

# OREGON HUNTER

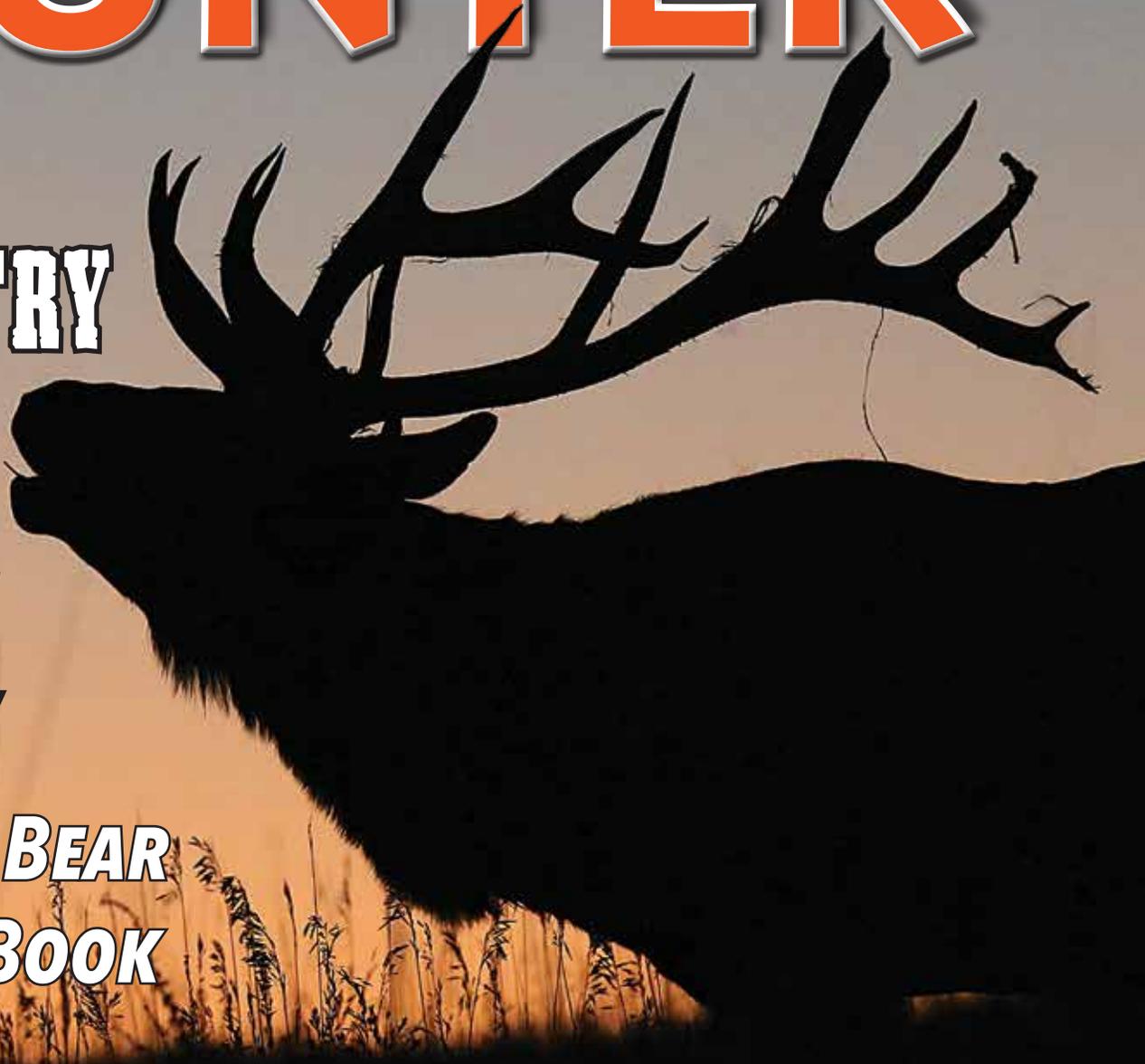
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VOL. 44, NO. 2

OHA, ODFW and OHA Citizen Landowner of the Year David Sill hosted a duck hunt for veterans Jan. 31.

KELCEY STOLLER

# OREGON HUNTER

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GERBER SUNRISE

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Cover: Oregon elk photographed by OHA member John Wheland

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# SETTING OUR SIGHTS

BY DR. TODD ADKINS, OHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



ROGUE/RANDY SHIPLEY

## Reflections on the First 50 Days

**W**hat a whirlwind! The first 50 days as your Executive Director have gone by in a *blur* of new people, new places, and new things, but I've quickly learned the one thing you already know: OHA members are undeniably dedicated to our mission and will do whatever it takes for OHA to reach the next level. I trust our members. They've already achieved so much that in many ways, I simply have to stay out of their way and provide what the members need to grow OHA.

We are – and always will be – a membership organization, so there's nothing more powerful than hearing from our members and listening to their ideas about what makes us strong and what will make us even stronger. I've heard from members in all corners of the state, and it was great to attend chapter events and talk to chapter leaders about what's working, what could be better, and the ideas they have to improve member services.

As you might expect, I've also been spending a lot of time with OHA staff, learning from them about everything we do and how we do it. Like your fellow members, you should be extremely proud of your OHA staff. This is a group of very dedicated and hard-working people. They are mission-centric and have made my transition into the Executive Director role about as painless as it can be.

More than anything, I have devoted the bulk of my time during these first 50 days to a handful of administrative details that will smooth out member services and streamline our growth. Not the most exciting stuff, I completely agree, but crucial to our future success. In the coming months, you'll take note when our website changes, somewhat dramatically, to include new gadgets like a member portal and even new pages for chapter leaders to interact with their members and volunteers. But the additional services available on this new site are almost too numerous to list. At this point, just know that your ability to get what you need, and when you need it, will be dramatically improved.

Driving these changes, the part you won't see, is our conversion to a full Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system built to serve our members, donors, and sponsors with more efficiency and ease. Whether you're upgrading your membership, renewing an existing one, or simply wanting to buy a ticket for a banquet, event, or raffle, the CRM behind the website will "slick out" all of those processes while vastly reducing the staff time needed to administer all of the above.

Yes, our website will look different, feel different, and *be* different, so there will be a few growing pains along the way, but once we are done and all the bugs are driven out, our online presence will add significant value to your membership.

Enough about all that administration, right? In February, I begin my "listening tour" in earnest, starting with the sports shows, like the Pacific Northwest, but also continuing with my attendance of several chapter events and fundraisers. I've recently mapped out my calendar for the coming months and I'm planning on about 20 events between now and April, heading into the state convention. This is flat awesome exciting!

As I tour the state, please come introduce yourself if we end up at the same event. If you have ideas or thoughts, I'd love to hear them, and I look forward to meeting you in person if we get the chance.

It's on to the next 50 days, and I'm glad you're here to help take us where we want to go. I look forward to every minute of the coming *blur* and know that together, we can't be stopped, so let's buckle up and get after it.

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# WORK SHARP OREGON HUNTING QUIZ

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## KNOW OREGON? WIN A WORK SHARP!

- Bifurcated antlers would be rare on which deer?  
a) mule deer      c) whitetail  
b) blacktail      d) all of the above
- Oregon's September goose season allows you to bag what species of geese?  
a) Canada      c) snow and Ross  
b) white-front      d) all of the above
- Which drake is known as a copper top?  
a) American wigeon      c) cinnamon teal  
b) Eurasian wigeon      d) redhead
- Which offers the shortest season?  
a) pheasant      c) chukar  
b) band-tailed pigeon      d) dove
- Which grouse species does not have inflatable air sacs (apterium)?  
a) blue      c) sage  
b) ruffed      d) sharptail
- If you pause at Jewell Meadows to drool over elk, you are probably hunting:  
a) coast elk      c) Rocky Mountain elk  
b) Cascade elk      d) antelope
- What season runs concurrent with chukar?  
a) pheasant      c) gray partridge  
b) blue grouse      d) none of the above
- The boundaries and name of which former mule deer hunt unit remain as a mule deer hunt area in 2026?  
a) Metolius      c) Upper Deschutes  
b) Keno      d) Steens Mountain
- The Keating Unit is where in Oregon?  
a) northwest      c) northeast  
b) southwest      d) southeast
- Which bird would you expect to take off horizontally across the water?  
a) teal      c) canvasback  
b) wood duck      d) mallard

ANSWERS: 1-c; 2-a; 3-b; 4-b; 5-b; 6-a; 7-c; 8-b; 9-c; 10-c. Page 27 photo essay quiz answer: Blacktail.



WHERE IN OREGON?

### WHERE IN OREGON WAS THIS PHOTO TAKEN?

Identify this county-line Oregon reservoir in one of the easier rifle hunt areas to draw a tag, then 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](http://oregonhunters.org), where a larger version of the photo appears. One entry per OHA member.

**ENTRY DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2026.**



### LAST ISSUE'S WINNER:

**Jacob Doty, Sherwood**

Jacob's name was drawn from among the OHA members who identified Ironside Mountain.

MATTHEW GINGERICH

## OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

MARCH 5

Central Oregon Sports Show opens; NW Hunt Expo opens in Hillsboro

MARCH 7

OHA chapter banquets:  
Hoodview 503-314-3090  
Pioneer SOLD OUT!

MARCH 13

Klamath Falls sports show opens

MARCH 14

OHA Capitol banquet 503-990-2978  
Yamhill County banquet 503-490-2489  
Rogue Valley banquet 541-773-8736  
OHA Bend banquet & A&H  
Statewide Elk Tag auction 541-480-9848

MARCH 21

OHA Tualatin Valley banquet SOLD OUT!

MARCH 28

OHA Josephine County Chapter banquet  
541-761-1852

MARCH 31

Deadline to buy spring bear tags

APRIL 1

Spring bear season opens

APRIL 4

OHA CHAPTER BANQUETS:  
Baker 541-403-0402  
Lake County 541-417-2983  
Umpqua 541-430-7324  
Union/Wallowa 541-786-1283  
YOUTH TURKEY CLINICS:  
White River 503-358-7821  
Rogue Valley 541-857-2407

APRIL 11

OHA Clatsop banquet 503-440-9934  
OHA Tioga banquet 541-294-7912

APRIL 11-12

Statewide youth spring turkey hunt

APRIL 15

Turkey season opens;  
Late hunt results reporting deadline

APRIL 18

OHA Mid-Willamette banquet & A&H  
Statewide Elk Tag auction 541-698-0413

APRIL 25

OHA Curry Chapter banquet 541-698-0413  
OHA Pioneer Chapter Spring  
Youth Day 503-936-4718

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## OREGON AFIELD

PHOTOS BY RANDY SHIPLEY



# March 10 is your last shot at geese

*Snow, Ross, Canada and white-fronted geese offer opportunities for Oregon hunters into March.*

**T**here's no better cure for spring fever than some late-winter waterfowling, and Oregon provides plenty of opportunities for cacklers, white geese and specklebellies that are fueling up on fresh forage for their return flights north to their nesting grounds.

With goose populations well below the USFWS goal of about 125,000, bag limits in the Willamette Valley have decreased over the past few seasons. Not long ago, almost every ryegrass and grain field was covered in cackling Canada geese feeding like locusts on the fresh sprouts and often obliterating entire production crops in just days. At that time, it was easy to

find an abundance of geese, and farmers welcomed hunters to stop the devastation of their crops.

Now the birds are more scattered, and finding huntable tracts is more difficult. Geese also seem to be more cautious when approaching decoy sets.

Avid goose hunters know that luring wary geese takes patience, good decoy sets, selective good calling and plenty of scouting. Most late-season birds are compelled by larger spreads of several dozen decoys. Hunters are typically out there several hours before shooting time, setting decoys and preparing for the seemingly never-ending circling passes of wary geese.

Patience will prevail during the late season. High-quality realistic decoys and lifelike calling sequences will pull birds into range during February and March, so invest in good decoys and calls.

While fewer geese visit Oregon than in past seasons, hunter numbers are not declining, and geese remain very cautious after a long season that opened in October.

Late seasons for some geese run through March 10 in specific areas of Oregon, with various bag limits based on species and location. Check regulations and permit requirements before taking one last shot at waterfowl this winter.

