

## **Deadly by Nature Exhibit**

*by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor*



The new *Deadly by Nature* exhibit opened in the main foyer of the Museum on January 31, 2015. The exhibit educates visitors about why wildlife uses toxins and the different ways they secrete them. Toxins are used to immobilize prey, provide defense, repel competition, and deter nuisance parasites. The types of toxins produced include neurotoxins, hemotoxins, cytotoxins, myotoxins, and endotoxins.

As visitors make their way around the exhibit, they learn about various invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals that use venom or poison. There are many types of invertebrates that

use toxins. A display of a live Vietnamese centipede informs visitors about how that species immobilizes its prey. Scorpions and the Sydney funnel-web spider are also discussed.

In the center of the exhibit, a large aquarium houses several specimens of toxic fish and invertebrates. The showy black lionfish, with its stripes of brown and white, has venomous fin rays. It is aggressively expanding its range in the West Atlantic and Caribbean Sea. The rose bubble-tip anemone appears harmless but its tentacles fire tiny, threaded venom darts that paralyze its victims. The delicate spines of the black long-spined urchin are coated with mildly poisonous mucus. The brightly colored foxface rabbitfish delivers toxins through its 25 spines. Jellyfish, the blue-ringed octopus, and the sabre-toothed blenny fish are also discussed in this display.



Next, the exhibit focuses on several types of amphibians. Though few produce venom, an exception is the Spanish ribbed newt with a live specimen on display. When threatened, their ribs puncture the sides of their body and secrete toxins. Amphibians often have poisonous glands on their heads or backs. Some produce toxins that prevent a predator from swallowing them while others cause pain or death.



Reptiles are featured next in the exhibit. Recent research indicates that there may be thousands of additional snakes that are at least mildly venomous. For example, garter snakes produce a mild neurotoxin. There is a live Central bearded dragon lizard in the display. This lizard puffs out a "beard" of toxin-tipped spikes and scales. Gila monsters and Mexican bearded lizards are also mentioned. The Asian vine snake has cryptic coloration that makes it a challenge to find in the display case and helps it find prey in the wild.

Birds are not usually toxic but one exception is the spur-winged goose. It feeds on blister beetles and if the bird is consumed, the poison can cause damage to internal organs and death.

There are about 12 mammals known to produce toxins. These include two species of mole-like solendons, four shrews, a mole, and the duck-billed platypus. The male platypus has spurs on its ankles that produce venom.

The exhibit also mentions some of the medicinal uses of animal-based toxins used in treating human ailments. The Gila monster produces a toxin used in treating diabetes. It brings blood sugar levels down and increases production of insulin. Sea sponges produce a toxin that controls bacterial infections and it may be useful as an antibiotic. Pufferfish produce a toxin used to treat chronic pain. It is three thousand times more effective than morphine.

Visitors are invited to find other examples of venomous and toxic animals in the Museum's other display areas. A special symbol denotes which species in the collection are venomous and poisonous.

## Introducing Aimee White, Membership Coordinator

by Lynne Schaefer, Newsletter Writer



Photo by Lee Schaefer

Aimee White, the Museum's new membership coordinator, implemented the first of her goals to increase membership by sending a series of coded renewal letters. "The first is a soft reminder mailed a month before the membership expires," she explained. "The second warns that the membership expires the current month along with listed Museum benefits; the third states 'we miss you' because your membership expired last month; and the fourth is a follow up 'we miss you' to touch base by email. The first reminder letter resulted in a huge 17 percent response in renewals."

During 2012-2014 as membership manager for Lakeshore Public Media (PBS and NPR stations in northwest Indiana and Chicagoland), Aimee helped triple radio membership, increased television membership 25 percent, and increased renewable revenue 33 percent.

She is re-evaluating the Museum's telethon to be more proactive rather than reactive, and is initiating a monthly giving plan toward the annual fund.

"The Adopt an Animal program doubled in revenue from one year ago," Aimee said. "Word is that Bandit, a raccoon, may be added to the list of adoptees."

Aimee was born and reared in Valparaiso, Indiana. She has two younger brothers, Josh, age 30, living in Phoenix, and Chris, age 21, currently attending Eastern Kentucky University. She worked in her step-father's Italian restaurant, which was named Kilroy's and decorated with World War II memorabilia. "I decided then I didn't want to work in the restaurant business," she said. "It is hard work with never a day off."

