stable or increasing in recent years with a current population estimate of 1,100 to 1,300 animals.

Bear and Cougar

For the 2026 controlled spring bear season, ODFW will offer 11,067 tags in 19 hunts, which is 70 more tags than were

offered last season. These additional tags are for the 731A South Central Hunt (605 tags) and 754A Mt. Emily-Walla Walla hunt (242 tags). Both of these hunt areas have strong bear numbers that will not be adversely affected by increased harvest. There are no changes for fall bear season.

Oregon has a robust black bear population of about 43,000 statewide.

Cougar hunting regulations remain unchanged from 2025. The cougar population is estimated at 7,060 animals.

Tag Application Fees

Controlled hunt application fees will increase by \$2, raising the cost to \$10. Application fees will increase by another \$1 in 2028 and again by \$1 in 2030. Application deadlines remain the same.

Fair Chase


The Commission added language clarifying regulations that prohibit the use of thermal imaging devices for hunting in Oregon. The previous rule stated that: "It is unlawful to: Hunt, locate, or scout for the purpose of hunting any wildlife with infrared or other night vision sight or equipment except trail cameras."

Expanded language includes clarification that it is unlawful "to hunt, locate, or scout, for the purpose of hunting any wildlife with infrared, including thermal, or any other "night vision" sight or equipment except trail cameras."

This prohibition includes any thermal device that is attached to or incorporated into a scope or firearm while hunting – even if the thermal device is turned off.

In recent years, Oregon State Police have received increasing reports of poachers using thermal devices to locate wildlife at night. In December 2024, OSP arrested 13 individuals in Clackamas County for allegedly poaching deer, elk and other big game animals. Included in the bust was the discovery and confiscation of 14 thermal imaging devices.

In addition, hunting within 500 feet of the mouth of designated wildlife crossings on US Highways 20 and 97 is now prohibited. This new rule is modeled after current trapping regulations that make it illegal to set traps within 500 feet of the mouth of designated wildlife crossing structures. This new rule was added in response to public input ODFW received during the public comment period while developing the 2026 Big Game Regulations.

See more about regulations on technology and even AI cautions on Page 56. 




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Find Yourself at Finley



I wanted to approach close enough to identify the puddle ducks in the monster mass of avian goodness without blowing them out and causing deafening noise. Waterfowl season was open, but I was scouting. Suddenly, the marsh erupted. The early-fall locals, so comfortably asleep seconds earlier, were in distress. I felt guilty before noticing the bald eagle. The majestic bird split the flock like bowling pins, narrowly missing, and sailing over me.

The last week of the general blacktail season found me at Snag Boat Bend. I wondered about the odds of filling a tag here,

but found tracks within minutes, including some heavy bucks chasing does.

Two mallards cut across the river bend within range before I noticed an archer examining sign in a choked-up floodplain. He was working much harder than I had this season, and I respected him. It was only his second season of hunting. He figured archery elk would be it, but after getting to full draw on his friend's bull, he got hooked. It was gray ghosts now. He showed me two fresh rubs. I gave him a Primos grunt tube.

While searching for a quiet place to escape before Beavers games, I found

much more. This place is special, with a fascinating history. Amazingly, over two centuries since Lewis & Clark, and the subsequent flood of pioneers, significant open space and world class agricultural land remain in the Willamette Valley.

The Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex preserved unique habitats in the region while promoting outdoor recreation and fostering education and habitat restoration. The William L. Finley NWR, located just south of Corvallis, is the southernmost jewel in the complex.

The Kalapuya people were here first. German immigrant John Fiechter built a

Once a hunting lodge, this Oregon gem is now a refuge for wildlife and hunters alike.

STORY & PHOTOS BY JASON HALEY



house here in 1855. It still stands, and is thought to be the oldest in Benton County. Fiechter traveled by wagon train on the Applegate Trail to avoid the treacherous final section of the Oregon Trail. His widow sold in 1906 to Foster and Hughes, who subsequently sold to the three daughters of Henry Failing, a prominent Portland entrepreneur. One daughter, Emily Failing Cabell, bought out her sisters and the Cabell family assembled a few thousand acres.

The Cabells established a hunting estate here where sportsmen hunted waterfowl, pheasants, snipe, and deer. The Cabell Lodge was built in 1912 overlook-

ing Cabell Marsh. The hunting lodge era spanned 1912-1964 before the land was purchased from Cabell's son by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, primarily to provide winter habitat for Dusky Canada geese. The Cabells encouraged students from Oregon State to conduct research on the property during their tenure.

Today's refuge is 5,700 acres with several unique habitat types that allow visitors to see what the early valley may have looked like. Permanent and seasonal wetlands and riparian zones, oak savanna woodlands, mixed conifers, and wetland prairie form a picturesque destination.

Some of the signature oaks are hundreds of years old. Boardwalks, trails, viewing platforms, interpretive signs, a visitor center/store, and historic structures are just some of the attractions. The abbreviated watchable wildlife checklist is impressive.

William L. Finley's photos helped persuade President Theodore Roosevelt to establish the first bird refuge on the west coast. Later, Finley served as president of what would become the National Audubon Society. He was appointed to the Oregon State Game Commission in 1925. His contributions to species and habitat conservation live on.

Hunting Opportunities at Finley

Hunting occurs primarily at the 376-acre Snag Boat Bend Unit located off Peoria Road along the Willamette River, east of and non-contiguous to the main refuge. Walk-in deer and waterfowl hunting is allowed seven days a week. Waterfowl hunting occurs in the backwater sloughs and seasonally flooded ponds of Zone 1 (along the river's bend). Duck are ODFW's "Zone 1" and "Zone 1 Scaup" and geese are ODFW's "Northwest Permit Zone." Shots could be heard in the distance the morning I visited.

Deer hunting happens in Zone 1 and Zone 2 (archery only) with short-range weapons: archery, shotgun slugs, and muzzle-loaders. Boat-in hunting is allowed. There is a public launch downstream in Peoria. State-issued General Archery (one deer), General Any Legal Weapon (one deer with visible antler) and Willamette Unit 615 (one deer) tags are all good here. The 615 tag provides a six-month season (Sept. 1 to Feb. 28).

Deer hunting is offered August-October at the main refuge with the same tag and weapon requirements and zones. Antlerless elk hunting is offered by special permit and lottery. A single 3-week archery season with 10 tags began this year on Aug. 30. Three 2-week, short-range firearms hunts began Sept. 20 with five permits each. Look for a May press release each year with refuge hunting access applications due July 1.

Self-service kiosks are present at both units. Maps, regulations, and brochures are available.



Resident honkers, the only Canada geese to nest in Oregon, raise broods at Finley in the spring.



If it flies in western Oregon, you'll likely find it at Finley.





Valley quail find food and cover living on the edges.



Turkeys trot here, too.



There's the rub. A hunter with a 615 Willamette deer tag hunts with a recurve at Finley, where big game hunting is limited to short-range weapons. A few opportunities to hunt elk are offered, as well.



COLD DUCK

**When the weather cools off, Oregon's duck hunting can get hot.
Start the new year off with a bang and pop a cold one.**

BY TROY RODAKOWSKI





I slowly pulled on my waders and eased them up to my chest with some resistance. "This guy must have gained a couple pounds since Thanksgiving and Christmas," I thought to myself as I loosened the belt and lengthened the suspenders a bit so I could move. It was cold, 36 degrees to be exact, and the warm coffee mug made my frozen finger tips tingle as I took a sip of the black tar and swallowed. Got to have caffeine in the duck blind, especially this early. It was 5:30 a.m., and we had a few dozen decoys to set prior to shooting time on this early January morning. Every year I can't wait for the late-season birds to show and provide some of the best shooting of the season.

Hunting the late season looks to be pretty good for most of Oregon, with good numbers of birds projected to move through during the later portions of the season. As Pacific storms roll across the Northwest, birds will wing their way south at a rapid pace from the northern reaches south to California and Mexico. I recall many times over the years when limits didn't come quickly until the months of December and January. Just as the fog slowly rolls into the marsh on a late fall evening, the bird hunting tends to follow suit across most of Oregon's wetlands.

I really look forward to those cold mornings with warm coffee, snacks, good company and whistling wings descending from the skies above. Setting decoys by headlamp in the dark and that fresh smell of gun powder as it drifts on the air following some good shooting at a cupped-up flock. Watching the dogs work and retrieve birds from the frosty winter waters without

hesitation. The evenings around the dinner table telling stories of great shots and the ones that got away, while enjoying a great meal of fresh duck and goose. These and many other things we cherish are all part of the late season fowl fancy.