—TROY RODAKOWSKI



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

# The end of the squirrel as we know it

**A**n Ewok strolled into a sporting goods store one day on the forest moon of Endor and said to the manager, "I am looking for a place to hunt California gray digger squirrels with my wife. I have a .22 rimfire and a ToYoda camper van and ... can you tell me what I'm doing wrong?"

"Sure thing," the manager said, "but why the little pause?"

The Ewok looked down and said "I don't know, I've had them all my life."

Well, as you can guess, the manager proceeded to tell the little guy he had been looking in Alderaan places, which is a backwards way to help a guy out.

We get a lot of things backward. New hunters, both young and old, start at shooting ranges and then are taken to the big game woods for deer and elk. And with big game comes high expectations and stress. Better to begin with small game hunting –

from sage rats and womp rats to squirrels to rockchucks and jack rabbits – and then graduate to big game. West of the Cascades, not too far from Portland or Salem, Eugene, Roseburg and Medford, and in Tygh Valley and down to Madras, there is a critter we call the gray digger that causes a lot of trouble for farmers and ranchers.

Some people eat gray diggers, but don't ask me how they taste. I haven't tried them. I hear they are a little chewie.

Unlike the western gray squirrel – a tree-dwelling game animal that roams around all winter – the California gray digger likes to stay in the tunnels of the underground until spring. Because of the bushytailed burrower's enthusiasm for excavation, landowners are often pleased to let a hunter roam property with a rimfire long gun in hand. Sometimes a farmer will let a guy park a ToYoda in all the right places. —GARY LEWIS

*This fat Tygh Valley digger was part of a scurry of about 30 squirrels the hunters intercepted on a spring morning. And these blast points – too accurate for Sand People. Only Imperial Stormtroopers are so precise.*

# OHA sets sights on Flat Fire burn rehabilitation

The 2025 fire season may not have been as bad as the historic 2024 season, but it still had some big impacts on habitat and OHA's conservation work. The Flat Fire in Jefferson County in central Oregon erupted on the afternoon of Aug. 21 and quickly spread south. This human-caused fire affected some of OHA's conservation work and efforts in the area.

Within just a few days, the fire covered more than 23,000 acres and cost an estimated \$30,000,000 in suppression costs alone. Other impacts and costs will take a while to fully comprehend. What we do know already is that this area is a key wintering ground for migrating mule deer within the Deschutes mule deer herd range.

Winter range is a critical part of the habitat and seasonal movements of mule deer. OHA recognized the importance of this area some time ago and leaned in to help conserve and improve the habitat here as part of a bigger project known as the Metolius Winter Range project. The area is home to an OHA conservation easement and multiple habitat projects.

As the fire made its initial run, the first impact it had on OHA's work was burning through an area that had been planted with bitterbrush as part of OHA's inaugural "Women of OHA" event in the fall of 2024. The fire then continued its hard run to the south, crossing Whychus Creek and burning through the entire conservation easement property.

The landowners of the property, David and Pamela Potter, reported "everything around us is burned, but miraculously that fire crew saved our house."

So now what? Mule deer habitat is slow to develop after a high intensity burn, often taking decades for browse and thermal cover to re-establish and grow. One thing that unfortunately happens repeatedly in burned areas is a rapid development of invasive annual grasses (cheatgrass and others). This has multiple negative impacts on the area. These invasives are not only a poor source of forage for mule deer, but they can also prevent or slow the natural re-establishment of native plants.



OHA intends to contribute to reseeding native forage in the Metolius Unit where the Flat Fire burned.

Restoration work is expensive and time consuming. The USFS is already planning to do some bitterbrush planting (21,000 plants) this year and more next year. They are also planning for seeding

portions of the burned area (600-800) with native bunchgrass and forbs. OHA will look for opportunities to partner with the USFS and other conservation landowners to restore this critical area. —MIKE TOTEY

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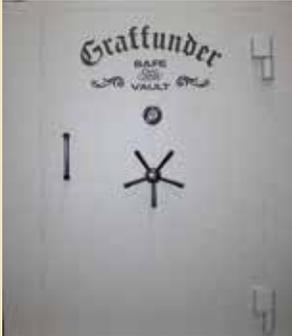


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JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

# OHA, state senators introduce key corner crossing legislation

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Representative  
[driftcreekconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:driftcreekconsulting@gmail.com)

Senator Mike McLane (R-Powell Butte) and Senator Anthony Broadman (D-Bend), working with the Oregon Hunters Association, introduced legislation in January to protect Oregonians' access to public lands through "corner crossing."

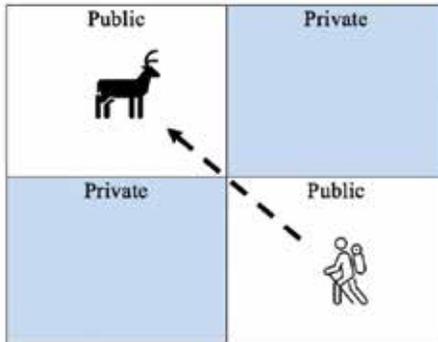
Corner crossing, or stepping from public land to public land where adjoining corners of public and private lands meet, has been a legal uncertainty in Oregon law. The Senators' legislation provides much-needed clarity to protect public land users from allegations of trespass, as well as landowners from allegations of negligence.

*The bill balances the public's right to access public land with necessary protections for private landowners.*

"Legal clarity improves access to public lands and protects landowners," said Senator McLane. "Oregonians deserve common sense from Salem on how and when we can access public resources. Senate Bill 1545 makes Oregonians' access to our lands clearer."

Balancing the public's right to access public land with necessary protections for private landowners, the legislation provides protection against negligence lawsuits. This has long been a troublesome issue for Oregonians who utilize public lands, where corner crossings are often necessary. This critical legislation will provide more certainty for all parties going forward.

"Our public lands are part of our heritage and who we are as Oregonians," said Senator Broadman. "Senate Bill 1545 will help



preserve access for hunters exercising our rights to access federal lands across our state. We also owe it to the Tribes, ranchers, farmers, and timber owners to ensure corner crossing doesn't interfere with working Oregon lands and their stewardship of our state. Our proposal strikes that balance."

The bill has already garnered support from all sides of the political spectrum, including 10 Republican and Democratic legislators from urban and rural districts alike. This diverse support shows that access to public lands is a bipartisan concern that resonates throughout the state.

"Oregon's public lands are incredibly important to hunters, hikers, bird watchers, anglers, and all Oregonians seeking to enjoy the state's natural beauty," said Amy Patrick, OHA's policy rep in Salem. "Providing some level of legal certainty ensures public land access when such access is vital to everything we do. OHA thanks Senators McLane and Broadman for spearheading this critical effort."

The legislation is broadly supported by the conservation, recreation and outdoor communities including Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation, Oregon Association of Shooting Ranges, Oregon Trappers Association, Oregon United Sporting Dogs Association, and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.

# M-114 bill rears its ugly head despite court challenges



By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Representative  
[driftcreekconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:driftcreekconsulting@gmail.com)

On Feb. 2, the groundhog saw his shadow and the 2026 Legislative Session kicked off. The groundhog went underground for six more weeks until spring, by which time the short legislative session will be over.

In that time, legislators will work through nearly 300 bills, balance the state budget, decide if the gas tax referendum will be voted on in May or November, and again take up the topic of transportation funding.

For Oregon's sportsmen's community, the three major bills of concern in the 2026 Legislative Session will be:

- **SB 1545** - This bill defines the act of corner crossing and when it is not considered an act of criminal trespass. It also includes important protections for neighboring private landowners. The bill has strong bipartisan support in both the Senate and House, and has brought a cross section of supporting organizations.

- **HB 4134** - Increases the statewide transient lodging tax by 1.25% to create funding for ODFW conservation work, wolf depredation compensation, invasive species response, anti-poaching efforts, wildlife rehabilitation programs, the Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund, and the Oregon Conservation Corp.

- **HB 4145** - Back again is a bill to rewrite and implement Measure 114 without acknowledgment that the measure itself is still awaiting a ruling from the Oregon Supreme Court. The rewrite does nothing to improve the measure or walk back OHA's opposition to the bill.

To support OHA's Hunters' Victory Fund for legal and legislative efforts, visit <https://oregonhunters.org/donate>



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# Targeting Bulls in Oregon's Open Country

*When trying to close the gap on great bulls in Oregon's great basins, it pays to be open-minded.*

**O**pen-country bowhunting can be intimidating. Wide open spaces with few places for you to hide can make it seemingly impossible to close the gap during bow season. With one third or more of the state covered in sage or grasslands, elk that call this landscape home seem safe during the early weeks of archery season, when temps soar during the day.

I guide in country that is notoriously open and lacking cover, and we fill tags in this terrain every season in spot-and-stalk scenarios.

The first step, of course, is finding the elk. This is easier said than done, but in the early season before many of the cows are in their first estrus cycle, bulls should still be solo or in bachelor groups.

We climb to the highest glassing point in the area with our spotting scopes and higher-powered binoculars, and look for movement. We often find them feeding or moving to or from water at first light before resting for the heat of the day.

Once you find your target, it's time to be patient. You don't want to consider moving in on these animals for a few hours. We often don't plan our routes until after the second bed of the day unless the animals



*The good news is you've spotted a big bull, and even better, he's bedded. The bad news is he's in the open with minimal stalking cover, and he's surrounded by extra eyes and ears. So now what?*

are within 800 yards. Bulls frequently will have a first and second bed – the first being in a spot where they feel cool from the sun's rays that are starting to heat the landscape, and the second is where they inevitably move after the sunlight shifts later in the morning and their first bed becomes too hot for their liking.

We have seen this take place as early as 8:30 and as late as 11 a.m. Once this second bedding has occurred (often within 100 yards or so of the first, but out of the direct heat), this is when you make your move. This is likely in a place with some cover, or in a draw.

Planning the stalk is similar to how you would conduct any ordinary stalk. You begin by checking the wind and memorizing landmarks. Did the bull lie down in a patch of sagebrush? Just under a rocky

embankment? The head of the draw that curves to the east? Memorizing exactly where he lay down is the first step. Using a map app such as OnX or Basemaps can help, so you can cross-reference as you cut the distance.

The most important factor is the wind direction, as with the sun directly overhead, the elk will try to sleep or rest their eyes from the brightness of the midday sun. Check your wind once, twice, 30 times if you must, but make sure you are flexible to the change and move when you must, to avoid your scent drifting directly toward the elk. We have made stalks with wind hitting us from behind, but at just enough of an angle so the wind is missing the bedded animals by a few yards.

Once you're within 200 yards of your animal, you need to get really sneaky.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR



I always carry an extra pair of socks that I can toss after the stalk is over. Take your boots off, pull these socks (thicker the better) over your first pair, and tuck in the bottom of your pants. This helps eliminate the swishing noise that many hunting pants make, as well as any loud crunching from your boots. If you have sensitive feet or the terrain is too harsh, moccasins are a great option, too, as long as the bottoms aren't solid.

Thin long-sleeve shirts with a hood are a great option to help keep you cool. Ditch your ball cap, as it's less discreet than you think when we're trying to minimize the cast of a shadow. Be sure to hydrate and eat before you begin your final leg of the stalk, as sometimes you may be waiting for a shot opportunity for a few hours in the heat of the day. No one said this would be easy.

The remainder of the stalk is all up to you. Move slowly and deliberately, avoid swinging your bow around, and keep yourself low to the ground. If crawling on all fours isn't your thing, we have had good luck with "boot-scooting," wherein you lay your bow across your lap and push yourself through the grass in a seated position as low as you can.

Once antlers are in sight, we pause and regroup. One key thing to keep in mind is

to never base your ranges on the horns. If you are ranging the rack, your rangefinder may take a range behind the bull, and your shot placement won't be where you're hoping. If you can't range your bull's exact location, range just in front and just behind to make your best estimate on his location. We often are within 1-4 yards when we use this method.

**Once the second bedding has occurred (often within 100 yards of the first, but out of the direct heat), it's time to make your move.**

If at this point you're within your comfortable range and you aren't in position to take a shot, you will be faced with two options: Sit and wait out the elk for when he decides to get up and move around, or decide for him. We have used both tactics to our advantage, though the first option may take hours. If you are good with a call or are hunting with a friend who is, this is your time to shine. The bulls may or may not be super interested in cows at this point, but they will always respond to one talking right in their bedroom when they are resting.