On the high school swim team, Aimee specialized in the backstroke and 500 meter freestyle. She also was equipment manager and statistician for the football and wrestling teams. For four years, she was a member of the rowing team at Purdue University where she sampled and eliminated math and chemical engineering, pre-law, and art before finding her niche in journalism. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in communications from Governors State University in 2011 and worked as a journalist at *The Herald* in Bourbonnais, Illinois, before joining Lakeshore Public Media.

In 2014, Aimee followed her friend Travis Buchan to Bend where he accepted a position in radio with the Horizon Broadcasting Group. She continued as membership manager for Lakeshore Public Media as a contract employee from home until her replacement was hired.

Aimee enjoys hiking here, looks forward to kayaking, and is eager for snow because "Snowshoeing here will be more of a challenge than on the Indiana dunes."

Once a week from home, she co-hosts with an Indiana friend a radio program comparing music, artists, and style. "We hope it's educating and entertaining," she said.

While in Bend, Aimee looked for months for a job with the right fit. "I liked the Museum's mission," she said, "and I liked the attachment to the community and the passion for life-long learning that I find very important. When this position opened, I said 'This is it! I want this job!'"

## High Desert Museum Area Updates from December 2014

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

**Living History** – They have two new volunteers. One worked as a ranger at Fort Stevens in Astoria, OR; the other has experience as a seamstress. The Buck fence was removed at the Miller Farm. The area behind the chicken coop and root cellar has been opened up. This will create a large space that can be used for Education and Living History Programs.

**High Desert Voices Newsletter** – They were thankful for the articles written by volunteers Frank Graham and Sigrid von Hurst in this issue. They may have one new volunteer.

**Birds of Prey** – They would like to have at least two volunteers a day helping with feedings and cleaning

enclosures. Additional volunteers are needed on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

**Mammals** – Louise has moved to the Grant Writer position in the Museum. Additional volunteers are needed for otter and cat talks.

**Collections** – Cleaning has been postponed until a later date.

**Admissions/Greeters** – Attendance is up. The *Deadly by Nature* exhibit has been popular. Visitors are being asked if they are staying in Bend or Sunriver as part of a study financed by a grant.

## By Hand Through Memory - Area Overview

by Sigrid von Hurst, Team Lead, BHTM



Welcome to By Hand Through Memory (BHTM). The exhibit depicts life of the Columbia River Plateau Indians. It was shaped by traders, missionaries, European settlers, and the US government in the 20th and 21st century. To survive, Native people adjusted to a new strange life style and value system. They continue to adapt to living in today's society and try to regain some of their lost identity and customs.

At first glance visitors, are startled to see a cooler and lawn chair in the traditional tipi made out of tule reeds, a native bulrush. This introduction leads into the exhibition's purpose to "... illustrate the mix of the historical traditions and the contemporary culture that Plateau people use every day" (as quoted by Curator Vivian Adams).

The High Desert Museum (HDM) received a donation of 7,000 items from the Doris Swayze Bounds collection. She was a lifelong collector of Indian artifacts. The HDM chose two major curators, Bob Boyd and Vivian Adams from the Yakama tribe. Many knowledgeable scholars and tribal elders were consulted for the displays to present the life of the Plateau Indians and to convey beliefs and history with dignity and respect. After ten years of diligent work, the exhibit opened in 1999.

Presently the active volunteer team is small, consisting of eight people. We are looking for new volunteers. The schedule is flexible and adjustable to any time that suit a person's needs. On average, volunteers spend three hours per week at BHTM. New members are encouraged to shadow different interpreters for a while until they feel comfortable taking on the task by themselves. The team



arranges yearly field trips and attends presentations at local venues and public Native American events like Pow Wow and Eagle Dance to learn more about traditions of a different culture. When you decide to join the team, you will receive a helpful guide, *The Interpreter's Manual for the Hall of Plateau Indians*. A library of Native art and history books is there for your studies. It is important that the truth about the past and present is heard, and let it be known that Native people are alive.

Visitors do appreciate a personal introduction or a brief welcome.

They thank us for minute information because it makes the exhibit more meaningful. It is fun and rewarding to talk to our visitors, especially when the children get excited about seeing a tipi, dancing in a jingle dress, drumming, cooking in a basket with 'hot' rocks, squeezing tule reeds, touching beaded moccasins, and holding real roots still used for food. The comparison table at the entrance to the exhibit is a great starting point for adults and children alike.