Overall, several species populations are up from 2024, including wigeon, gadwall, pintail, shovelers, redheads and canvasback. Mallards, teal and scaup have struggled during the last year, according to the recent Delta Waterfowl population and habitat surveys.

The really good news is relief from our recent drought years has made for a healthy overall population in the Pacific Flyway for 2025-26 season, according to Brandon Reishus, ODFW Migratory Game Bird Coordinator.

"For northern areas that contribute to our wintering flocks, Alaska and northern Canada were mixed, while southern Alberta saw increases in breeding populations for most species," Reishus reported. "For geese, populations in Alaska continue to be lower than the past couple of decades, and cacklers from the Yukon Delta remain well below population goal at about 125,000. Those are similar numbers to the early 1990s, as the population was rebuilding from historic lows that necessitated closed seasons."

Northern pintails are always a prize, regardless of where you hunt, and the USFWS has increased the bag limit to 3 birds this season, which is fantastic news. However, I encourage folks to carefully identify their birds and try their best to shoot drakes so we can continue to have a multiple-bird bag limit for future seasons.



PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

Freezing weather can prompt northern birds to move about in search of high-energy feed.

“The main wintering areas in Oregon (Willamette Valley and LCR, Columbia Basin, Treasure Valley) are more at the mercy of population status and breeding conditions in northern breeding areas and with mixed population status this spring (some up and some down) and continental populations at near long-term average, I’d expect an average season, unless favorable weather conditions prevail for much of the season,” said Reishus.

I really love those stormy mornings when the new flights of northerns arrive on the cold jet stream and drop into the decoys. Some of the best hunts I have enjoyed came on the nastiest, wettest and coldest days of the season. Draw blind hunting opportunities in several of Oregon’s wildlife management areas can be a smart move for hunters, especially late in the season. After Thanksgiving, when the cackling Canada geese arrive, there are plenty of opportunities on private agricultural tracts where geese cause extensive damage to crops and most landowners are usually very happy to grant access to hunt.


Surface water will build on ryegrass and grain fields, creating new feeding zones for waterfowl. Early-season feeding zones may be fed out by now, so birds will search for new locations with ample food. This in turn creates a problem for hunters, as it scatters flocks across large areas of potential roosting and feeding sites. Spend some time scouting. When the fall rains are late to arrive, feed will hold on longer and magnetize migrating fowl for several weeks. However, early-season heavy rains can flood out many potential feeding locations, quickly whisking away feeding migrants to new areas.

Mallard populations, though slightly down, are holding strong at nearly 6.5 million for the 2025 season, with gadwall, wigeon and pintail all up from 8-13 percent, respectively, according to the Ducks Unlimited May Pond Surveys (www.ducks.org/ducknumbers). Overall species counts were around 34 million, which is almost exactly the same as 2024.

“We have very little information from snow goose colonies in the arctic,” Reishus noted, “though reports from Alaska’s north slope indicated strong breeding efforts and good overall production.”

Snows and specklebellies have been seen more frequently moving through the Willamette Valley and much of western Oregon over the past several seasons. This was not the norm a decade ago, when most of them migrated further east toward Summer Lake and the Malheur Basin. Pattern shifts can occur when land use and agricultural practices change in favor of migrating flocks looking for food and stopover resting spots.

Late-season birds have some of the best plumage, with every color of the rainbow present at times throughout their feathers, and they provide some of the best specimens for the taxidermist.

The best time to bundle up and enjoy Oregon’s waterfowl is late in the season. You won’t regret a few frosty mornings in a late-season blind, especially if you pop some cold duck for the holidays. 



The author shows off a colorful limit of late-season ducks from the central Willamette Valley.



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TIRED OF WAITING FOR EWE

A SHEEP HUNT IN THE JOHN DAY CANYON WITH A HARVEST MOON RISING

BY GARY LEWIS

After the sheep was tied off to the mountain, Jamie Bowles and Louisa Hooton took a moment to celebrate.

She clawed her way out of the blackness of a fevered dream. Eyes squeezed tight against the morning sun coming in the tent, she checked the time. This was not how this hunt was supposed to go. This last day.

In her second year applying in the big game drawings, Louisa Hooton drew a tag for a bighorn ewe. The plan was to float the John Day over a four-day span in October.

On many floats with her family, she had seen sheep along the river in small herds, and it seemed easy to put eyes on a dry ewe and make a stalk. But that was before the river was so low the 52-mile float would have been one long drag over the skinny water.

Louisa Hooton makes her home in Bend. She works in the same ODFW office her father Bob Hooton retired from, and the former biologist is one of her inspirations.

She dragged on her boots. Her head pounded. This had been harder than she or any of the people she called mentors had imagined.

After a summer backpacking, her body was honed to whip cord and muscle. With help from friends, she had sighted-in her Ruger American and Leupold scope, testing 6.5 Creedmoor loads at the bench at the COSSA Range until she settled on a 140-grain Nosler bullet that patterned the best. Out in the gravel pits, she had shot prone and from sitting positions on the advice of hunters who knew the terrain.

She could hear them now in her head.

Randy Lewis saying, "Wait for the tiny circle to cross the target."

Gary saying, "Press the trigger with the whorl of your fingerprint."

THE VIEW

ODFW had issued 28 resident tags and two nonresident tags. By this time, most of the other hunters had been successful or at least had "educated" the sheep in the canyon.

The season had come down to this. Her partners and mentors, Jamie Bowles and Corey Heath needed to be heading for home on the morrow. The last day.

While no stranger to wild places, this was much harder than she imagined.

Here, the cliffs are carved of layered basalt that run beneath the arid grasslands. Through it cuts the John Day River headed north, a thin ribbon of water now in early October. Tight to the river's edge is the only vegetation, where the leafy willows survive and the silvered sagebrush leaches water from the volcanic soil. The arrowleaf balsamroot are still in evidence, their leaves dry and crisp while the resilient mullein stands tall, sentinels at the deltas that mark the long-dry feeder creeks.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

A hunter lets her eye scan across the vertical basalt, mark the thin ledges and clefts, scan deep in the side canyons. Watch for gray shapes, the horizontal line of a back, the crook of a leg, the flick of an ear.

Vast fields of shale mark the scars on the sides of the hills. Sometimes a lone juniper can be seen clinging to life in a crack in the boulders. Somehow, the herds of California bighorns here survive the barren land, taking water from the river. It is hard to be a hunter here, where even mountain lions fear to tread.

She hadn't admitted it to Jamie or Corey, but she had a fear of heights.

Throughout this last day, the trio looked into side canyons, glassing into shaded pockets. There were sheep here to find. They just had to find them in places where a stalk could be made.

The sun passed its zenith and began moving to the west and to the finality that sunset would bring to her hunt.

She had heard there was to be a harvest moon, a hunter's moon – the full moon closest to the autumn equinox. The timing of the moonrise is significant for the extra light it provides hunters and farmers.

From down on the river trail, they spotted the sheep, a dozen strung out under the rim.

Corey plotted a route with a gain of about 1,500 feet elevation to get them within 200 yards. Two hours later, they skinned around an outcrop and Jamie froze.

"The sheep are right there," she whispered.

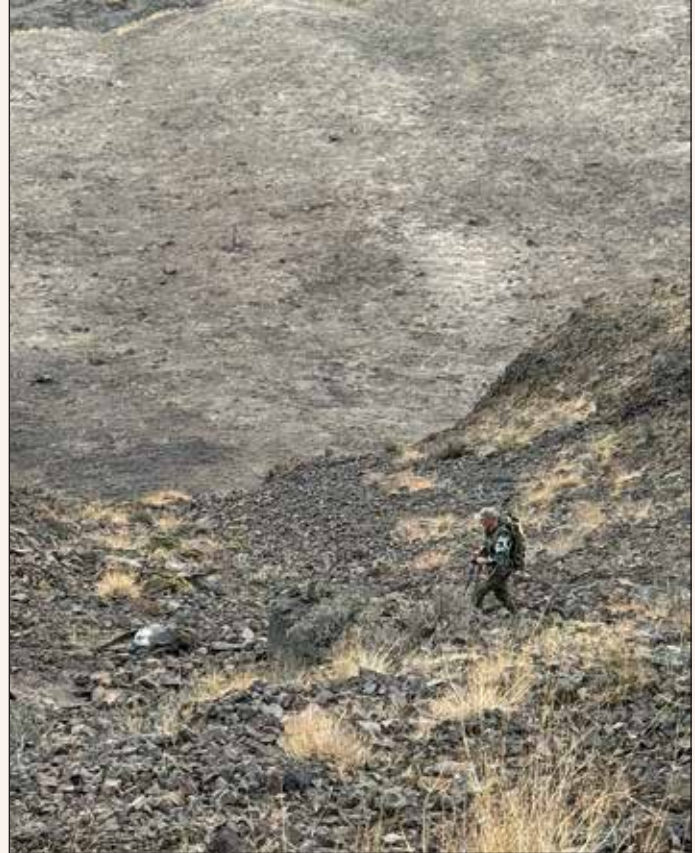
Corey Heath, the former wildlife bio, tore his eyes away from the binocular, turned and said. "This might be the last chance you get."