If you're solo, make sure you have your ranges memorized and go to full draw before trying a few quiet calls, as they will likely stand and look within a few seconds after the first time they hear you, and if you go to full draw after they do this, you will scare them away immediately.

If you have a friend, you can use them as a decoy in this scenario, which is more



The author helped guide this hunter to this bull with unique antlers in Oregon's open country.

ideal. For example, I once positioned my hunter 35 yards from a bedded bull that was bedded quartering away from us. To prevent him from standing and looking at us in a bad shot angle, I crawled back out of the draw and went 150 yards below the bull, so when I was to call, he would look at me and ideally stand straight out of his bed, giving my hunter a great shot angle.

We discussed beforehand that I would wait exactly 30 minutes after I had left him, to not only give myself time to get into position, but because he would be out of sight from me, he would go to full draw at that time. This plan worked perfectly and he arrowed a great bull, his first in an open-country scenario, to which he is now addicted and comes annually to hunt the same way.

This style of hunting is not for the faint of heart. You will put on many miles, and the weather in late summer in the desert is unforgiving. Make sure you're mentally and physically prepared for a tough hunt. Pack light gear, extra water, and a couple old pairs of socks that you don't feel the need to pick 100 pieces of cheat grass out of. This style of hunting will test you, but there are few things more rewarding than getting impossibly close to such an incredible animal in a way that most wouldn't dare try.



STOCKINGS FOR STALKING - The author's hunter comes to full draw on a bull bedded in minimal cover after a 45-minute stalk aided by wearing double socks instead of boots.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

ZUMWALT PRAIRIE/DUANE DUNGANNON

# TRADITIONS

By RICH THOMPSON

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

## Traditional Wild Turkey

“You want me to hunt turkeys with a longbow?” came Ed’s response to my suggestion. We are both diehard traditional archers, so why not? He told me about seeing turkeys while deer hunting in a particular spot in southern Oregon. He followed up with the landowner and got permission.

I started bow hunting turkey on the east slope Cascades areas with no luck, but found bagging a nice tom with my shotgun on a guided hunt in southern Oregon didn’t seem so tough. Hunting turkeys with the most primitive equipment legal for their pursuit might prove to be a different game. But if the indigenous people back east could do it with the bows they carried before the first Thanksgiving, we should be up to the challenge.

Ed was right; the turkeys were there. We allowed several days to observe, learn habits and figure out where, when and how to hunt them. As we went about it, patterns began to emerge.

Listening at daybreak and getting them to respond to shock gobblers at dusk can be very effective. Confirm where they roost with feathers and droppings. What do they do after they fly down? How long before they start to forage? When do the hens head to nests? These movements will likely be similar tomorrow, so focus on where the turkeys want to be and not where you think they ought to be.

They like to forage through open pastures, and their coal black bodies against bright spring green pastures makes them stand out. Use binoculars to observe their movements, mark travel routes for potential blind locations to be verified later. Look for pinch points like holes in woven fences, as well as skid roads and trails with feathers and droppings.

There is no doubting the effectiveness



*Traditional bows are the most primitive - and challenging - weapons legal for hunting turkeys.*

of a pop-up blind, especially for bowhunting with traditional equipment, but check upper limb clearance. My Double Bull Recurve model has two large windows covered with shoot-thru camo netting, providing good vision. Brushing in the blind never hurts your chances, however, as I’ve found there are times or locations where they just don’t like what they see.

Be mindful of where the sun will be when you will hunt the blind. Determine where you will place decoys. Keep the blind organized with bow, binoculars, pack, folding chair, and gardener’s knee pad. Wear dark clothing, and don’t silhouette yourself with open windows behind you. Practice shooting from the blind before you go.

Once you’re set up, your ears will be your early warning system. All-out gobblers are a dead giveaway, but also concentrate by listening for quiet yelps, purrs, and even wing beats if they should jump fences or cross creeks. Calling can confirm their location if not visible or hasten their approach if they are playing hard to get. Once they’re in sight, be patient, and quietly watch and wait as they approach.

You may have to adjust your position to keep the longer bow centered in the highest part of the blind. This means your body will be toward the back of the blind, underscoring the importance of keeping gear out of the way.

Many of these points came together late one morning. I had determined a good potential pinch point with confirmed sight-

ings, droppings, tracks and feathers. I set the blind and put my hen decoy out near the blind, then organized the blind and made myself comfortable.

I heard a nearby gobbler and opened an observation window on that side of the blind, keeping an eye out for any movement. Finally, in no hurry to move, two toms pattered around at about 100 yards, quietly pecking away at brunch.

I closed the window, chalked my Lynch box call, and placed it in easy reach. I moved my folded chair to the front of my blind and made sure my knee pad was ready. Time for a few soft yelps followed by a seductive purr. It worked! The first tom walked right past, but the second hesitated broadside, allowing me to pick a spot. The shot was true and the tom expired quickly.

Rather than roasting like a traditional Thanksgiving butterball, I prefer to slice off enough breast meat for several meals, and then process the rest into turkey burger.

Hunting with the longbow and broad arrow is a challenge. You now have the satisfaction of fletching up a new set of fir or cedar arrow shafts with the wing feathers, and a tail fan offers more memories. If the wing bones didn’t take a two-blade broadhead hit, there is the self-made wing bone call you can gift to your elk hunting partner in September.

Get busy now, so on April 15 you can hit the ground running like a gobbler flying down off the roost.



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# Diary of a Bear Hunter

**Not every hunt is strictly by the book.**

**BY MAX ZELLER**

**Y**ears ago, in my Oregon law enforcement days, we were required to keep a hand-written account of our daily activities in an official notebook (no computers or smart phones back then). Every half hour we had to log our location and activity, whether a situation arose or not. This facilitated recall for our reports and in court, which sometimes kept supervisors and attorneys at bay.

Thankfully, I adopted this habit to my hunting life, as well. Hunting journals and diaries not only preserve past memories, family history and legacies, but can also be used as an educational tool and improve success by tracking patterns (weather, animal behavior, animal movement) and tactics for smarter future decisions.

***In a typical spring bear season, more than 5,000 Oregon hunters will go afield an average of close to a week, for a total of 35,000 days, to harvest fewer than 1,000 bears.***

***About 16 percent will bag a bruin, and nearly 40 days will be hunted for every bear taken. So if you're a one-weekend warrior, you can probably expect to fill a tag once every 20 years.***

***Successful bear hunters like the author put in the time. Here's what that looks like.***







*A ThermoCell mosquito repeller is a must for spring bear hunters. A bear's nose is extremely sensitive, and you don't want to smell like bug spray.*

After a long, cold winter, I was aching to get back to the east slopes of the Cascades for the spring bear season. Keeping a journal over the last several years has helped me whittle down some prime spring bear hot spots to several small drainages.

However, I knew this prolonged winter with continued freezing temps and a heavy late-season snowpack would delay bear activity. Spring green-up is at the mercy of Mother Nature and the melting snowpack, and this particular year was a very late spring.

I made two short trips at the end of April and first week in May before my main hunt the last week of May.

**April 22-24:** Mixture of blue skies and overcast – no precipitation – below freezing temps. I was greeted with up to 6 feet of snow and no off-road vehicle access even at the lower elevations. Strapped on the snowshoes and covered several miles of my lower elevation bear destinations. No bear sign, but coyote tracks covered the area. The beauty and haunting stillness of the forest enveloped in virgin snow is breathtaking.

Final morning turned into a predator hunt. Four coyotes came in at once – two didn't make it out. Nothing like coyotes winding through the timber coming to the call.

**May 5-7:** Mixture of blue skies and overcast – morning freeze, thawing by afternoon. Still a large amount of snow, but there was some green-up near standing and running water sources.

Cut several different bear tracks following the water's edge and found two scat piles (two that were quite large). Cut the lone tracks of huge bear with 5 1/2" front pads. I tracked him for six hours and about four miles where he finally came to a county road and crossed onto private property. He traversed thick piney forests over countless deadfalls, crossing two streams, open meadows and frozen swamps. In an open field he must have smelled a ground squirrel under the snow and commenced to digging. Looked like a bomb went off in that pasture of pristine snow – he dug down about four feet, creating a muddy stain 12 feet wide in that field of pure white.

Before heading home, I saved the morning of the last day to hunt coyotes, which paid off with another prime pelt.

Back home, I decided to wait and set up bear camp the last full week of May, giving my most promising hunting grounds time to completely green up and lessen my human footprint in the area.

**May 25:** No rain – mild temps. I set up bear camp. What a difference two weeks made since my last visit to the area. A warm spring kicked into high gear, melted most of the snow in the lower elevations, and the drainages were lush with grasses and succulent growth. After camp set-up, I had time for an evening hunt. Walking a mile of creek bottom yielded six scat piles from a couple good-sized bruins that looked only to be a few days old. Hunted till dark with no bear sightings.

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If snow is heavy and bear activity is light, take a break and hunt hungry coyotes right before fawning and bird nesting season.

**May 26-27:** No rain – temps rising. Ten miles of shoe leather each day. Huge mosquito hatch – thank goodness and American ingenuity for Thermacell. Still-hunted other promising areas with the same result – scat piles but no bear sightings. Snuck within 30 yards of a bachelor herd of nine elk – all branch antlered in velvet, a couple trophy quality – beautiful.

**May 28-30:** Heavy rain, non-stop – temps dropped. I braved the weather and continued on my hunts, knowing bears are mainly fair-weather critters and not very active during nasty weather, especially this soon after winter torpor. Used all the tactics: still-hunting, stand hunting and predator calling. The calling brought in 16 coyotes in three days, including nine in one day. None shot due to targeting bears, but quite a show. Fun couple of days.

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**May 31 (last day of the season):** Break in the weather with intermittent showers and thunderstorms. When the sun broke out it was warm and bear friendly. Hungry spring bears take advantage of these breaks to move and feed. Mosquitoes extra heavy – no problem with TheraCell. Morning hunt: 3-mile hike to trailhead before daylight, then 2 miles still-hunting upstream along a small creek-bottom riparian zone littered with small meadows and plenty of beaver activity. Six hours of silent vigilance produced close encounters with two more herds of elk gorging themselves on an endless treasure trove of new grasses. Bear sign was moderate with several days-old scat piles.



Left area mid-afternoon – still no bear encounters.

**Last evening of season:** Overcast and cold – no precip. I targeted my favorite drainage 3 hours before the end of shooting light to still-hunt the most productive one-mile stretch of high-quality bear habitat. The east side of the creek has an elevated game trail through the timber that allows me vantage points for the entire mile of riparian zone. The west side of the creek is bordered by thick timber and hardwood swamps where bears feel secure but tend to exit into the open meadows to feed at last light.

My plan was simple: just still-hunt that mile back and forth, hoping for a mature bear to show himself in time. I made that mile hike four times, glassing heavily along the way at each opening. My last mile out would be my final push, then nightfall and the season would be over. Exhausted, I was approaching the end of that last mile without remorse, knowing I put in the effort. A half hour before darkness ended my season, I cleared a large blow-

down that marks the very last opening overlooking a football-field sized swampy meadow 50 yards below. I spotted something in my peripheral vision that was out of place in that sea of green – the unmistakable dark patch and movement of a bear in the middle of the meadow. Everything went into slow motion, but I had to move quickly as light was fading fast. Weeks' worth of effort, and it all came down to the last waning minutes of the season.

The swaggering brute was busy feeding toward me, raising his head occasionally to test the air, but in no hurry, even though I was.

I tried crouching, kneeling and standing only to find encroaching darkness and a new set of obstacles that seemed to multiply by the minute. I calmed myself, deciding to let the moving bear create the opening for me. Standing, I braced myself against a large Ponderosa pine as the bear cleared the last branches of my small opening. As the crosshairs settled on his front left shoulder, he stopped perfectly broadside to sniff the air one last time.

The rifle jumped in my hand, the bear staggered, ran a half dozen steps, and fell still. Floating on cloud nine, by the time I made it to the bear's side on the west side of the drainage, it was already dark. There is something mystical walking through a forested wetland with all the surrounding night sounds and that feeling of accomplishment. There was no ground shrinkage.