The HDM is honored by visits from Plateau Indian families. They bring children to infuse their perspective of life. It's very special when they can point out family heirlooms or spot familiar faces in the displays.

Feel free to visit with us at the tipi anytime and bring a friend. Learning about the life of the Plateau Indians may spark an interest in you to join the team. Please contact Linda Evans or Sigrid von Hurst, BHTM Team Lead, 541-389-1522.

There is more to the exhibit than you see at first sight. Think about the guiding quote at the entrance by Elizabeth Woody, Warm Springs, "By Hand Through Memory this house is more than form."



Photos by Abbott Schindler, John Williams, and file

## In Memory of Donald M. Kerr, Founder of the High Desert Museum

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor



File photo

We are sad to share the news that Donald M. Kerr, founder of the High Desert Museum, passed away on February 4, 2015. He was 69 years old.

He had a lifelong interest in wildlife that began when a teacher brought a falcon to his elementary school classroom. This early experience and other encounters with wild animals later influenced his chosen field of study. Don earned a bachelor's degree in biology and an interdisciplinary graduate degree in biology, anthropology, and journalism. He went on to work as an instructor for the Oregon Zoo and as a wildlife biologist for The Nature Conservancy.

Don always had an appreciation for the High Desert and visited the area often in the 1960's. He described himself as a "desert rat". He had many discussions with friends and eventually came up with the idea of creating a unique museum to highlight some of the area's features. After several years in the planning stages, Brooks-Scanlon Lumber Company agreed to lease him a 135-acre site south of Bend for the Museum. Mike Hollern, president of Brooks-Scanlon at the time, was impressed with Don's tenacity after he collected a couple hundred thousand dollars in startup money as Hollern and other prospective supporters had suggested.

The High Desert Museum opened its doors in 1982 and focuses on high desert wildlife and habitats and Western and Native American history. Visitors are thrilled to see exhibits and shows with live animals. They are also excited to interact with staff and volunteers dressed in historically accurate garb while portraying characters from the past. The Museum serves to "wildly excite, responsibly teach" just as Don had envisioned. Nearly 160,000 people visit the Museum annually.

There will be an event celebrating Don Kerr's life at 5:30 pm on Saturday, March 7, at the Museum. In lieu of flowers, the Kerr family suggests making a donation to the High Desert Museum.

Thank you to volunteers, staff, and community members who have helped make Don's dream a reality.

## “Brewing Culture” goes to the Dark Side

by Frank Graham, Newsletter Contributor



Photo by Siobhan Sullivan

On Thursday night, February 5, the Museum’s *Brewing Culture* exhibit went to the Dark Side with a celebration of the darker ales known as *Porters and Stouts*. At least five different breweries were represented, from the Wallowa Mountains to the Nevada Great Basin, from Seattle to right here in Bend. Each offered samples of their own versions of these heavier members of the beer hierarchy. When asked the difference between the two, one of the “ambassadors” from a local brewery replied, “That seems to be the question of the evening.” He went on to explain that Stouts tended to be heavier, darker, perhaps higher in alcohol content, and even more redolent of hops. When the same question was later put to a second ambassador, he asked, “How many brewers are here?” That would likely be the number of different answers to the question. He went on to explain that, historically, there was little difference, but over time stouts have moved to the heavier end of the spectrum, while porters have become a bit lighter and even a bit sweeter. The dark color comes from roasting the barley and many porters and stouts even include added ingredients such as oatmeal, chocolate, or espresso.

Tasting was done in standard beer pint glasses emblazoned with the exhibit logo – and the portions were in keeping with the distance most had to drive to get home. Flavorful and colorful, both varieties proved popular to more than a hundred members and guests. Many attendees offered complementary comments about the exhibit itself. These First Thursday gatherings will be repeated through the life of the exhibit. March 5 will introduce *Winter and Spring Seasonals*; April 2 will bring *Sessions and Imperials*; May 7 will conclude the tastings with *Sours and Belgians*. If you have a “hankerin’” to learn more, plan to join the First Thursday events.



### Getting Rich at Mining Days!



Photos by Lee Schaefer

## Introducing Jon Nelson, Associate Curator of Wildlife

by Dave Gilbert, Newsletter Writer



Contributed photo

Jon Nelson was born in the woods. He grew up, he says, “running feral in the woods.” He developed a deep interest in every wild animal he found there. He hunted and fished at every chance, but he also built bird houses and came to know and protect the ecology of living things.