In the east, the hunter's moon appeared, bathing the high desert landscape a bright golden hue as the sun tinged the western sky in orange and violet. Louisa scrambled to get set up in the shale and seat the butt of the rifle into her shoulder. "The last sheep in line," Corey breathed. It had long, thin, tipped-out horns. An older animal. It turned and looked back up the hill. That's what we would, of course, call a ewe-turn.

A downhill shot. Just a bullet away. Ninety-four yards. Quartering-to.



There is nothing more satisfying than topping out on a ridge with a full pack under a harvest moon.



Well above the river, the sheep came to rest, albeit precariously atop another cliff.

Louisa thumbed the safety forward to "fire" and found the animal's shoulder in the crosshair. The rifle cracked, and the animal turned to run headlong. Dead on its feet, the ewe rolled end over end 400 yards to come to rest on a narrow shelf.

AFTER EWE, LOUISA

Louisa took a deep breath. Why had she expected it to be easier? Over the cliff they went, sliding down, stepping sidehill, sliding in the scree, hands extended through the steepest parts.

Beside her prize, under the light of the moon, Louisa hesitated to touch it until Corey tied the animal off to a boulder.

"The ridge was steep enough, I felt like I couldn't stand," Louisa said later. Corey and Louisa skinned and bagged the quarters, dividing the load in thirds. Well after dark they started for the rim, side-hilling up by degrees.

"I basically crawled my way to the top. Every time I pulled myself up another step, I was making a grunting sound." She said it sounded like a tennis match with the sound of effort at every step.

"I have never feared death as much as I did in that moment," Louisa said later.

Bloody, beaten and scarred, Louisa Hooton topped out on the ridge carrying a full pack, grateful for the light under the hunter's moon.

In the small hours, with the quarters hanging, the trio lifted their glasses.

"You neglected to mention you were afraid of heights," Corey said, taking a sip. "Until we were sitting on a small shelf on a cliff a hundred feet to our death, quartering up your animal in the dark."



Gary Lewis is the host of Frontier Unlimited TV and author of Born Ballistic - the Bob Nosler Story, Fishing Central Oregon and other titles. Contact Gary at www.garylewisoutdoors.com

WANTED:

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Do you have a passion for hunting that you would like to pass on to others?**

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- Hunter ethics and responsibilities
- Outdoor safety

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

How do I become a Certified Instructor?

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



Hunter Education

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





CHECKING OUR BACKTRAIL

2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

OHA fights in Capitol, court and at Oregon's ballot box

OHA plays defense in 2025 legislative session

OHA took a defensive posture in the 2025 legislative session, combating both wildlife management and gun control bills.

While OHA opposed HB 3932, a bill that banned the trapping of beavers on impaired public waterways, it was ultimately passed with little scientific evidence presented in its favor.

OHA had greater success in the defeat, or reduced impact, of gun control bills. The session began with 17 bills specific to gun possession or ownership, and while not all of them sought to reduce Oregonians' access to firearms, most did.

At the midpoint of session, SB 243 emerged as a firearms omnibus bill, rolling four previously independent bills into one. This bill would have banned the possession of a firearm for anyone under the age of 21, required a mandatory 72-hour waiting period, restricted concealed carry in public buildings and adjoining properties, and banned rapid-fire trigger mechanisms. OHA was successful in getting the age restriction and wait period portions of the bill removed entirely, as well as greatly reducing the impact of the concealed carry restriction.

IP28 takes aim at the 2026 Ballot

IP28 proponents have gathered more 80,000 signatures in the goal of making the 2026 ballot. IP28 would criminalize hunting, fishing, and trapping, as well as criminalize wildlife management efforts, education and research with animals, and even trapping vermin. It would also effectively end farming, ranching, and eating Oregon-grown animal products.

As outrageous as that may sound, they continue to receive large out-of-state and foreign contributions that allow them to employ paid signature gatherers. With seven months remaining before the deadline to turn in signatures, the initiative may be poised to reach the qualifying number of 117,173 signatures.

OHA continues to oppose this proposed measure, partnering with numerous sportsmen's organizations, as well as a coalition of farming and ranching organizations.

Measure 114 litigation continues

Measure 114 litigation efforts continue with the state lawsuit being heard by the Oregon Supreme Court in early November.

The suit was upheld by a Harney County judge in 2023, effectively instituting a permanent stay against the measure. That ruling was appealed by the State of Oregon, and the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled in March 2025 that the measure was Constitutional, ruling in opposition to the Harney County judge. The

OREGON HUNTER, January/February 2026

OHA's 2025 Investments in Our Mission

Projects benefiting Oregon's wildlife & sportsmen:	\$396,716
Outreach, information & education:	\$306,602
Defending hunting rights/Advocating for wildlife:	\$102,891
Fighting poaching in Oregon:	\$81,084
Volunteer hours donated by OHA members:	33,058

legal team behind the lawsuit appealed that ruling to the Oregon Supreme Court, which took up the case in November 2025. That court's ruling is expected to be filed in 2026 and will determine the next steps in the fight against Measure 114.

To support this effort and others on the horizon, donate to OHA's Victory Fund at <https://oregonhunters.org/donate>

Women of OHA and Learn to Hunt programs headline OHA's outreach

Learn to Hunt program brings new hunters afield

The OHA Learn to Hunt Program continues to prove itself effective in reaching adults new to hunting through online and in-person courses and events. Over the course of the last four years, we have seen a steady increase in the number of course participants, program subscribers, and new OHA members – all indicators of a growing community.

The Learn to Hunt program will continue to evolve, focusing on providing relevant Oregon-specific instructional courses and materials in an effort to bring new hunters into the community.

Women of OHA program thrives in sophomore year

Since its launch in January 2024, the Women of OHA program has shown continuous growth. With current subscriber numbers nearing 300, the program is proving to be a valued addition to OHA's outreach efforts.

In addition to monthly newsletters with articles, profiles, and resources of specific interest to women, the program hosts several in-person events around the state, including the annual "Weekend Away" event, which combines conservation work with the fun of a chukar hunt.

The response to the program has been definitive, with the subscriber list growing nearly ten-fold in two years and the Weekend Away events selling out each year. In response, OHA will continue to prioritize this outreach program in conjunction with the Learn to Hunt Program and traditional outreach efforts.

OHA engaged important conservation issues in '25

OHA's Conservation Team had another busy year in 2025. There were numerous big accomplishments working on the ground for habitat restoration and enhancement and influencing important wildlife and land management decisions. OHA focused on conservation priorities across the state in various arenas.

Highlight Priorities for 2025



METOLIUS UNIT/JIM YUSKAVITCH

OHA's Mule Deer Fund made a major impact.

Mule Deer

In its first year, the OHA Mule Deer Fund provided critical match funds for five projects that are being implemented specifically to benefit mule deer. OHA allocated \$61,115 to these projects that are seeking to leverage \$1,372,000 in state, federal and partner funds combined.

OHA funded:

- ☛ Metolius land acquisition and bitterbrush planting on winter range
- ☛ Work to protect, restore and enhance aspen stands for the Sumpter herd range
- ☛ The Bend to Suttle Lake Wildlife Passage Initiative for the Deschutes mule deer herd
- ☛ Riparian enhancement within the Smoke Creek drainage for the Crescent herd range

Elk

The OHA Elk Management Subcommittee, operating under the OHA Wildlife-Lands Committee, addressed critical elk management issues across Oregon, including those on the west slope of the Cascades, Clatsop Plains, and in northeast Oregon. OHA funded a Bridge Creek Wildlife Area project that will treat 512 acres of annual

grasses through aerial herbicide applications. 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. OHA also funded the Indian Prairie Aspen Restoration Project 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 lush cover for calving, wallowing areas, and a very palatable forage resource.