He had a beautiful chocolate hide with no rubs, a small scar on his nose, and a missing toe on his back paw. In the inky blackness, a tarp, headlamp and sharp knife kept the quarters clean on the soft, water-covered turf. By 1 a.m. the third and final pack-out was complete, closing the final chapter in my journal. 



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The author tagged this brawny bruin in the waning minutes of the two-month Oregon spring bear season. Persistence does pay off.

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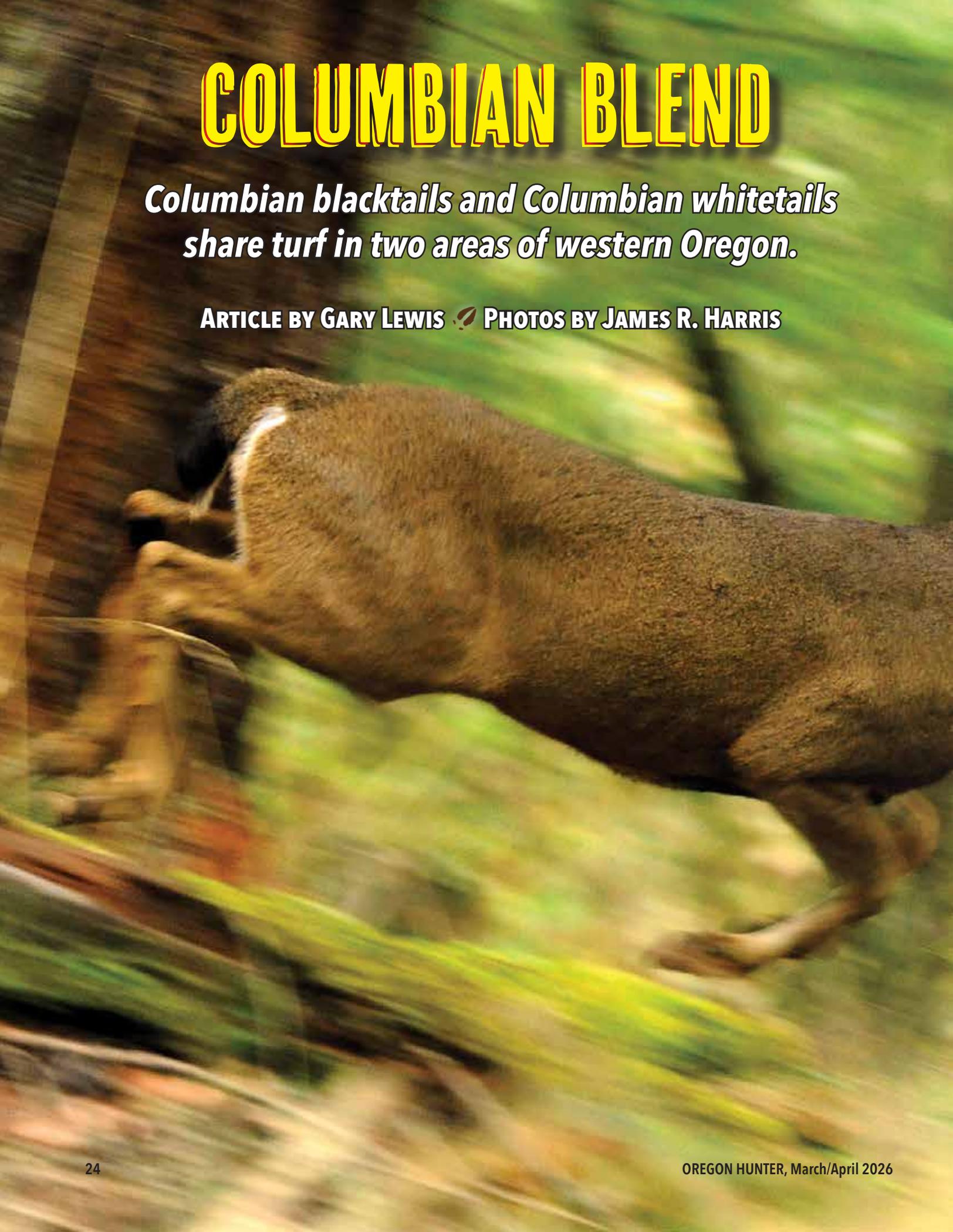
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# COLUMBIAN BLEND

*Columbian blacktails and Columbian whitetails share turf in two areas of western Oregon.*

ARTICLE BY GARY LEWIS 🍄 PHOTOS BY JAMES R. HARRIS





## Learning to photograph or hunt Oregon's Columbian blacktails & whitetails is *A Tail of Two Cervids.*

**T**hey are two different deer. Oregon's Columbian whitetail and our Columbian blacktail, as unlike each other as a creek bottom is from a ridgeline. As different as a patch of blackberries is from an acre of manzanita. While the Columbian whitetail displays a marked preference for riparian areas, and the Columbian blacktail tends toward the brushy uplands, both are masters at remaining undetected while living out most of their lives in about a square mile or less of ground.

The bucks that make it into their fourth October have learned when to move and when to hold tight. They have learned to tell the differences between the farm trucks they might see on a daily basis, and have learned the habits of the men throwing out feed for cattle.

On any given patch of blacktail ground, a big buck probably has half a dozen beds. One might be a better spot to rest when the wind is out of the north. Another bed might be a sunny south-facing location on a cold morning. And another bed might be deep in a thicket with three escape routes.

While deer are watching what humans do, they are more attuned to how other animals act and react. Does, small bucks and fawns are part of a buck's early warning system, and cows and sheep, too, can signal the presence of a mountain lion, a coyote or a bear. At the first hint of danger, a forked horn might turn and look back, while the big buck knows this is the cue to exit stage right.

This is why big bucks tend to stay close to edge. Edge and escape are only one bound away. A blacktail buck or a big whitetail does not have to go far to find cover. Over a fencerow. Into the blackberries. Beneath a tangle of blowdown. Into the poison oak.

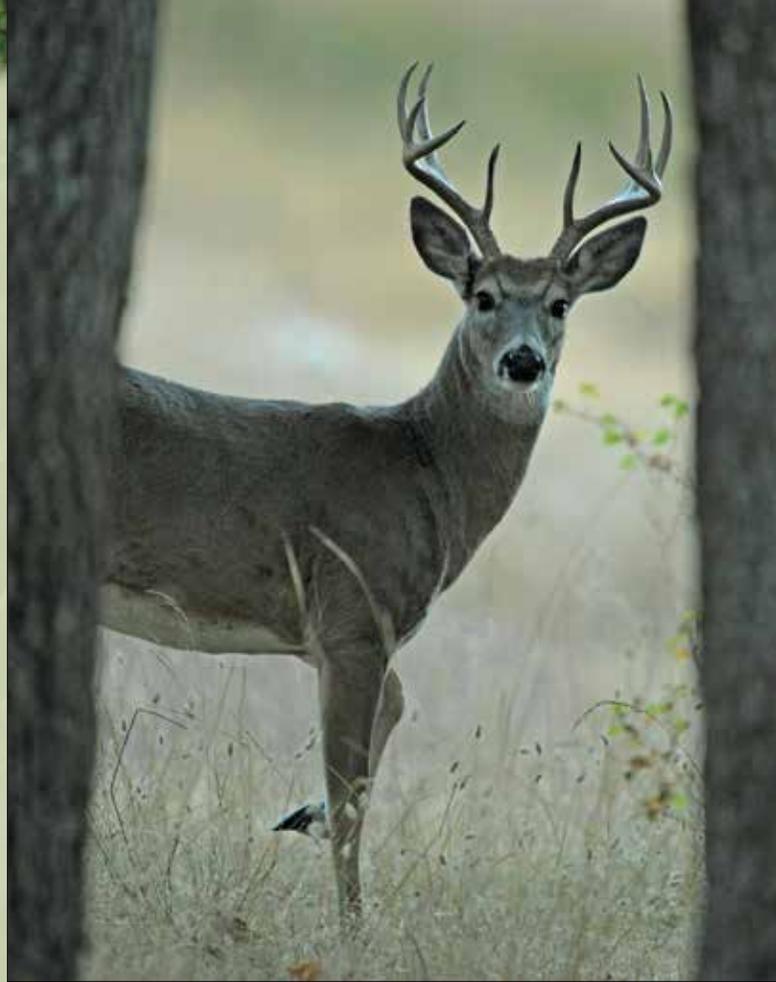
While mule deer put distance and obstacles between themselves and danger, the Columbian whitetails and the Columbian blacktails are content, if they have not been seen, to take a few steps to lie down on the backside of a boulder or behind a fallen log. Tall grass is an even better bet, especially in a corner of a hayfield or a back pasture.

This behavior explains why hunter success is relatively low despite good numbers of deer. Blacktails and whitetails are aware of audible cues like the crunch of gravel under tires, the sound of a car door, even the metallic tink of a round being chambered. A hunter moving very slowly through good deer habitat is given away by birds that alarm, pine squirrels that scold or non-target deer that move away.

What hunters do not see is deer move ahead of them and move around them. A hunter in motion is easy to keep track of. Not so the rifleman or bowhunter that watches from a stand.

A hunter should stop and consider, "who or what is watching me in this moment?" Thus the walking hunter becomes a still hunter, taking one or two steps every 5 to 10 minutes. The still hunter learns to wait on stand and watch small openings in good deer habitat.

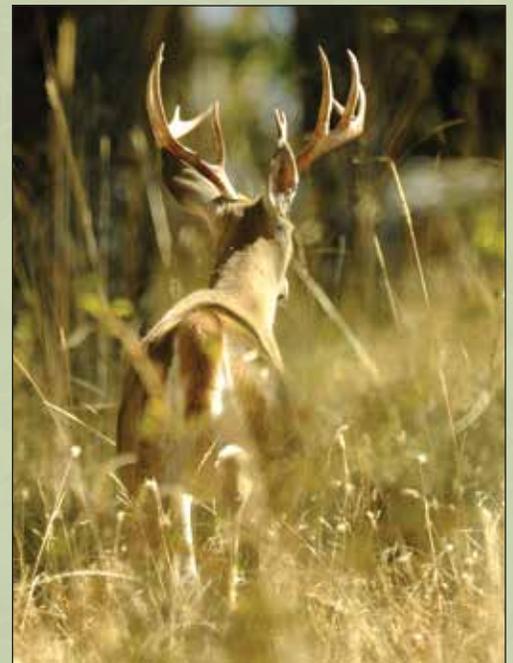
It is something the wildlife photographer learns that perhaps the hunter never does.



*With the tail hidden, this whitetail is given away by points all off the main beam, white eye circles and a midtone scalp and muzzle.*



*Even without seeing the tail, the bifurcated antlers, along with the dark scalp and white muzzle, make identifying this blacktail buck easy.*



*The tell-tale tail of a whitetail has a lack of black. A tag for a Douglas County Columbian whitetail is one of the most difficult to draw. The best habitat is on private land, where the buck excels at living mostly out of sight.*



*Back in black from head to tail, a blacktail sports a dark scalp over a white nose. This three-point would be hard to tell by the antlers that fork in the front, giving them a main-beam look.*



*Today, two distinct groups of Columbian white-tailed deer are recognized in the Pacific Northwest: a thriving population in Douglas County, and a smaller herd in the Columbia drainage.*



*Surely you had to know there would be a quiz at the end. So now, this bedded buck is keeping his tail hidden from you. Is this a Columbian whitetail with points on the main beam, or Columbian blacktail with eyeguards and forks in front? See Oregon Hunting Quiz answers on Page 8.*

The way to see big bucks is to learn their habits, build a brush blind downwind and out-wait them. It means moving slow and cautious into a big buck's core area well before dawn. If a field must be crossed, it should be skirted through timber with wind in the face. Once at the stand, it means staying in place – watchful without moving.

This is also why we use cartridges and premium bullets that put deer down fast. When the shot opportunity is offered, there might be three seconds to make the shot. Hit by a substantial, well placed bullet, the deer is likely to drop in place. Bucks that go down fast are much easier to find than deer that run a fair distance through poison oak and blackberries.

To really see big bucks, one must learn their habits, and there's no closed season for that. Shoot them now with a camera or trail camera, and you'll have a better shot this fall.