So as the High Desert Museum’s associate curator of wildlife, Jon is living his passion. Much of his work is done “in the field.”

He was born in 1979 in Kamloops, B.C., where his father, Ron, was a logger; his mother, Mardell, was a waitress. Both were Oregonians.

When Jon was 6, his grandmother died, leaving her Sandy, OR, home to the family, and they moved back to Oregon. Jon’s education in the wild didn’t skip a beat.

“As a teenager, when my father trusted me with a rifle,” Jon began hunting “all over the high desert.” It’s an environment that he says has always drawn him. He also spent time fishing for steelhead in the Sandy River.

In high school, he immersed himself in the environmental sciences program, studying such creatures as wood ducks and foxes, and other topics like trail maintenance. For four years, he helped teach an outdoor program for grade school students.

At 17 Jon became involved in Cascade Streamwatch on the Salmon River near Welches where biologists collect data used in management of water quality, fisheries, and riparian ecology. He was so valuable that the Forest Service offered Jon an internship.

Still in his teens, Jon married his high school sweetheart, Harmony, and “we started having kids.” His first, Jacob, was born in 1997.

Then came a reality check. Jon went to work for 12 years in the forest products industry, fabricating building materials and learning cabinet making.

His fishing, hunting, and interest in wildlife continued full steam, however. “I fished every single day,” he says, “every morning before work and every evening after work.”

His second son, Aidan, came in 2000 and his daughter Ella arrived four years later. Jacob attends Bend High School. Aidan is in a Bend charter school. Ella attends Ponderosa Elementary School.

In 2008, “on a whim,” Jon and Harmony left their jobs and moved to Bend. Harmony found work at St. Charles as a registered nurse. “I couldn’t find anything,” Jon says, so he went to school instead. He earned a degree in natural resources management at COCC and OSU-Cascades, with a minor in fisheries and wildlife sciences. While he was still in school, Jon began working at the High Desert Museum in 2010, at first in seasonal or temporary positions.

That fall he took an ecology course from Professor Matt Orr. As a research project for the course, Jon decided to place carrion in the field and study patterns of discovery and use by scavengers.

“He told me he came up with the idea because of a task he performed at the High Desert Museum,” Orr said. “He had to dispose of some fish carcasses in the woods and noted an array of scavengers coming to them.” Jon becomes excited as he describes the conjecture he was studying for Orr’s class.

“Ravens are smart,” he says, “but they can’t open a carcass like raptors can. Do the ravens lure the eagles to the dead animal and use them to open it up?” The answer is inconclusive and the work is ongoing.

In addition to his current full-time work as associate curator, he works part time with the Oregon Department of Transportation. Among other statewide tasks for ODOT, Jon monitors the Highway 97 wildlife underpasses south of the Museum. Using 24 remote cameras, he records animals’ use of highway crossings and the effectiveness of fences designed to keep deer off the highway.

In what time he has left, Jon and his family camp, kayak, and bike together. Jon and Harmony both enjoy cooking and photography. “We enjoy making meals together and make a point of sitting down together as a family for dinner most every night.”

Jon says he loves his work at the High Desert Museum, as a “jack-of-all-trades” in its wildlife programs. He especially loves his work with the Birds of Prey exhibit and his field research. “I love working here with a lot of super-talented people,” Jon says. “Some really exciting things are happening, and I like that this place emphasizes public education. I love making science approachable.”

Perhaps his favorite part of his work is with the Museum’s birds. It just acquired a pair of turkey vultures and Jon hopes to train them to be part of the free-flight program.

His eyes soften as he describes the female vulture he works with. “She’s a real sweetheart.”

## Free Day February 21, 2015

Thanks to volunteers and staff who helped at this event!



Photos by Lee Schaefer

### Kudos Korner

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

Several staff and volunteers were thanked for their work in February. **Cynde Magidson** was thanked for putting ideas into words and **John Williams** was thanked for coming up with ideas for a subcommittee of the Volunteer Recognition Committee. Everyone was thanked that took much needed photographs for grant related work. **Carolyn Nesbitt** was thanked for doing such a wonderful job as interim Volunteer Coordinator. Kudos to all of you!