Gamebirds

Sage-grouse: OHA once again led support for continued sage-grouse hunting seasons in Oregon and denounced the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's new process for approving permits. We are confident that our work will ensure successful applicants will have more time to plan for hunts in 2026.

Wild turkey: OHA played a lead role in supporting increased hunting opportunity for wild turkey in light of substantial population growth statewide. However, we are closely monitoring our wild turkey population trends to protect against overharvesting birds that predominantly use public lands.

Waterfowl: OHA supported increased bag limit for northern pintail from one to three daily.



OHA led efforts to fund the fight against CWD.

Chronic Wasting Disease

CWD continued to expand across the west in 2025. This dreadful, always-fatal disease has been confirmed in Idaho, Cali-

fornia and Washington, heightening our concerns for its detection in Oregon. OHA continued to work on programs to detect and prevent the spread of CWD to Oregon.

OHA provided incentives in 2025 – a drawing for rifle and optics prizes – for those who submitted samples of harvested deer and elk. OHA is committed to continuing these incentives into 2026.

In November 2025, all samples collected for deer and elk in Oregon will be processed in-state at the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) at Oregon State University. Previously, all samples were collected and shipped to Colorado State University for testing, delaying results by 7-8 weeks. Testing at the OVDL will significantly shorten this timing to a week or less. The establishing of in-state testing was accomplished through \$2.7 million in state funding that OHA helped secure in the 2024 legislative session. OHA wrote the initial funding bill, advocated for the funding through two legislative sessions, and ultimately spearheaded the effort to secure the funding in 2024.

Renewable Energy and Impacts on Wildlife

With Oregon's aggressive clean energy goals looming in the near future, an immense amount of effort is being put into development of clean, renewable energy in our state. This led to policy discussions in the legislature, local governments, and state agencies. OHA was active in nearly all of these processes to safeguard against critical habitat losses and negative impacts to wildlife.

OHA staff wrapped up time served on a Rule Advisory Committee for the Department of Land Conservation and Development that was focused on eastern Oregon solar siting. OHA was successful in ensuring the most critical habitat areas are protected, and when development does occur in such areas, there is required mitigation per the ODFW Habitat Mitigation Plan. OHA tracked the development of first Oregon Energy Strategy and submitted comments to the Oregon Department of Energy pointing out the lack of clear communication around the impacts of energy development on wildlife and their habitat.

Land Management Plans and Projects

In 2025, the U.S. Forest Service, through interim direction from the Regional Forester, did an abrupt change to how they are choosing to manage access to our national forests. OHA and several partners shared our concerns over the impacts to both hunting and habitat. It appears the USFS had decided to ignore

OHA's Conservation Team of staff, committee members, and volunteers have continued their extensive work on critical conservation issues.

its own research on the needs for security cover for elk and mule deer. In a rare step, OHA submitted a formal objection on a high-profile project on the Umatilla National Forest, pointing to the need to better manage the Forest Service lands to keep elk on public lands, rather than pressuring them onto surrounding private lands where long-term chronic damage has occurred.

This input continued as the USFS continued to work through a major forest planning process for the three National Forests in northeast Oregon – the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests – to update their forest plans. OHA has provided comments pressing for the inclusion of habitat needs for game species and acknowledging the most prevalent form of recreational use: hunting.

OHA and many conservation partners were also successful in changing plans from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee who were pushing to include a major sell-off of public lands as part of the overall budget bill that congress was working on. The initial bill included a mandate to arbitrarily sell at least 2 million acres, and up to 3 million acres of federal public lands across 11 western states.

OHA Active at Commission Meetings

OHA testified at every ODFW Commission meeting and flagged several wildlife management issues that we will continue to work on in the foreseeable future.



LAKE COUNTY/ODFW

OHA is seeking a pilot program that would provide active management of wolves in Oregon.

Wolves in Oregon

Wolf populations in Oregon continued to grow in 2025. Along with increased wolf populations come increased conflicts with livestock and increased questions on impacts on elk and deer populations. At the April Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, ODFW staff shared information on the 2024 Annual Wolf Report. The report is an annual accounting of the status of wolves in Oregon and includes information on populations, dispersal, conflict with livestock, and management. Most of ODFW's report covered the three main factors that were prioritized at a wolf workshop in 2023. Those being illegal take of wolves, reducing depredation (specifically in NE Oregon), and improving population monitoring, including the development of a population model. Missing in the report is any reference to the predation effects on ungulates. These data are nearly impossible to find, and currently we know very little about the impact of wolf predation on Oregon's deer and elk herds.

There is still no population estimate for the total number of wolves in Oregon, which leaves only the "minimum wolf count" (204 wolves in 2024, a 15-percent increase), which is essentially useless for overall management of the species.

With this, OHA began work on planning for a potential pilot program in Wallowa County. The intent of the program would be to begin active wolf management in areas where chronic depredation has occurred and concerns for wolf impacts have occurred. This ambitious pilot program could produce a variety of benefits, and it will be a key focus area in 2026.

Habitat Connectivity/Wildlife Migration

OHA continued its tireless work to improve habitat connectivity and reduce wildlife vehicle collisions. Conservation staff have been involved in wildlife crossing projects across the state, including projects planned on Interstate 5 and state highways 20, 97, and 82. This work accomplishes multiple goals, such as reducing wildlife mortality, reducing damage to vehicles, and conserving migration corridors for big game. OHA was heavily involved in key pieces of legislation that were passed in the 2025 session.

Minam River Wildlife Area management

The Minam River Wildlife Area (MRWA) is one of the newest and biggest state wildlife areas in Oregon. ODFW, RMEF and OHA all supported the acquisition of the property (OHA contributed \$100,000) which has a multitude of benefits. The area hosts a wide array of game species, access to the Minam River, and a variety of publicly available outdoor recreation activities.

OHA had specific conversations with ODFW for the draft management plan for the Minam River Wildlife Area. The purpose of the plan is to share the goals and vision for the MRWA, document current condition of the area, identify management needs, discuss management actions (such as timber harvest and grazing) and set the groundwork for public use. OHA offered a number of suggestions on everything from management to funding, to hunting access. OHA looks forward to continuing our partnership on the MRWA and contributing on future projects.



Thanks a Million!

OHA chapter volunteers helped OHA raise \$1.1 million, signed up more than 3,000 members, and logged over 33,000 hours in 2025 for OHA's mission!



TOP CHAPTER BANQUET NETS IN 2025

Bend	\$113,971
Redmond	\$103,170
Pioneer	\$100,679
Umpqua	\$87,029
Tillamook	\$65,939
Yamhill	\$58,049
Tioga	\$54,988
Mid-Willamette	\$51,592
Hoodview	\$43,456
Josephine County	\$41,965

TOP CHAPTERS FOR MEMBERSHIPS

Pioneer	665
Redmond	218
Umpqua	211
Tioga	204
Clatsop	200
Yamhill	158
Klamath	121
Union/Wallowa	119
Mid-Willamette	107
Lake County	103

JOIN YOUR LOCAL OHA CHAPTER FOR SOME GREAT EVENTS IN 2026!
VISIT [OREGONHUNTERS.ORG/CHAPTERS](https://oregonhunters.org/chapters)



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stays here.

OHA banquets in 2026 will feature
a Coastal Farm and Ranch Raffle for a
Christensen Evoke Mossy Oak Flat Dark
Earth Cerakote 7MM PRC \$1,049

FEBRUARY 21

Columbia County 971-225-8013
Ochoco 541-410-5050

FEBRUARY 28

Redmond 541-419-7215

MARCH 7

Hoodview 503-314-3090
Pioneer 503-710-1233

MARCH 14

Bend 541-480-9848
Capitol 503-990-2978
Rogue Valley 541-773-8736
Yamhill County 503-490-2489

MARCH 21

Tualatin Valley 503-502-0611

MARCH 28

Josephine County 541-761-1852
Union-Wallowa 541-786-1283

APRIL 4

Baker 541-403-0402
Lake County 541-417-2983
Umpqua 541-430-7324

APRIL 11

Clatsop County 503-440-9934
Tioga 541-294-7912

APRIL 18

Mid-Willamette 541-971-3351

APRIL 25

Curry 541-698-0413

MAY 2

Tillamook 503-812-3832

MAY 16

OHA State Convention, : :
Seven Feathers Casino, 541-772-7313

: A&H Statewide Elk Tag auction
: : A&H Deer & Elk Tags auction

"EVENING GLOW"

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BUCK OR BULL HUNT

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ZUMWALT PRAIRIE PRESERVE!