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# Wary Old Oak Woodland Turkeys

**H**unting turkeys in the oak woodlands of southwest Oregon was high on my bucket list. Widely spaced, stately Oregon white oak with brilliant green grass understories seemed like the perfect habitat for big gobblers. My chance came in 2022 after an invitation from friends Matt Elliott and Josh Warren at Work Sharp in Ashland. I'd be filming content for one of my television episodes, and if the hunting was good, I'd get my chance to tag a bird. Public lands in this part of Oregon receive a fair amount of hunting pressure, so I was interested to learn how Matt and Josh enticed wary toms.

The lights of Medford disappeared as we drove down the narrow, two-lane country road. Pavement eventually gave way to gravel in the rolling foothills. The road climbed into the oak woodlands and onto public lands where we would call birds from high points. Matt explained that turkeys often roosted in the private bottom lands and then feed up ridgelines in early morning. If gobblers responded to our calls, we would move downhill below the road, set up a blind using a small camouflage fence and natural cover, and attempt to call in a long beard with hen yelps.

Matt pulled off the gravel road on a high corner overlooking a shallow draw. We quietly walked to the road edge, listening for turkeys in the calm morning air. There are several ways to strike gobblers, causing a tom to gobble and give up his location. My brother uses a coyote call, and a friend either slams a pickup door or honks his horn, while others will use a call to simulate a gobble. Matt is an experienced turkey hunter who uses loud hen yelps to locate birds. Box calls are excellent for locating birds because they are loud. A couple yelps and Matt had two responses, one below and one above the road.

**When OHA members from Work Sharp take a cut at southern Oregon's edgy gobblers, there's never a dull moment.**

**By Richy J. Harrod**



The gobbler the hunters dubbed *Crafty Craig* eludes the aim of Josh Warren in the oak woodlands of Jackson County.



Game on! We walked back to the pickup, quietly discussing which bird to go after, when suddenly a gobble boomed close below the road. Like an old vaudeville comedy show, we bumped into each other while scrambling for shotguns, vests, and the blind. The tom thundered again even closer. No time to set up the blind, so we crowded behind a large boulder off the road, but it was too late. The wary tom caught our movement and sprinted back to the creek bottom.

The gobbler above the road was still making his presence known. With our gear finally organized, we hiked up to a small bench to make our blind. Matt switched to a slate call for softer yelps and purrs. The tom immediately responded and came closer with each yelp. After 30 minutes, it was apparent this cagey bird wouldn't come within shotgun range. He stayed out of sight and eventually stopped gobbling. We named this bird "Crafty Craig" after a couple of evening hunts ended with the same result, but this wouldn't be our last encounter with this tom.

It was apparent these gobblers would require more cunning on our part. We decided to arrive in the dark and descend closer to the private land boundary where birds were roosting. Our idea was to use loud yelps to locate birds when the morning light glowed on the horizon, and then shift to quiet yelps, putts, and purrs once



PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

birds left the roost. Toms are adept at pinpointing the locations of calling hens, so by setting up closer to the roosts, it was more likely one would come within shotgun range.

The next morning, we parked at a gated road in a different location well before first light. The short walk behind the gate led to a broad ridgeline we would descend within several hundred yards of potential roost trees below. A distant gobble quickened our pace down the ridge to the edge of an opening to watch for approaching birds. Josh was relatively new to turkey hunting, so Matt placed him in the best position to shoot. With the camouflage fence in place, I settled in with the camera alongside Josh and all was quiet as we listened intently.

There was no need to use the box call, because gobbles were continuous. It seemed like there were several toms, as gobbles were in unison. We assumed it was a group of jakes, which can be easier to call in close. Every few minutes, Matt would softly call on the slate. After an hour, the gobbles sounded farther away, and then it was quiet again. It's been my experience that gobbling toms that become quiet might be on the move, so patience is important. Matt had similar experiences, so we decided to stay put, and it was a good choice.

My video camera was zoomed to the farthest opening 200 yards below. After a 10-minute wait, I caught movement in the viewfinder as three long beards were coming our way; clearly, they weren't jakes! Matt made a couple more low yelps, triggering a trio of thunderous gobbles. The toms started jogging uphill into the dense oak understory and momentarily disap-

peared from our view. A sudden booming, deep, gurgling gobble echoed in the trees as three red heads appeared above a log to our left 10 yards away. I expected a shotgun blast from Josh at any moment, but he couldn't see them well over the log, and they were so close together he was afraid to shoot more than one. Exasperated, he whispered to Matt, "shoot one if you can." The trio continued uphill past the log in full view of Matt, who hammered the middle bird with a deadly shot that cut off part of his long beard. Laughing about the scraggly bearded bird, we were nonetheless excited to have conned the cunning toms.

**Public lands in this part of Oregon receive a fair amount of hunting pressure, so I was interested to learn how Matt and Josh enticed wary toms.**

One more morning hunt remained, so Josh decided to go after Crafty Craig. Another co-worker, Steve Baker, joined us while Matt returned to work. Using the strategy of the previous hunt, we arrived well before daylight and set our blind in a small opening near our first encounter with this tom. Steve used a slate call to yelp and purr, but just barely audibly, thinking that the bird might shy away from too much calling.

At first light, Crafty Craig gobbled, leaving the roost nearby, and then silently walked our way. As if out of thin air, he appeared on the far side of the opening. Josh had his shotgun shouldered, but the long beard walked into the opening – perfectly blocked by a tree. The bird stood still for several minutes, and then walked out on the same path he came in on, while Josh leaned left and right of the tree trying to get a clear shot. Steve's skilled calling finally fooled Crafty Craig into coming close, but in the end, he somehow proved he was the craftiest.



Josh Warren (left) and Matt Elliott of Work Sharp enjoy the moment after taking the turkey they nicknamed Scraggly Beard.

Hunting with good friends, learning their techniques, and spending time in the beautiful oak woodlands of southwest Oregon was an experience I won't forget. Success with wary toms can be achieved by knowing where birds roost, being in position before fly-down, and calling patiently. It didn't matter that I couldn't hunt on this trip, because the time spent with friends and learning about oak woodland turkeys was rewarding enough. 🦃

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# OHA HELPS VETERANS EARN THEIR WINGS



FOGGY PINTAILS BY RANDY SHIPLEY

## ***OHA, ODFW & David Sill host duck hunt on Veteran's Waterfowl Day.***

**O**regon Hunters Association, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and OHA Citizen Landowner of the Year David Sill hosted a waterfowl hunt for eight veterans and active military personnel on Jan. 31 at Sill's waterfowl hunting property on the Tualatin River following an ODFW Duck Hunting Workshop at the Gervais Rod and Gun Club.

Oregon's general duck season ended Jan. 25, but each year ODFW sanctions a special postseason hunting day for veterans only.

Four parties of two or three hunters each (veterans and active duty personnel paired with an experienced mentor) took to the marsh.

The veterans were free to bring their own dogs or rely on the experienced dogs provided by the mentor. Shotguns, ammo, waders and decoys were provided as needed.



*David Sill's waterfowl hunting property served as an ideal setting for our service men and women.*



*The event offered some of the participating veterans their first shot at waterfowl hunting.*

Volunteers from OHA’s Tualatin Valley Chapter had coffee brewing at 4 a.m. and served breakfast to veterans and organizers, and the property farm and hunt manager Steve Schumacher went the extra mile in preparation for the event.

“This was our first OHA event of this type, and we hope to build on this in the future,” said Kelly Forney, OHA state board member and event organizer.

OHA and ODFW partnered to offer this opportunity for the veterans to hunt on the Sill property. Weather conditions were less than ideal (dense fog and no wind), but all hunters had shot opportunities and saw birds. Green-winged teal, mallards and pintails were in the mixed bags of the hunters.

OHA’s Field Director Bryan Cook was in the field for this last hunt of the season. “This was a great opportunity for us to help show appreciation for our veterans, and we

thank our partners ODFW and David Sill for helping us make it happen. The setting was amazing, and the fun and camaraderie couldn’t have been better.”

“Everyone got some shooting and everyone had a good time,” reported Sill.

“OHA and ODFW made it easy, we just had to show up and hunt,” said Matt Martel, a Navy veteran. “Thanks to Mr. Sill for letting this happen.”

Chris Benson, an Air Force veteran, added, “I was honored to be invited to hunt this property. What a slice of heaven this property is. There were birds everywhere, even when we couldn’t see them. Thank you for a wonderful day of camaraderie, sharing stories, learning and self reflection. A guy couldn’t ask for more.”

Marine veteran Doug Stefan said, “I hope all veterans get to experience what OHA is doing.” —GARY LEWIS



**PHOTOS BY KELCEY STOLLER**



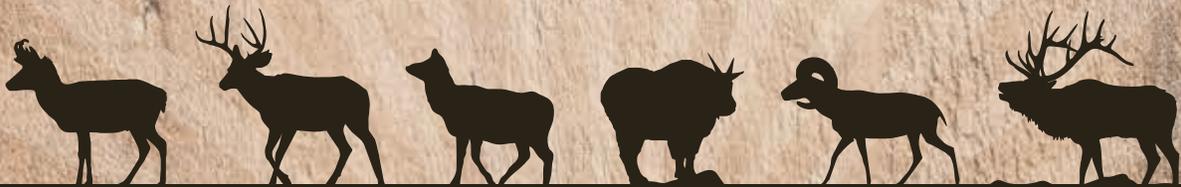
*A hard-working dog retrieves a drake mallard. These straight-shooting veterans enjoyed a good day afield despite the foggy weather.*



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## OHA NEWS & VIEWS

OHA invested more than \$100,000 in the last three years for projects aimed at improving big game habitat in the Blue Mountains.

### OHA raises stakes in support of Blue Mtns Elk Initiative

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

The Blue Mountains hold the vast majority of the elk in eastern Oregon across the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur and Ochoco National Forests. In the past three years, OHA has invested \$108,000 in these forests across eight landscape-scale projects. This year, OHA put its chips on a 5-year project on the Wallowa-Whitman, as well as a sizeable project on the Malheur National Forest.

➤ **North Fork Burnt River Watershed Habitat Enhancement Project** will reduce density of mixed conifer stands and increase early seral species important to elk and mule deer diets through commercial and non-commercial thinning. This project will construct new buck and pole fencing around aspen stands with recent conifer thinning to allow the recovery of the aspen stands. Finally, it will enhance meadows and riparian habitats through the removal of encroaching conifers, hardwood planting, and construction of beaver dam analogues on the Wallowa-Whitman in Baker County.

➤ **Magone Juniper Removal** will enhance forage quality on 800 acres of elk and mule deer habitat on the Malheur National Forest that is being suppressed by juniper and conifer encroachment.

OHA chapters that have financially contributed to the Blue Mountains include Bend, Redmond, Capitol, Umpqua, Lake County, Pioneer, Hoodview, Emerald Valley, Blue Mountain, Ochoco, Mid-Willamette, Josephine County, Lincoln County and Union-Wallowa.

UNION COUNTY/JIM WARD

DESCHUTES COUNTY/RYAN HOEFT



OHA has funded five new landscape-scale projects that will enhance Oregon mule deer habitat.

## OHA Mule Deer Fund gains steam 10 projects net nearly \$3 million in matching funds

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

OHA is leaning in to help reverse mule deer declines across eastern Oregon. In just two years, the OHA Mule Deer Fund has received a total of 21 landscape-scale project proposal applications with a total request of \$613,115 from OHA.

We were able to fund \$110,115 (18% of funds requested) across 10 projects with more than \$2,900,000 in match funding since the inception of the OHA Mule Deer Fund in 2025.

Recently in 2026, OHA funded five projects:

➤ **Lower Deschutes Range Enhancement Project** will treat 5,800 acres of annual grass and invasive weeds, and plant 52,000 shrubs (bitterbrush, sagebrush, and other riparian species beneficial to mule deer) on the ODFW Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area.

➤ **Metolius Winter Range Bitterbrush Planting** will plant 20,000 bitterbrush plants across approximately 500 acres in Jefferson County in addition to the 20,000 bitterbrush plants that the OHA Mule Deer Fund planted in 2025.

➤ **Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area Forage Enhancement** will apply herbicide across 2,000 acres of invasive annual grasses and aerially seed 2,663 acres on the wildlife area in the John Day Watershed.