### High Desert Voices

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**HIGH  
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MUSEUM**  
BEND, OREGON

*The  
High Desert  
Museum, Inc.*  
59800 S. Highway 97  
Bend, OR 97702

2015



**MARCH**



2015

**Kitchen Patrol: Mammals/Wolf Program**

**March**

- 5 **Beer tasting:** *Winter & Spring Seasonals*. 4:30-8:00 pm. Members \$3; Non-members \$5. Beer tasting package \$10 for glass & five tastings. Additional tastings \$1 each. RSVP.
- 7 **Thornhollow String Band.** 11:00 am-3:00 pm.
- 7 **Weekend Workshop:** *Volcanoes!* 10:30 am-12:00 pm. One adult & one child. Members \$10; Non-members \$15 plus admission. Each additional \$5. Registration and pre-pay required.
- 8 **Field Trip:** *Owl Prowl*. 6:00-10:00 pm. Members \$10; Non-members \$20. Registration and pre-pay required.
- 10 **Natural History Pub:** *Investigating a Source of Lead Exposure in Oregon's Scavenging Birds of Prey*. 7:00 pm. (Doors open at 5:30 pm). McMenamins. RSVP.
- 10 **New Volunteer Training Common Core:** 9:00 am—12:00 pm.
- 16 **Teacher Training:** *North American Association of Environmental Educators—Guidelines for Excellence Workshop*. 8:45 am-3:30 pm. Registration & prepay required. \$40. The Environmental Center, 16 NW Kansas Ave., Bend. RSVP.
- 17 **VAC meeting.** 2:00-4:00 pm.
- 17 **High Desert Museum Bookclub.** Discussion of *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson. 6:00-7:00 pm. Free. Downtown Bend Library. RSVP.
- 18 **Lecture:** *Oregon's Rivers*. Tim Palmer, author of *A Field Guide to Oregon's Rivers*. 6:30 pm. Members \$3; Non-members \$5. RSVP.
- 21-28 **Spring Break: Sky Hunters.** 11:00 am and 1:30 pm. Members \$3; Non-members \$5 plus admission.
- 25 **Kids Day: Poisonous and Venomous.** 10:00 am—5:00 pm.

**April— Save the Date!**

- 2 **Beer tasting:** *Sessions & Imperials*. 4:30-8:00 pm. Members \$3; Non-members \$5. Beer tasting package \$10 for glass & five tastings. Additional tastings \$1 each. RSVP.
- 4 **Exhibit Opening:** *Growing Up Western*.
- 4 **Thornhollow String Band.** 11:00 am-3:00 pm.
- 9 **Museum & Me.** 4:00-7:00 pm. Free. RSVP.
- 11 **Off-Site Field Trip:** *Sage Grouse Lek Tour*. 5:30-9:00 am. Members \$10; Non-members \$20. Registration and pre-pay required.
- 11 **Weekend Workshop:** *Playful Pastimes*. 10:30 am—12:00 pm. Members \$10; Non-members \$15. Each additional \$5. Registration and pre-pay required.
- 14 **Natural History Pub:** *The Magma Chamber Below Newberry Caldera*. 7:00 pm. (Doors open at 5:30 pm). McMenamins. RSVP.
- 18 **Off-Site Field Trip:** *Waterfowl of Central Oregon*. 8:00 am-12:00 pm. Members \$10; Non-members \$20. Registration and pre-pay required.
- 21 **High Desert Museum Bookclub.** Discussion of *Fools Crow* by James Welch. 6:00-7:00 pm. Free. Downtown Bend Library. RSVP.
- 21 **VAC meeting.** 2:00-4:00 pm.
- 22 **Lunch & Lecture:** *Tracking Biodiversity in the High Desert*. 12:00—1:30 pm. Free.
- 22 **Teacher Training:** *Incorporating Technology into Your Classroom with Vernier Probes*. 4:30 - 6:30 pm. Free. RSVP.
- 23 **History Lecture:** *Shifting Gender Roles on the Oregon Frontier*. 6:00 pm. Members \$3; Non-members \$5. No-host bar. RSVP.
- 25 **Ranch & Brewery Tour.** 9:00 am-3:00 pm. \$35. Sorry FULL.

To RSVP: [www.highdesertmuseum.org/rsvp](http://www.highdesertmuseum.org/rsvp)  
or 541-382-4754 ext. 241

To pre-register: [www.highdesertmuseum.org/program](http://www.highdesertmuseum.org/program)