Zumwalt Prairie Trophy Bull



Photo: Chad Dotson

**2 SEPARATE RAFFLES FOR
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**EACH HUNT IS FOR 1 HUNTER &
UP TO 2 NON-HUNTING GUESTS
& 1 GUIDE FOR 3 DAYS IN 2026!**



SCAN FOR TICKETS
FOR EITHER RAFFLE

Zumwalt Prairie Trophy Muley



FOR EACH RAFFLE (Deer OR Elk):

Tickets: \$50, or 7 for \$300.

500 offered. Value: \$4,900.

Drawing: April 22, 2026, 2 p.m.

For tickets, call 541-772-7313,

visit oregonhunters.org/store or

mail check & contact info to OHA,

PO Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501.

3-day guided rifle hunt for 1 hunter on the 33,000-acre Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in Oregon's Wallowa County during the fall 2026 season. 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 has been close to 100%. Mature animals are common with trophy potential. The Preserve is part of the largest remaining intact Pacific Northwest bunchgrass prairie in North America. Food, beverages, gear, and gratuity not included. Transportation to the Preserve not included (once there, your guide will provide transportation). Tag is guaranteed, but hunter is responsible for license & tag cost. Valid for the fall 2026 season only; must make arrangements by April 30, 2026. Sponsored by The Nature Conservancy. Proceeds benefit OHA.

Drawing: 4/22/26, OHA Office, 301 Crater Lake Ave., Medford, OR, 2 pm. Need not be present to win.



WIN A GUIDED MAINE BEAR HUNT FOR 1 HUNTER IN 2026!



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Lodging, Meals & Airfare from PDX to Bangor included!



**Share a traditional rustic
1-room Maine hunting cabin
with other bear hunters.**



Hunt over bait in Maine's backcountry for 4 weekdays in mid-September. Includes transportation to and from cabin, Big Game License and Bear Permit.

Tickets: \$20; 7 for \$100.

500 offered. Value \$4,999.

Drawing: April 1, 2026.

**Tickets & info: call 541-772-7313
or visit oregonhunters.org/store**

Drawing: 3pm 4/1/26, OHA Office, 301 Crater Lake Ave. #C, Medford, OR. Need not be present to win.



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OHA NEWS & VIEWS

OHA is working toward more safe crossing projects to protect Oregon's wildlife.

Safe crossing projects shift into high gear

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director
mtotey@oregonhunters.org

OHA has been working across the state to address critical areas with a high density of wildlife/vehicle collisions. Work has been completed on Highway 97 at Gilchrist (where OHA invested over \$100,000), and projects are planned on the southern portion of Interstate 5, Highway 20 between Suttle Lake and Bend, and Highway 20 east of Juntura.

In northeast Oregon, two different highways are in need of work to safely get wildlife, specifically deer and elk, across busy highways. The first is Highway 82 in Wallowa County, between Wallowa and Enterprise, where way too many white-tailed and mule deer are struck by vehicles every year.

The second is Interstate 84 between Pendleton and La Grande. While elk and deer collisions are clearly a concern on the roadway here, GPS wildlife tracking has shown this interstate to be a barrier to migrational movement. Addressing this barrier will be a key factor to connect habitat, protect seasonal movement corridors, promote healthy elk and deer populations, and improve safety for motorists on this stretch of the interstate.

All of this work takes a tremendous amount of planning, time and funding to complete a project. In the end, wildlife collisions are decreased by over 85 percent, habitat stays connected, and travelers are safer.

JOHN MCFARLAND III

Dr. Todd Adkins will bring experience from Sportsmen's Alliance, NRA to work for OHA

The Oregon Hunters Association Board of Directors has approved the hiring of Dr. Todd Adkins as OHA's new Executive Director, effective immediately.

After an extensive national search and comprehensive evaluation process, Dr. Adkins emerged as the exceptional candidate our organization needs during this critical period of transformation and growth. His track record in strategic leadership, fundraising excellence, stakeholder management, and conservation advocacy makes him ideally suited to lead OHA into the future.

"Throughout the search process, Dr. Adkins kept rising to the top of our candidate pool," said Fred Walasavage, OHA's Chairman of the Board of Directors. "He has a unique combination of training, experience, and dedication that make this a very exciting time at OHA, especially when we look to the future and how this key hire will prove vital to our continued growth."

Dr. Adkins brings an impressive combination of academic credentials and practical executive leadership experience, including a PhD from the University of Notre Dame and a law degree from the University of Iowa. Together with his nearly 30 years of work on behalf of hunting and conservation for organizations large and small, he is ideally suited to lead OHA at this pivotal time.

Most recently, Dr. Adkins was Senior Vice President of Sportsmen's Alliance, where he oversaw a major expansion of staff and resources dedicated to protecting hunting (and hunters) in every corner of the country. He is also a former Managing

'We have a fantastic opportunity before us, and working with OHA members throughout the state, we will get there.'



Dr. Todd Adkins emerged from a field of more than 40 candidates in a nationwide search to become OHA's Executive Director.

Director of State & Local Affairs for the National Rifle Association's Institute of Legislative Action (NRA-ILA), overseeing 25 staff members and an eight-figure budget. Throughout his career, Dr. Adkins has led significant organizational change, but always with an eye on improving member service, satisfaction, and solidarity.

Dr. Adkins is a life-long hunter and angler, was a hunting guide on Maryland's Eastern Shore for several years and spends all of his free time in the outdoors. His decision to dedicate his life to hunting and conservation has been a guiding polestar throughout his professional life.

"I wake up every day thinking about how to protect hunters and our amazing conservation legacy, so I am honored by the Board's decision to appoint me as OHA's executive director," Adkins said. "We have a fantastic opportunity before us, and working with OHA members throughout the state, we will get there, of this I have no doubt."

Dr. Adkins will be reaching out to chapter leaders and other members this month to introduce himself personally and learn about OHA's chapters, challenges, and aspirations. We ask for your partnership in welcoming him to the OHA family and supporting this important transition.

See Dr. Adkins' Setting Our Sights column on Page 6.

OHA weighs in on Minam area plans

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director
mtotey@oregonhunters.org

The Minam River Wildlife Area (MRWA) is one of the newest and biggest state wildlife areas in Oregon. ODFW, RMEF and OHA all supported the acquisition of the property (OHA contributed \$100,000). The area hosts many game species, access to the Minam River, and a variety of publicly available outdoor recreation activities.

ODFW has drafted a management plan for the area. The purpose of the plan is to share the goals and vision for the MRWA, document current condition of the MRWA, identify management needs, discuss management actions (like timber harvest

and grazing) and set the groundwork for public use.

ODFW hosted a public meeting to introduce the draft management plan, then followed up with a specific meeting for OHA staff and board representatives. OHA offered several suggestions on everything from management, to funding, to hunting access.

Key questions still remain, such as how camping will be allowed, and areas for seasonal closures to protect wintering big game. OHA looks forward to continuing our partnership on the MRWA and contributing on future projects. See the draft management plan on the ODFW website:

<https://tinyurl.com/47m6wbh5>



SPONSORED BY OHA, OSP & ODFW

OHA pays \$20,000 in 21 reward cases

In the last two months, OHA issued 23 reward checks to informants in 21 cases totaling \$20,000 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund. Charges included: unlawful take/antlerless deer, hunting prohibited area/city limits, unlawful possession buck deer, unlawful take spike elk and antlerless deer, waste of game mammal, hunting across highway, criminal trespass, unlawful take/black bear, criminal trespass, unlawful take game bird/turkey, hunting with motor vehicle, hunting with infrared and trespass II, no big game tag, hunting prohibited hours, waste of game mammal/spike elk, several fish cases, and one case that led to 67 charges being filed in 4 counties pertaining to 20 different big game animals.

Latest Gun Calendar winners announced

The latest winners in OHA's 2025 Gun Calendar Raffle have been announced, and the 2026 OHA Gun Raffle Calendar winners will be drawn Dec. 30! The 2027 Gun Calendar will go on sale at Oregon sports shows and online this winter. See winners on OHA's website or get our app, which you can also use to enter OHA contests and get timely notifications.

- ★ **Ruger American Go Wild Bronze 7mm PRC**
Erik Parks, OHA Emerald Valley Chapter
- ★ **Stoeger M3000 2023 Max 7 Camo 12 gauge**
Jeff Vian, OHA Pioneer Chapter
- ★ **Browning A-bolt 3 Hunter Grade II .30-06**
Shawn Toot, OHA Tualatin Valley Chapter
- ★ **Sig Sauer P320 M18**
Ed Netter, OHA Pioneer Chapter
- ★ **Howa 1500 Hogue Carbon Fiber 6.5 PRC**
Brian McDowell, OHA Tualatin Valley Chapter



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CHAPTER NEWS

Bend OHA's youth bird hunt put feathers in caps.