➤ **USFS Knox Meadow Enhancement** will remove 20 acres of conifer from aspen stands, retrofit 1.5 miles of fencing to wildlife-friendly specifications, remove conifer encroaching on the sizeable meadow, plant 65 acres of mule deer forage, and install new water sources.

➤ **Highway 20 Deer-Vehicle Reduction & Signage** will purchase and utilize three trailer-mounted portable solar-powered message signs, which will be placed in hot-spots for mule deer-vehicle collisions on Hwy 20 in the Juntura and Sagehen herd ranges. These signs also will be used during buck deer and Rocky Mountain bull elk seasons to notify hunters of the new mandatory CWD check station in Riley.

OHA chapters that have financially contributed to the OHA Mule Deer Fund include Umpqua, Redmond, Pioneer, Bend, Klamath, Capitol, Josephine County, Mid-Willamette, Lincoln County, Ochoco, and Hoodview.

# OHA announces first winners in 2026 Gun Calendar Raffle

The first winners in OHA's 2026 Gun Calendar Raffle have been announced!

The 2027 Gun Raffle Calendar is on sale now; call 541-772-7313 or visit <https://oregonhunters.org/shop/#raffles>

See winners on OHA's website or get our app, which you can also use to enter OHA contests and get timely notifications.

★ **Sig Cross 6.5 CR**

Scott Shaw, Pioneer Chapter

★ **Browning A-Bolt 6.5 CR**

Tim Spencer, Baker Chapter

★ **Pointer O/U 12 gauge**

Molly Hames, Capitol Chapter

★ **Weatherby Vanguard Badlands .270 Win.**

Steven Bloom, Tualatin Valley Chapter

★ **G4 Gift Card**

Pat Clement, Ochoco Chapter

★ **Howa 1500 Green Carbon 6.5 PRC**

Deb Borine, Redmond Chapter



OHA Pioneer Chapter member Scott Shaw picks up his Sig Cross - the first gun awarded in OHA's 2026 Gun Calendar Raffle - at G4 Outdoors.



SPONSORED BY OHA, OSP & ODFW

## OHA pays \$8,600 in 9 reward cases

In the last two months, OHA issued nine reward checks to informants in nine cases totaling \$8,600 from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) reward fund.

Charges included: Unlawful take and waste of game mammal (elk), hunting prohibited hours, take/possession of antlerless deer, unlawful take of cougar, unlawful take of blacktail buck, trespassing, unlawful take of bull elk, aiding in a wildlife offense, hunting in prohibited area, waste of game animal, failing to validate tag, unlawful take of cow elk, waste of cow elk, offensive littering, trespass with a firearm, hunting with artificial light and hunting with a suspended hunting license.

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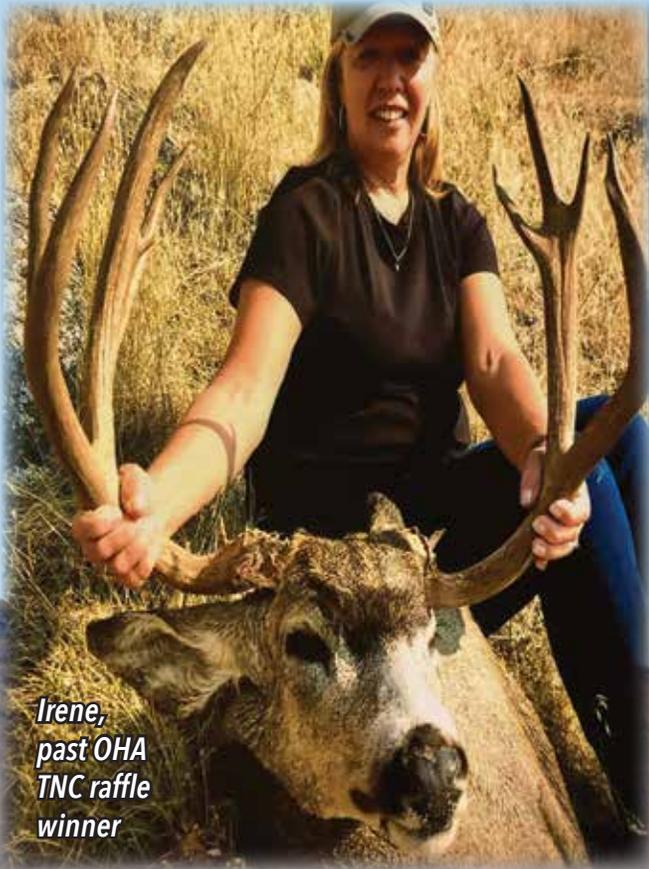
To learn how you can leave something good behind that will benefit wildlife and future generations of Oregon hunters through OHA's Legacy Program, call the OHA State Office at 541-772-7313 or visit [oregonhunters.org/documents](http://oregonhunters.org/documents)

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PO Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501.**

3-day guided buck rifle hunt for 1 hunter on the 33,000-acre Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in Oregon's Wallowa County during the fall 2026 season (dates TBD; early October). 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 bucks 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).



Zumwalt Prairie Bucks/Photo by Chad Dotson

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 TNC. Proceeds benefit OHA. Drawing: April 22, 2026, OHA State Office, 301 Crater Lake Ave. Suite C, Medford, Oregon, 3 p.m. Need not be present to win.



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**Drawing: April 1, 2026.**

**Tickets & info: call 541-772-7313 or visit [oregonhunters.org/store](https://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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**Saturday, May 16, 2026**

**Seven Feathers Casino, Canyonville**



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- Tikka T3-Lite 6.5 PRC \$1,229
- Sig P320 X5 10mm \$1,050
- Retay ACE Type R Realtree Max 7 12ga. \$1,149
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**Tickets must be ordered and prepaid by May 6, 2026.**

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- 8 Early Bird Tickets\*\*
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- 8 Party Starter Tickets
- 8 Special Raffle Tickets
- 72 General Raffle Tickets
- 8 Early Bird Tickets\*\*
- 1 Commemorative Gift

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- 2 Early Bird Tickets\*\*
- 2 Commemorative Gifts

**STAG PACKAGE \$150\***

- 1 Dinner & 1 Drink Ticket
- 1 Party Starter Raffle Ticket
- 12 General Raffle Tickets
- 1 Early Bird Ticket\*\*
- 1 Commemorative Gift

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

\*\* Early Bird tickets must be ordered by April 16, 2026.

Party Starter: 2 guns (\$599 & \$569). Max 1,900 tickets.  
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## CHAPTER NEWS

Elk safely inside the Hwy 97 Lava Butte fence.

# You're invited to OHA's banquets!

### 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](http://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:** At the Mule Deer Classic this year, we will auction an Oregon Access & Habitat Statewide Elk Tag. Call 971-270-7035 in advance to bid by phone.

### BLUE MOUNTAIN

KEVIN MARTIN 541-969-6744

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

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

### 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](mailto: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

DON MAYWALD 503-867-5073

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

**2026 Fundraiser:** Feb. 21, Columbia County Fairgrounds, 360-901-2201.

**Update:** Our chapter is looking for someone to become our chapter president. Please contact any board member to apply.

### CURRY

JAMIE BADGER 541-499-2245

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

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

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

### EMERALD VALLEY

RON MARTIN 541-954-5459

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

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

**Update:** We hosted a booth at the local sports show Jan. 30 - Feb. 1, with a free drawing for a Maine bear hunt. Everyone attending a chapter meeting will be entered into a drawing for a Howa 1500 .223 bolt action rifle with Nikko scope and camo stock. Bring a friend and get two entries.

### HOODVIEW

LEVI BARRERA 503-863-4495

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

Facebook: Hoodview OHA

**Chapter Meetings:** 2nd Thursday, General Chapter Meeting, Elmer's Restaurant, 1933 NE San Rafael, Portland.

**2026 Fundraiser:** Feb. 21, Monarch Hotel,



OHA Bend Chapter volunteers recently cleared fallen trees from the Lava Butte wildlife fence that funnels wildlife into a safe undercrossing.

Clackamas, [ohahoodview2019@gmail.com](mailto:ohahoodview2019@gmail.com)

**Update:** Our March chapter meeting will feature Ben Haron, who will talk about turkey strategies and calling. Youth Turkey Clinic will be held on April 4 at White River Wildlife Area; call 503-358-7821.

### JOSEPHINE COUNTY

DAVID DOWNS 541-821-1511

[ddowns2646@gmail.com](mailto: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.

### KLAMATH

DENNIS WIARD 541-891-3549

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

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

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

**Update:** We held our annual PLAY Outdoors youth event on Jan. 17. 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 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](mailto: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.

**Update:** We will host a fund-raising shotgun shoot on April 25. Our annual Youth Shotgun Shoot will be held Aug. 8.

### MID-COLUMBIA

TONY WHITE 541-490-2980

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

**Update:** The annual Youth Turkey Clinic will be held on April 4 at White River Wildlife Area; call 503-358-7821.

### MID-WILLAMETTE

KEN MCCALL 541-753-8588

[kenemccall@gmail.com](mailto: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 (SOLD OUT!).

**Update:** At our annual banquet this year, we will auction an Oregon Access & Habitat Statewide Elk Tag. Call 971-270-7035 in advance to bid by phone.

### 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 (SOLD OUT!).

### PIONEER

BRIAN ANDREWS 971-221-8827

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

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

**2026 Fundraiser:** March 7 (SOLD OUT!)

### REDMOND

K. C. THRASHER 541-419-7215

OHA line 541-383-1099

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

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

**2026 Fundraiser:** Feb. 28, Deschutes County Fairgrounds.

**Update:** We are scheduling 2026 chapter meeting guest speakers. If you know someone, please contact us.

### ROGUE VALLEY

PAUL THOMPSON 541-941-6978

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

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

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

**Update:** We hosted a booth at the local sports show Feb. 20-22. Youth Turkey Clinic will be held on April 4 at Denman Wildlife Area; call 541-857-2407.

### 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:** Thank you to Sgt. Warwick from OSP for being the guest speaker 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, 541-294-7912.

**Update:** If you have had your recent harvest tested for CWD, you could be entered into a drawing for a Sportsman's Warehouse gift card. Just send us your receipt/proof. Drawing will be held at our annual banquet on April 11.

### TUALATIN VALLEY

SHELLEY KIND 503-290-6143

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

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

**2026 Fundraiser:** March 21, Wingspan Event Center (SOLD OUT!).

**Update:** A big thank you to Adam Johnson, General Manager of Threat Dynamics in Sherwood, for speaking at our chapter meeting.

### 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 hosted a booth at the local sports show Feb. 6-8. Our chapter is looking for volunteers for newsletter editor, assisting with projects and serving on the chapter board of directors. Let's keep our chapter growing and moving forward.