OHA provides opportunities for all ages

BAKER

CHARLIE BRINTON 541-403-0402

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Wednesday, 5:30 p.m., Oregon Trail Restaurant.

2026 Fundraiser: April 4, Baker County Event Center.

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.

2026 Fundraiser: March 14, Bend Riverhouse Conference Center, 541-480-9848.

Update: We hosted our annual youth bird hunt on Oct. 18.

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.

CAPITOL

DANNY SOUTH 503-577-6033

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

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

2026 Fundraiser: March 14, Oregon State Fairgrounds, 503-990-2978.

CLATSOP COUNTY

TROY LAWS 503-738-6962

ClatsopCountyOHA@pacifier.com

Chapter Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 5:30 p.m. no-host dinner, 6:30 p.m. meeting, Hong Kong Restaurant, 2813 Marine Dr., Astoria.

2026 Fundraiser: April 11, Clatsop County Fairgrounds, 503-440-9934.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

CODY HUMBLE 360-901-2201

Chapter Meetings: 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m., Village Inn, 535 S Columbia River Hwy., St Helens.

2026 Fundraiser: Feb. 21, Columbia County Fairgrounds.

CURRY

JAMIE BADGER 541-499-2245

Badgergirls3@gmail.com

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

2026 Fundraiser: April 25, Event Center on the Beach, Gold Beach, 541-698-0413.

Update: Our chapter is currently looking for a new chapter president. If you're able and willing to step up, please contact a board member or come to the monthly meeting.

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 will host a booth at the local sports show Jan. 30 – Feb. 1; stop by and enter a free drawing for a guided Maine bear hunt that includes lodging and airfare.

HOODVIEW

LEVI BARRERA 503-863-4495

oregonhunters.org/hoodview-chapter

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

Chapter Meetings: Please check our website for meeting schedule.

2026 Fundraiser: March 7, Monarch Hotel, Clackamas, ohahoodview2019@gmail.com

JOSEPHINE COUNTY

DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511

ddowns2646@gmail.com

<https://ohajoco.mailchimpsites.com/>

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

2026 Fundraiser: March 28, JoCo Fairgrounds, 541-761-1852.



OHA's Yamhill County Chapter manned the Stimson Timber gate to allow public access on weekends during rifle seasons this fall.

KLAMATH

DENNIS WIARD 541-891-3549

dtward@charter.net

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

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

Update: We held our annual youth chukar hunt Oct. 25-26. Our annual PLAY Outdoors event will take place on Jan. 17; call 541-891-3501. We will host a booth at the local sports show March 13-15; stop by and enter a free drawing for a guided Maine bear hunt that includes license and bear permit, meals, lodging and airfare.

LAKE COUNTY

LARRY LUCAS 541-417-2983

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

2026 Fundraiser: April 4, Lake County Fairgrounds, 541-417-2983.

LINCOLN COUNTY

CHELSEA DIOSDADO 970-779-2817

chelsea.diosdado@gmail.com

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

2026 Fundraiser: June 12, Pint Night at Rogue Brewers on the Bay, 970-779-2817.

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.

OHA Tioga Chapter members helped make the Coquille youth bird hunt a big hit.

MID-COLUMBIA

TONY WHITE 541-490-2980

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

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 p.m., Old Armory, Albany.

2026 Fundraiser: April 18, Albany Boys & Girls Club, 541-971-3351.

OCHOCO

JAMES COX 541-408-4816

Chapter Meetings: 1st Tuesday, 7 p.m., COCC Open Campus Room 120.

2026 Fundraiser: Feb. 21, Carey Foster Hall, Prineville, 541-410-5050.

PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 971-221-8827

oregonhunters.org/pioneer-chapter

Chapter Meetings: 1st Wednesday, 7 p.m.; dinner 6:30, Canby Rod & Gun Club.

2026 Fundraiser: March 7, Mt. Angel Community Festival Hall, 503-730-1233.

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.

2026 Fundraiser: Feb. 28, Deschutes County Fairgrounds.

ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

Firepmt29@gmail.com

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

2026 Fundraiser: March 14, Ashland Hills Inn, 541-773-8736.

Update: We will host a booth at the local



OHA's Klamath Chapter hosted its annual youth chukar hunt Oct. 25 and 26.

sports show Feb. 20-22; stop by and enter a free drawing for a guided Maine bear hunt that includes lodging and airfare.

TILLAMOOK

JOHN PUTMAN 503-842-7733

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

2026 Fundraiser: May 2, Tillamook County Fairgrounds, 503-812-3832.

Update: Yvonne Shaw, ODFW Stop Poaching campaign coordinator, and Clint Galusha from OSP spoke at our recent meeting.

TIOGA

MARCEY FULLERTON 541-294-7912

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

2026 Fundraiser: April 11, Coquille Community Building.

TUALATIN VALLEY

SHELLEY KIND 503-290-6143

oregonhunters.org/tualatin-valley-chapter

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

2026 Fundraiser: March 21, Wingspan Event Center, 503-502-0611.

UMPQUA

TADD MOORE 541-580-5660

<https://www.umpquaoha.org>

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

2026 Fundraiser: April 4, Seven Feathers Casino, 541-430-7324.

Update: We will host a booth at the local sports show Feb. 6-8; stop by and enter a free drawing for a guided Maine bear hunt that includes lodging and airfare.

UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

Chapter Meetings: La Grande Library, next date TBA.

2026 Fundraiser: March 28, Blue Mountain Conference Center.

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.

2026 Fundraiser: March 14, Yamhill County Fairgrounds.

Update: We thank our volunteers who helped man the Stimson Timber gate to allow hunters access to the property.

In Memoriam

Contributions made recently to the

OHA Memorial Fund

In memory of

BOB STEAGALL

from Debra Mode & Terry Fields

In memory of

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from Buck & Geri Teasley



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





OHA IN ACTION BY JENNIFER BRALEY

Women of OHA earn their wings

The recent Women of OHA Weekend Away event proved to be a success for the second year in a row. Over the course of two days, women from all over the state came together in Prineville for a weekend of fun, food, and chukar hunting.

The Weekend Away event offered more than a chance to hunt – it provided hands-on learning and mentorship. Morning briefings covered field safety, shot placement, and ethical hunting practices, while experienced volunteers led hunting pairs in the field. Attendees practiced their shooting skills at the skeet range station prior to their hunts and gained hands-on experience processing their harvested

Women from all over the state came together for a weekend of fun, food, and bird hunting.



Women dog handlers brought flushing and pointing dogs, demonstrating techniques and safety.

birds after their hunt.

Twenty-four women participated in the chukar hunt portion of the weekend, which was put on with assistance from the Bend OHA Chapter.

The evening prior to the hunt, the ladies gathered in Prineville for a catered meal, social event, and numerous giveaways donated by OHA chapters. One lucky participant won a Citadel 1911 .380

series pistol donated by Legacy Sports International.

A particularly encouraging trend this year was the growing number of women dog handlers who volunteered to support the hunt. Local handlers brought well-trained flushing and pointing dogs, demonstrating handling techniques and dog safety around hunters. Newcomers benefited from watching handlers work their dogs in the field, and



Briefings covered field safety, shot placement, and ethics, and participants practiced their shooting skills at the skeet range station.

several handlers expressed excitement about returning each year and recruiting other women to help, expanding the volunteer pool, and strengthening the event's capacity to host larger groups.

The Bend OHA Chapter's contributions were instrumental to the Weekend Away's success. In addition to donating their hunt location and expertise, chapter members also organized and prepared the hunt location and staffed multiple roles from bird planting, safety oversight, running the skeet shooting station, and teaching the participants how to process their harvest, ensuring participants left with practical skills as

well as memories. Their local knowledge and willingness to donate time made the weekend run smoothly and safely for everyone.

This weekend event was supported by donations from OHA's Mid-Willamette, Umpqua, and Tualatin Valley chapters, Legacy Sports International, and grants from the Leupold & Stevens Foundation and the Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund.

With momentum building, the Women of OHA Weekend Away is becoming an important annual gathering for women hunters, mentors, and conservationists across Oregon.

The program continues to inspire new participants, cultivate skilled volunteers, and foster a welcoming community of women committed to responsible hunting and outdoor stewardship.