### UNION/WALLOWA COUNTY

MORGAN OLSON 541-786-1283

**Chapter Meetings:** TBA.

**2026 Fundraiser:** April 4, White Barn, LaGrande; [ohaunion.wallowa@gmail.com](mailto:ohaunion.wallowa@gmail.com)

### YAMHILL COUNTY

ANDY BODEEN 503-490-2489

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

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

**2026 Fundraiser:** March 14, Yamhill County Fairgrounds, 503-490-2489. 

## In Memoriam

*Contributions made recently to the*

### OHA Memorial Fund

In memory of  
**BUCK TEASLEY**  
from Bryan and Tammy Cook

In memory of  
**KATHY KINKEL**  
from Bryan and Tammy Cook

In memory of  
**CRAIG & DELBERT STARR**  
from Sharon Starr



Send contributions in honor of loved ones who loved wildlife to:  
**OHA Memorial Wildlife Fund**  
P.O. Box 1706  
Medford, OR 97501



# You're Invited to OHA's 2026 Banquets

## for Oregon's Wildlife & Sportsmen!

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OHA banquets in 2026 will feature  
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"EVENING GLOW"  
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<b>FEBRUARY 21</b>	Columbia County	971-225-8013
	Ochoco	<b>SOLD OUT!</b>
<b>FEBRUARY 28</b>	Redmond	541-419-7215
<b>MARCH 7</b>	Hoodview	503-314-3090
	Pioneer	<b>SOLD OUT!</b>
<b>MARCH 14</b>	Bend	541-480-9848
	Capitol	503-990-2978
	Rogue Valley	541-773-8736
	Yamhill County	503-490-2489
<b>MARCH 21</b>	Tualatin Valley	<b>SOLD OUT!</b>
<b>MARCH 28</b>	Josephine County	541-761-1852
<b>APRIL 4</b>	Baker	541-403-0402
	Lake County	541-417-2983
	Umpqua	541-430-7324
	Union-Wallowa	541-786-1283
<b>APRIL 11</b>	Clatsop County	503-440-9934
	Tioga	541-294-7912
<b>APRIL 18</b>	Mid-Willamette	<b>SOLD OUT!</b>
<b>APRIL 25</b>	Curry	541-698-0413
<b>MAY 2</b>	Tillamook	503-812-3832
<b>MAY 16</b>	OHA State Convention,  	Seven Feathers Casino, 541-772-7313
	 A&H Statewide Elk Tag auction	
	  A&H Deer & Elk Tags auction	
	To bid by phone, call 971-270-7035	

# Howa



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4LBS 15OZ / MSRP \$1,039



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GRAY w/ BLACK WEBBING / HHSSL308GRY  
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# OHA IN ACTION

BY TYLER DUNGANNON  
OHA CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

ODFW PHOTOS

## OHA invests in blacktail monitoring

Current black-tailed deer herd composition monitoring largely relies on spotlight surveys to determine buck and fawn ratios. This method for monitoring black-tailed deer began in the early 1960s, and it is heavily scrutinized today, with many researchers and managers deeming the methodology inaccurate and biased.

ODFW and partners have recently conducted noninvasive genetic capture-recapture studies using fecal DNA in many management units across western Oregon, which tremendously improved our population and density estimates for the years of sampling. However, the caveat is that these genetic samples are expensive to collect and analyze, and are not feasible across western Oregon for every unit on an annual, biennial or even a triennial basis.

So, we must improve our long-term black-tailed deer population monitoring in an efficient and financially sustainable way.

*As many as 600 trail cameras will collect data after hunting seasons each December.*



*ODFW will be able to obtain herd composition data and deer density estimates from the cams.*



*State OHA and the Umpqua and Tioga chapters are helping to fund new trail camera surveys.*



*Photos will be uploaded to a database, and species will be identified in each photo using artificial intelligence and biologist validation.*

With advances in technology (e.g., artificial intelligence) and successful pilot studies now completed, the Umpqua and Tioga OHA chapters along with State OHA recently funded materials necessary for ODFW to shift and predominantly monitor black-tailed deer populations with trail cameras that will be randomly distributed throughout western Oregon.

In the near future, as many as 600 trail cameras will be deployed, and they will collect data after hunting seasons in the month of December each year.

Upon camera retrieval, photos will be uploaded to a database, and species will be identified in each photo using artificial intelligence and biologist validation.

A decade ago, this would have been an arduous task to sift through potentially hundreds of thousands of photos devoid of wildlife, but now sophisticated software is capable of removing those “blank” photos

so biologists can focus on those with deer, elk and other wildlife in the frame. Photos will then be separated into independent detection events using a 60-minute inactivity interval, and individual deer in each independent detection event will be classified by gender, age, and antler points. Classified individuals will be totaled for each survey area, and herd composition for each wildlife management unit will be determined by averaging the herd composition of the survey areas within the unit.

In the coming years, ODFW will be able to obtain not only herd composition data (i.e. buck and fawn ratios), but deer density estimates from the cameras, as well. Deer density refers to the number of deer per unit area (usually per square kilometer) and is crucial for enhancing hunter satisfaction by managing harvest for a sustainable, quality herd. It helps determine when to increase or decrease harvest, manage sex ratios, and maintain a resilient population that benefits both wildlife and hunters.

The door is wide open for ODFW to use this methodology for monitoring many other species.

Other states, including Idaho, have used trail cameras to determine elk herd composition, although cow:calf and bull:cow ratios and density estimates are more difficult with a herd animal. ODFW will be collecting occurrence data at a minimum on every critter that crosses paths with these cameras, and these data may prove more valuable than we currently know.

OHA applauds ODFW for using OHA funds to leverage additional federal Pittman-Robertson funds to benefit black-tailed deer management in western Oregon.





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*Donated by Legacy Sports International.*



SCAN FOR TICKETS



**Proceeds will be used to improve habitat for  
wildlife in Oregon.**

**500 offered. Draw: OHA Convention, May 16,  
7 p.m., Seven Feathers Casino, Canyonville, OR  
NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN.**

# TACTACAM TRAIL CAM CONTEST

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



**WINNER:**  
Sharon Hatcher, an OHA member from Redmond, is the winner of a Tactacam Reveal Trail Camera for her photo of a herd of mule deer having a spa day at the waterhole.



SCAN HERE TO ENTER

## HONORABLE MENTION:



Roseburg OHA member David Vangsness captured a photo of a couple of Melrose Unit blacktails in velvet last August, earning an OHA hat and Honorable Mention.



OHA member Evan Boyer of Oregon City claims an OHA hat and Honorable Mention for this photo of a pair of elk captured by the camera in mid-morning.



OHA member Robert Crawford of Forest Grove grabs an OHA hat and Honorable Mention for his December photo of a cougar using a log to cross a creek.



Jon Duerst, an OHA member in Peoria, Ariz., earns Honorable Mention and an OHA hat for his Wallowa County bull elk making use of the last remaining water.



Baker City OHA member Josh Scrocca caught this blacktail doe catching a patch of early morning sun in the Melrose Unit, earning himself an OHA hat and Honorable Mention.

MOONRISE BEFORE SUNRISE OVER SNAKE RIVER

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# OREGON WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION 27TH ANNUAL BANQUET

Riverhouse Lodge Bend, OR  
April 25th, 2026

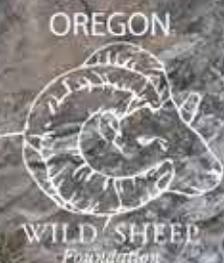


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# SHARING THE HERITAGE

By CLINT EPPS

## A Short Hunt, a long time coming

**M**y daughter Lillie is an experienced hunter. Turkeys, however, have proved elusive. Her first hunt was for turkeys, many years ago when she was 8 or 9. I found her an old 20 gauge Sears pump shotgun with the stock cut very short. I reshaped the forearm, plugged the magazine to hold two shells, fitted a good recoil pad, added weight to the buttstock, and refinished it. It was a pretty impressive sight in her tiny hands. I was able to call a gobbler in for her one spring morning, but she did not connect on the shot, and good, publicly accessible turkey spots are scarce. By age 10, she was focused on deer and squirrel hunting.

At 17, with many successful big game hunts behind her, she was willing to try again on Oregon's youth turkey hunt weekend. I still haven't managed to draw a reservation hunt, but she did.

*Is there anything sillier than running around with a plastic turkey strapped to your pack?*

By this time, she had upgraded to an old Winchester Model 12 pump, dating to around 1915. After testing, she decided a light 1-ounce load of No. 6 was the most she cared to handle. I figured that would be good enough if she didn't try to stretch the barrel on a distant bird.

Her hunt was on the second day of the youth season, a Sunday. After some panic about the access process, we showed up before dawn, chatting with another hunting party at the gate – a boy, his father and grandfather. The boy had drawn the other access opportunity for the day. The day before, however, they'd hunted the side of the property that we were slated to hunt, because another hunter had canceled.

"That was tough," said the father. "Bunch of birds on the back property line, but nothing convinced a gobbler to head our way."

When I returned to the truck, I told Lillie that it was time to be aggressive. Sometimes there are simply too many hens around. I burned a wine cork with a lighter and rubbed the soot on her cheeks, nose and forehead to cut the shine of her face.

First light was showing by the time we passed through the gate and skirted a wide series of mud holes. We could hear the first gobbles coming from the north side of the property. Away we went through fields and stands of timber, fast as we could. We crossed another wooded patch and eased up to the edge. There was a narrow open field, and from the sound, the turkeys were still roosted in the trees on the other side. Not far, but probably too far.

"I think we need to push right into those woods," I told her, "but it's risky, we may bust 'em. You OK with that?" She agreed. Moving quickly, crouching, we crossed into the final patch of



*The author's daughter scored an ODFW reservation hunt on private property in western Oregon, and then tagged her first turkey. To bag your reservation, visit <https://myodfw.com/articles/hunt-reservation-program>*

trees. Little time to choose fields of fire, turkeys were gobbling as close as 75 yards. Many birds. I set up a decoy. (Is there anything sillier than running around with a plastic turkey strapped to your pack?) We hunkered by a tree, and I began calling, trading between my old Lynch box and a wing bone call.

We heard the thumps as birds flew down, screened by thick brush, but the gobbles receded, and I glimpsed birds moving away to the east. Twenty hens in hand beats one in the bush. Off to the left, however, we heard several more distant gobbles, farther down the tree line. Then, closer. We shifted toward that edge, abandoning the decoy. Lillie set up, back to tree, me on her left.

"There!" Black shapes along the pasture's edge in the early light, at least three. Clearly males, but I couldn't spot beards. "Be sure; don't shoot unless you are sure!" I stuck my finger in my right ear.

The shot, turkeys running, something thrashing in the grass. We were up and moving to the spot. "Check your safety!"

The bird was down, a jake sporting a short beard.

We retraced our step to find a hat lost to the briars, the empty shell, pack, and the hapless plastic turkey.

Golden early sunlight flooded over the fields as we made our way back, walking carelessly in the open with the bird hanging over Lillie's shoulder.

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**Remember the thrill of your first hunt?  
Do you have a passion for hunting that you would like to pass on to others?**

### **ODFW's Hunter Education Program NEEDS you!**

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

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

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

### **How do I become a Certified Instructor?**

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



Hunter Education

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





# Deer and Elk Health Challenges

More than Chronic Wasting Disease

## Deer Hair-Loss Syndrome

If you see a thin and scruffy-looking deer in late winter or spring, it is likely to be Deer Hair-Loss Syndrome. Animals may have a dark coat in winter with hair loss and discoloration in spring. Deer will appear thin, show signs of patchy hair loss from excessive grooming, and often have diarrhea. This syndrome is associated with large number of invasive lice and more commonly affects younger deer.

## Elk Hoof Disease

Elk hoof disease, known scientifically as treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD), is a debilitating bacterial infection that has been detected in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California. The disease is associated with spiral-shaped treponema bacteria, which work in concert with other bacteria to cause painful lesions, ulcers, and deformed, overgrown, or even missing hooves. Affected elk often exhibit severe lameness and can become too weak to graze effectively, fight off other infections, or escape predators, leading to potential population impacts.

## Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) causes the largest mortality in our white-tailed deer. However, mule deer and black-tailed deer can also get the disease and sometimes recover with evidence of "cactus-buck" appearing antlers and overgrown hooves. Elk are also affected by EHD. The virus is spread by biting midges, or *Culicoides* gnats, in late summer and early fall. Transmission is most common during warm, dry weather when deer gather around water where the gnats are breeding.

## Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease

We also see Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) in all of Oregon's deer species, affecting does and fawns most often. Cases typically occur in the fall, and the disease is transmitted directly from deer to deer. AHD most often causes sudden death in animals that appear healthy and well-conditioned. Common symptoms include rapid, open-mouthed breathing, foaming at the mouth, and occasionally diarrhea.

There is currently no risk of these infections spreading to humans from infected meat. However, if you are hunting in an area where the virus is present, it is recommended to wear gloves when handling carcasses. Avoid harvesting deer and elk that appear sick. Make sure meat is always cooked thoroughly.

**Report any sick deer or elk to ODFW immediately at 866-968-2600 or [wildlife.health@ODFW.oregon.gov](mailto:wildlife.health@ODFW.oregon.gov).**



# NOSLER®

## 2026 PHOTO CONTEST

### FINALIST PRIZES

Prizes will be awarded in general and youth categories.

**FIRST PRIZE:** Nosler Model 21 rifle

**SECOND PRIZE:** Case (10 boxes) of Nosler Trophy Grade Ammo

**THIRD PRIZE:** Leupold scope

**FOURTH PRIZE:** Benchmade hunting knife

**FIFTH PRIZE:** Born & Raised Outdoors meat bags

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

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

### ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

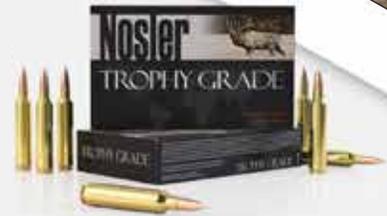
Go to **OHA's website at [www.oregonhunters.org](http://www.oregonhunters.org)** Click on **OHA CONTESTS**. Read the rules, and fill in the required fields. Click **CHOOSE FILE** and attach your photo. Click **SUBMIT**. That's it! You will be entered for a chance to win more great prizes courtesy of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

### PHOTO CATEGORIES

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

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

Current year contest prizes will be delivered the following year



# NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

## GENERAL CATEGORY FINALISTS



OHA member Bob Mumford of Anchorage is a finalist in the 2026 Nosler Photo Contest and wins an OHA Coast Knife for his November 2025 Sitka blacktail on Kodiak Island, taken with a 6.5-284 Norma.

Scott Turo, an OHA member from Madras, lands a finalist spot in the 2026 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his McKenzie Unit blacktail rattled in and taken with a Traditions Hawken .50 caliber Woodsman in November 2024.



SKY LAKES WILDERNESS/TERI DUNGANNON



# NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

## GENERAL CATEGORY HONORABLE MENTION



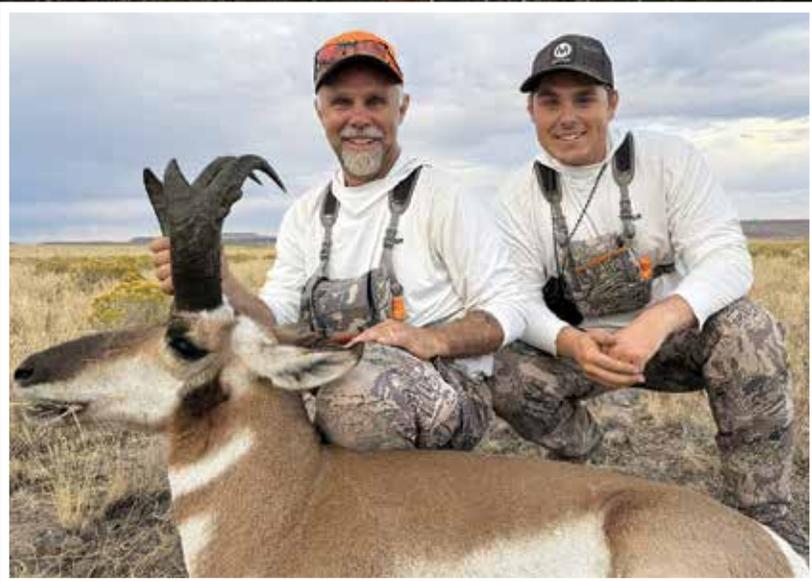
OHA member Ross Weaver of Redmond nabs Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of a West Deschutes bighorn, himself and his "wonderful girlfriend" last October.



Torin Foster, an OHA member from Seneca, snapped this image of himself, Lilly Foster, and her biggest buck, taken in Grant County last October, landing Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat.



Sutherlin OHA member Brian Elliott gets Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for a family photo of son Tejay, daughter in-law Lorin, and grand-daughter Ella. This Douglas County blacktail was taken with a .50 caliber Traditional Pursuit 385 Great Plains muzzleloader.



Pendleton OHA member Wyatt Rodin earns Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of himself and father Kevin Rodin and an Oregon pronghorn.



Portland OHA member Charlie Rutkowski captured an image of a couple of feisty Saddle Mountain cow elk in December 2024 for Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat.

# NOSLER<sup>®</sup> PHOTO CONTEST

## YOUTH CATEGORY FINALISTS

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



Watch for more youth photos entered this round in 2026 issues of Yearlings, OHA's award-winning quarterly junior newsletter. Yearlings is mailed to OHA Junior and Family members, and each issue is posted at [oregonhunters.org](http://oregonhunters.org)

OHA member David Anderson from Oakridge is a finalist in the 2026 Nosler Photo Contest and wins an OHA Coast knife for his photo of Cole Anderson and his McKenzie blacktail, taken last November with great, great, grandfather's muzzleloader.



Warrenton OHA member Russ Leavitt lands a finalist spot in the 2026 Nosler Photo Contest and an OHA Coast knife for his photo of Hannah Leavitt's first antelope last August in Catherine Creek.

# NOSLER® PHOTO CONTEST

## YOUTH CATEGORY HONORABLE MENTION



Kellen McIlmoil, an OHA member from La Grande, got his first buck in the Lookout Mountain Unit last October with his Weatherby 6.5 Creedmore. His photo nabs an Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat.

OHA member Austin Faganello of Klamath Falls captures Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat for his photo of himself, father Frank, and an Interstate Unit mule deer. Austin was shooting a Ruger American II 7mm-08 and was guided to his first buck by father Frank, and grandfather Jeff last September.



Honorable Mention and a Nosler hat belong to OHA member Matt Starley from Astoria for his photo of Paxton Starley and his Columbia blacktail he rattled in last November.





## Parting Shots

By Jason Haley

# Rubber Ducks & Young Turks

**T**urkey hunting has evolved. It was subsistence for the colonists. The first Thanksgiving has been celebrated on TV and in grammar schools throughout our brief history. Nobody could have imagined the head-to-toe camouflage, painted faces and custom vests full of goodies we have now. Nor could they have dreamed of written AND unwritten rules legitimizing turkey kills. Sport hunting, particularly the reverence for the quarry that legions of hunters share and the sub-culture created, would be unfathomable.

It's funny: those who weren't immersed in that culture/tradition, even the non-turkey-hunting hunting public, or newbies who've been introduced, view today's turkey specialists the exact same way. It's totally foreign.

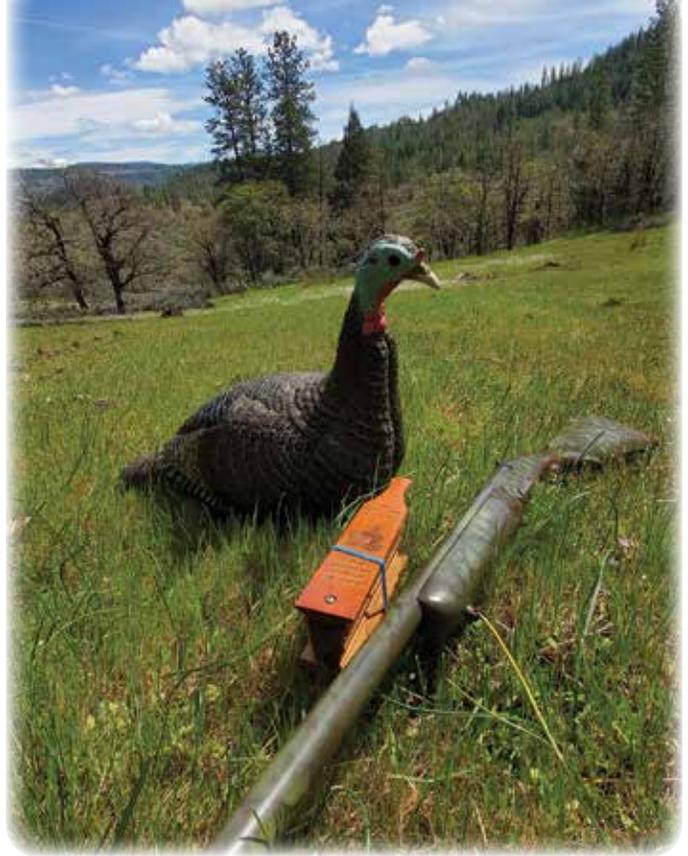
**I broke my hand chasing a jake downhill in a pockmarked cow pasture. It was fun and games till my hand turned into a black boxing glove.**

When I reflect on 40 years of hunting spring gobblers "the right way," I realize the scoffers make just as much sense as grown men carrying face compact kits and rubber duckies into the woods. That's what Grandpa called decoys. Rubber ducks! He almost fell over laughing when I arrived at one of his cattle leases holding one. He'd been scattering birds while opening green Powder River gates. Gramps offered a quad ride to an oak knob, and I was climbing on when he exclaimed with a grin, "What in the world is that!? A rubber duck? You don't need that! I see 'em all the time around here."

He dropped me off, only slightly offended, so I struck off and promptly struck out. Back at Grandma's house, he told her, "You shoulda seen what this kid brought down to hunt with!" laughing out loud. "Show her," he gestured to me, sincerely tickled. I pulled out my trusty hen, and Grandma laughed, too. I tried to plead my case, explaining the concept, but I had no bird. No proof.

Who could blame folks who lived through the Great Depression and second World War. Gramps was a vet and truck driver who sold furs in the winter. Grandma canned, and hung clothes on lines outside. I digress. I looked ridiculous.

That wasn't the first or last time. There were no witnesses when I spent three Saturdays trying to call a gobbler off private property onto BLM ground. There was no onX Hunt and no Google Earth. I found the spot using paper USGS land status maps and found tracks while scouting. Bingo!



*Rubber duckies make bathtime and turkey hunting loads of fun.*

First hunt, I took a trail into a canyon, waded a creek near three gold panners, and went up the other side. Crossing a buckbrush flat where I'd bumped a hen, I hit a barbed-wire fence and got a gobbler. I worked him 20 minutes before he went silent. He was vocal the following weekend, but I couldn't budge him. Something wasn't right. I couldn't get that bird out of my head, so after a long morning calling into canyons from a nearby ridgeline, I headed back a third time to satisfy my curiosity.

Finally, I walked twenty yards and stood bolt upright to peek over the rise. Like Johnny Cash sang in A Boy Named Sue, "He was big and bent and gray and old, and I looked at him and my blood ran cold." My tom was strutting, but inside a chicken coop. Ouch. I was a young fool, but at least I wasn't a lousy caller or roost shooter (tantamount to horse theft in the old west).

Last spring, my son and I rested while I shook a gobbler hose over a big basin. On the hike out, we saw bright colors coming at us on the trail. It was three youngsters garbed in blue and red with shiny sunglasses, shotguns, and reaping fans. We said howdy and compared notes. They mentioned hearing a bird off in the direction we'd just left. Jacob and I shared a laugh later. They had no chance, of course, but it warmed my heart that these boys were trying. That's how you learn.

When has it ever been a work of art like the lofty outdoor writing I grew up reading? On one of my last hunts with dad, I shot a jake and broke my hand chasing him downhill in a pockmarked cow pasture. We laughed as I drug my sweaty, muddy, butt back up the hill with my "rooster" (another gramps saying). "Haven't seen you move that fast in years," dad snickered. It was fun and games till my hand turned into a black boxing glove.

That dumb jake flew straight off the roost toward dad's call and my camo single-barrel. We fooled him. We won the game. Didn't we?



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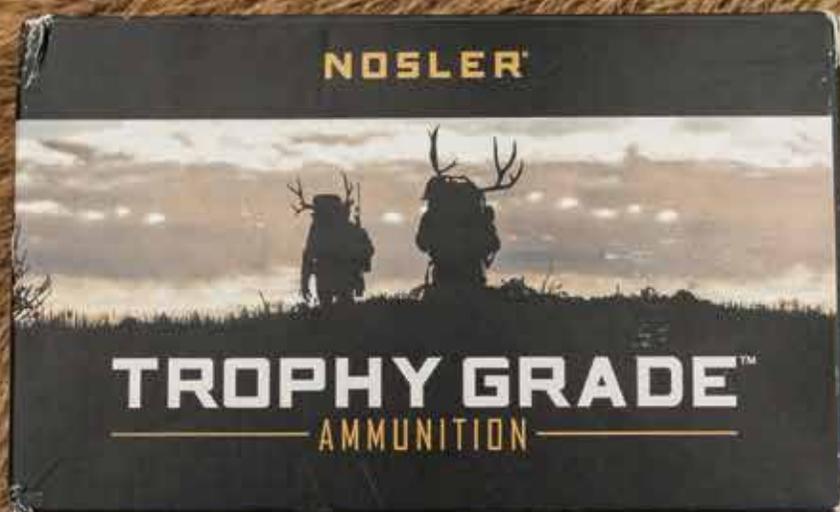
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