Planning has already begun for the 2026 event, which will be held in October. Subscribe to the Women of OHA newsletter for more information and to receive notices of event registration.

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

Contact Women of OHA program coordinator Jennifer Braley at outreach@oregonhunters.org



Attendees gained experience field dressing their harvested birds after a successful hunt.

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WINNER:

OHA member Ken Szewc of Merlin wins a Tactacam Reveal Trail Camera for this image of trash-talking elk. He thinks this is where the fight started for these Powers Unit Roosevelt bulls on a misty morning last June.



HONORABLE MENTION:



Jon Duerst, an OHA member from Peoria, Ariz., bags Honorable Mention and an OHA hat for his image of this contemplative bear overlooking a pond in Wallowa County.



OHA member Peter Soderstrom from Columbia City lands an OHA hat and Honorable Mention for this photo of a Saddle Mountain Roosevelt bull.



Mike Davis of Seneca gets Honorable Mention for his photo of a Murderer's Creek bobcat attack on a doe mule deer in June.



Mark Davenport of Tillamook caught this coyote leaping a Chesnimnus wetland in June, garnering an OHA hat and Honorable Mention.

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Make Steak Sizzle

I'm sure you've heard someone say, "I hate wild meat, it's so... gamey." And you've thought to yourself, "They must have had it cooked wrong." I'd never really had a bad cut of game until one day I tried a marinated elk steak that I could hardly finish. This experience made me realize that not everyone knows how to treat and cook wild game to where it's delicious. After decades of perfecting our technique, here are a few tips from our family to yours on how to make one heck of a steak.

For whole deer and elk steaks, wash them in cold water and put them in Tupperware with a rack on the bottom to allow blood to drip. Without the aging process, meat can be tough and may even upset your stomach. Take the meat out of the fridge and let it sit a bit; a cold slab of meat on a hot grill will cause tightening of the muscle fiber, which makes the meat tougher. Next, pound it out with a meat mallet. You can also use a fork or tenderizing tool to perforate the meat; this will do the same thing as the mallet – loosen the muscle tissue fiber.

We typically do not marinate; rubs are preferred in our family, as they keep the flavor true. Start by coating the meat with a layer of olive or avocado oil, and then season with your favorite seasoning. We love Montreal steak seasoning, but we often mix in some extra garlic powder plus some of our favorite herbs like rosemary, thyme, dried parsley flakes, etc. After seasoning, let the steak sit for an hour to allow all the flavors to soak in.

Next is searing the meat; you can reverse sear (at the end) or pre-sear (at the beginning). This can be done on a stovetop in a cast iron skillet on high heat or on a grill at 400-500 degrees. Do this quickly and immediately turn it down to medium heat. You can gauge when the meat is done by the texture of the meat, but we choose to use a thermometer. Do not overcook wild game. Because of the lack of fat in the meat, it can become very tough. The ends will be more cooked for those who prefer their steaks more well-done, but the middle will still be nice and pink.

Once the meat has come to 135 degrees, I pull it off and coat the meat with butter, cover with foil and let it sit for 5-10 minutes to allow the meat time to soak in any additional juices. Next, it's ready to cut and serve. Our favorite dips include chimichurri or a mix of plain yogurt, sour cream, horseradish, and a splash of Worcestershire sauce for a white sauce option. You can also opt for a gravy with mushrooms and onions or some classic blue cheese crumbles. The last step is easy: pair it with a glass of red wine and soak in the satisfaction of feeding friends and family with a beautifully cooked piece of wild meat.

Editor's note: Health agencies recommend cooking venison to an internal temperature of 160 degrees. Many wild game chefs prefer an internal temperature of 130-140 degrees for solid cuts of meat, 145 for ground meat.



Overcooking is the surest way to ruin the taste and texture of your venison. But are you doing the same with your marinade?



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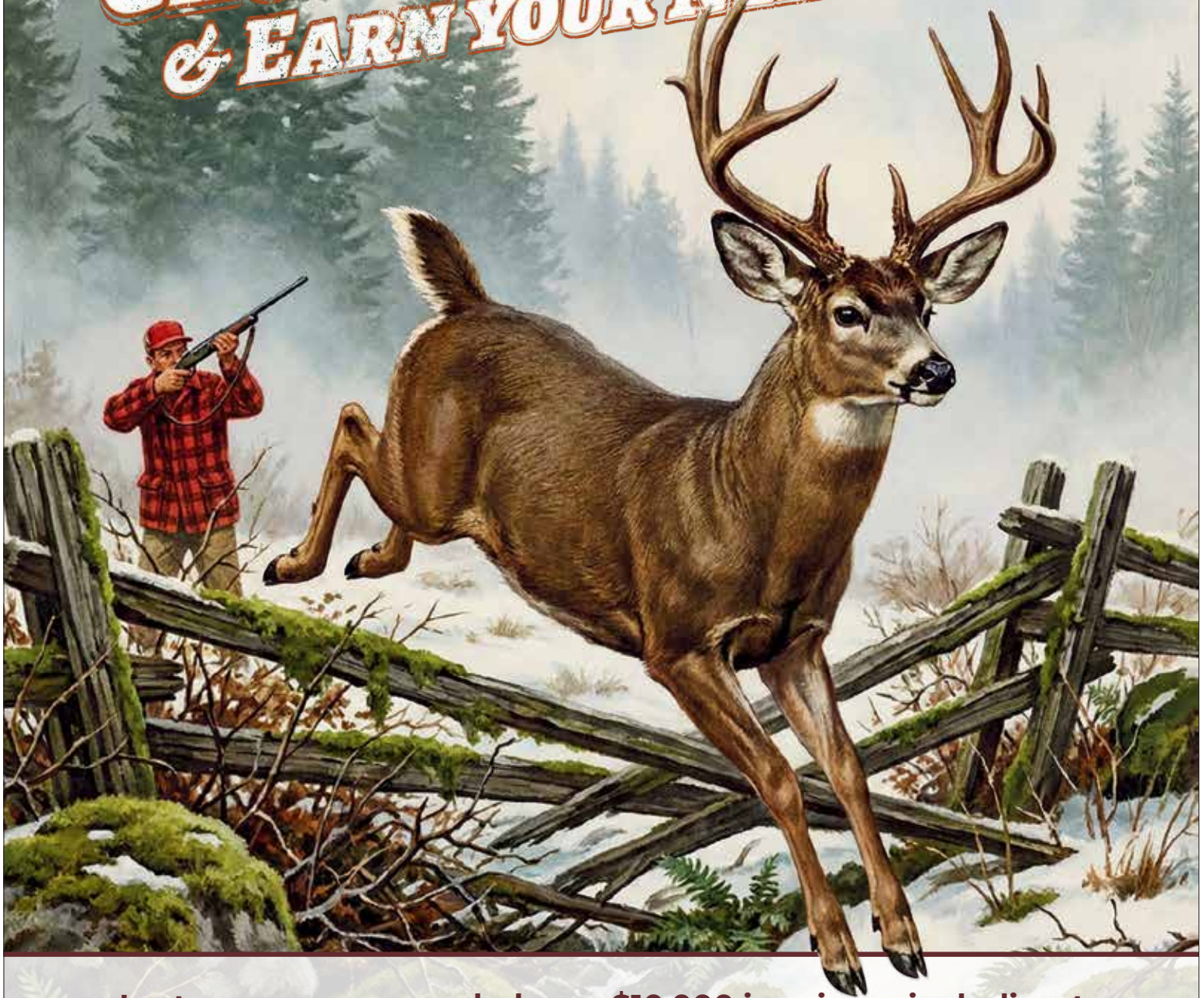
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HIGH-TECH POACHING

A Growing Threat to Wildlife

Learn what's legal, what's not and the impact of tech devices on habitat, fair chase and ethical hunters.

Though technology might be integrated into the rest of our lives, hunting is a different story. Fair chase—a foundational principle in North American hunting ethics—respects wildlife by ensuring that animals have a reasonable chance to escape.

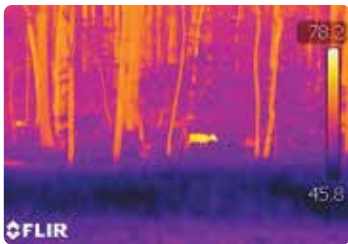
Thermal imaging devices can reveal heat signatures of every animal in heavy brush. Drones interrupt and irritate wildlife species gearing up for breeding, feeding and raising offspring. Motorized e-bikes access closed roads, disturbing wildlife.

The impacts on wildlife populations and hunting opportunities without fair chase can be significant, according to ODFW Wildlife Deputy Division Administrator, Brian Wolfer. *"We manage buck numbers to provide for both legal hunting opportunities and species conservation. If illegal take decreases buck numbers too much, then we have no choice but to decrease the number of tags issued to legal hunters."*

The hunting community strongly backs regulations related to emerging technology. *"OHA supports the vigorous enforcement of laws designed to protect wildlife, habitat, private property and hunter's rights,"* said Oregon Hunters Association state President Steve Hagan.

What wildlife and law enforcement officials want hunters to know:

THERMAL DEVICES:



Thermal imaging devices (which rely on infrared technology to detect heat) provide an unfair advantage because an animal's natural camouflage doesn't disguise its

body heat. It is illegal to use a thermal device to hunt, locate, or scout for the purpose of hunting any wildlife, including before the legal season starts. That includes recovering harvested wildlife or tracking an injured animal as tracking and recovery are considered hunting. In rule, read **OAR 635-065-0745**.

DRONES:



Using drones to locate, monitor or move wildlife is illegal. It is also illegal to use a drone to harass someone who is legally hunting, fishing or trapping. A drone is defined as any unmanned

flying machine, water-based vehicle or any other vehicle able to operate in the air, water, or under water, without a human occupant. In worst case scenarios, drone operators can harass wildlife to exhaustion. In statute, read **ORS 498.128**.

E-BIKES:



E-bikes are considered motorized vehicles. They can provide illegal access to roads and areas closed for wildlife conservation when riders bypass gates or other barriers, access narrow trails or travel cross-country. The roads are closed because vehicle activity can disturb

and stress herds, interfere with access to forage or water, and even cause big game animals to disperse to nearby agricultural lands. These regulations are intended to protect private property, reduce disturbance of wildlife, and to help keep big game from moving onto agricultural land during hunting seasons. *"Motor vehicle closures and winter range closures provide an opportunity for wildlife to avoid human disturbance,"* according to Wolfer. In rule, read **OAR 635-065-0760 (10)**.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:



AI like Chat GPT can give false or misleading information regarding hunting and fishing seasons, legal bag limits and rule changes. It is important for hunters, anglers and trappers to consult the online regulations for the most up-to-date and accurate information at go.MyODFW.com/Regs.



NOSLER[®]

2026 PHOTO CONTEST

FINALIST PRIZES

Prizes will be awarded in general and youth categories.

1ST PRIZE: Nosler Model 21 rifle

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

3RD PRIZE: Leupold Scope

4TH PRIZE: Danner Alsea Hunting Boots

5TH PRIZE: Benchmade Hunting Knife

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

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

ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

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

PHOTO CATEGORIES

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

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

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year



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NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

GENERAL CATEGORY PRIZE WINNERS



FIRST PLACE
OHA member
Roger Stanley of
Prineville wins a
Nosler Model 21 rifle
for his 2024 opening
morning photo of
grandson Colton Avila
and a mule deer buck
with a Snake River
sunrise as a backdrop.

SECOND PLACE
West Linn OHA
member Ezra
Maiden claims
a case of Nosler
Trophy Grade
ammo for his
panoramic photo
of his father Joel
Maiden on a
September 2024
archery hunt in the
Snake River Unit.



Mt. McLoughlin Above the Clouds/Teri Dunganon

THIRD PLACE
OHA member Matt Langer of Sherwood claims a Leupold rifle scope for his photo of Kevin Blair and a Wheeler County mule deer.



FOURTH PLACE
Clackamas OHA member Alex Gentry wins a pair of Danner Alsea hunting boots for a family portrait of Alex, Chase and sons following a successful Lane County turkey hunt.



FIFTH PLACE
OHA member Justin Hilger from Beavercreek bags a Benchmade hunting knife for his 2024 photo of a western Oregon Columbia blacktail.

NOSLER[®] PHOTO CONTEST

YOUTH CATEGORY PRIZE WINNERS

FIRST PLACE

Coquille OHA member
Ken Wilson wins
a Nosler Model 21
rifle for his photo of
Ensley Morris. Ensley
battled a long day of
wind and rain for her
Sixes Unit blacktail
buck last November.



SECOND PLACE

Roseburg OHA member
Jaysen Dunnavent scores
a case of Nosler Trophy
Grade ammo for this
photo of 12-year-old
Josi Dunnavent and her
Whitehorse pronghorn
this past September.



THIRD PLACE
OHA member Veda George
of Hermiston claims a
Leupold rifle scope for
this photo of an August
2024 Steens Mountain
pronghorn.



FOURTH PLACE
Gold Beach OHA member Daniel Crumley wins a pair of
Danner Alsea hunting boots for his image of his 10-year-old
granddaughter Paige Crumley and her first bear. She was
hunting with her parents in Curry County in May and made a
one-shot kill with her .243.



FIFTH PLACE
OHA member Justin Botefuhr from Heppner
bags a Benchmade hunting knife for his
photo of Avia Botefuhr and her first buck.
Avia bagged her youth tag buck with a
Browning .243 in the Juniper Unit.

ELKHORN MOUNTAINS/DUANE DUNGANNON



Raising the Bar

In which we talk about child-rearing and the honeymoon in that order

As a professional outdoor communicator, I am often asked to speak at bar mitzvahs and Star Wars conventions. Usually during the question-and-answer sessions, some young starfighter will ask how does a guy go about finding a mate in these troubled times?

I have found that a person can save a lot of trouble by basing one's choice on a simple test: Does she check a diaper with her finger, or does she do the sniff test?

To find out requires a toddler preferably between the age of 2 and 3. These are extremely easy to borrow. Sometimes the guardian of said toddler will even pay you to borrow it while they go to see a movie or drive to bear camp. Bring the toddler to the prospective spouse and then observe. Does she check the diaper with her finger, or does she do the sniff test?

I think either one is a deal breaker. You want a girl who can look at a diaper from 100 steps and say that diaper looks dangerous.

She can look at a diaper and tell by the way it's hanging whether it wants to be changed or not.

You want to know by looking at a diaper from across the room if it's time to deal with something. Or find somebody who can fix it in a hurry.

With a diaper, it's all about the sag. Is it light and airy? Or is it sodden like a rain cloud or perhaps a thunder cloud? Or like a hail storm? In fact, if you can find a girl who refers to the condition of a diaper with words like cirrus or stratus or cumulonimbus, you got a keeper.

While we are on the subject of diapers, let's make sure you know how diapers work.

A box of diapers comes with lots of clues on the outside as to what it's good for. Let's start with the brand and the model. Kind of like Chevrolet and Camaro, you got your Pampers Baby Dry. That's a good first clue that these diapers are probably for a baby. If the box says something like Grampers, you might be in the wrong aisle.

The next important number is how many diapers are in the box. This will always be a number like 198, which being divisible by three, means that if you have a set of triplets, no one is going to go without protection along about the end of next week.

The minivan is the clear choice for the honeymooners, because any other vehicle will be stolen.



"It's a goat, my lord, in a flatbed Ford..."

Your new diapers might also have a wetness indicator that changes color when wet. Duh. And then there is going to be a rating as to how many hours. Try to find diapers that are rated for 12 hours or more.

While we are on the subject of child rearing, child psychiatrists tell us habits and impressions gained in early childhood stay with us throughout our lives. If you want your infant to grow up to be an enthusiastic bear hunter, give it a bear instead of a rattle. To make the bear rattle, simply hollow out its insides and fill it with dried peach pits.

Oh yes, we were talking about how a young man can find that special young lady. If the potential life partner in question has a minivan and she can call a diaper's condition at 100 steps, then it's time to buy a couple of pack animals and start saving money for deer and elk tags.

You first want to get a couple of pack goats, and the goats will need some sheep or a dachshund at a minimum for a companion animal.

Of course, all of those pack goats and the companion sheep and/or dachshunds are going to need to be transported to the hunting grounds come September. Let's say you are headed to the Siskiyou for a late summer bear hunt and honeymoon. Most people who do not live in Josephine or Curry County already, will want a minivan to transport the livestock.

The minivan is the clear choice for the honeymooners because any other vehicle will be stolen. Imagine parking an F-250 and a trailer anywhere near Cave Junction for a week and hoping it will still be there when you get back! Conversely, you can park a Dodge Caravan full of hay and goat droppings, and it will always be right where you left it when you come back down off the mountains.



For a copy of A Bear Hunter's Guide to the Universe, send a rousing \$25 to Gary Lewis, P.O. Box 1364, Bend, OR 97709 or visit garylewisoutdoors.com

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