

Cowgirl Poetry Night

by Raven Tennyson, Newsletter Writer



Cowgirls galloped off the range from Harney, Lake, and Grant counties to the High Desert Museum on Thursday, November 10th. Ellen Waterston, A.K. Moss, and Jessica Hedges graced the halls of the Museum with laughter, tradition, and a poetry call back and forth. These women found time from their ranching worlds to share poems of dogs, horses, cattle, and intimacies of the desert.

At the Museum, listeners nestled between the blanket tower and the summer mat tule tipi. The closeness of the space enhanced the experience of listeners while the poets shared “Frozen on Roses”, “Afternoon Light”, “The Truth”, and “Jinglers.”

Each poet offered her unique spin on the ranching and central Oregon life.

A.K. Moss rode in from Canyon City, Oregon where she was raised on a working ranch, helping her parents calf, work with wild mustangs, and gentle troubled horses.

Her love of animals shines through her poetry. Hours bucking brush and feeding calves gave her the material for her *Unspoken* trilogy where she brings to life the trials and challenges of western living.

Another poet, Jessica Hedges, cantered in from her ranch in the Owyhee region of eastern Oregon. Jessica is an enthusiastic cowgirl who raises two active boys, herds cows, and whose life is shaped by the cattle, horses, gear, and people she feels privileged to work with. She spoke of the lasting oral tradition that cowgirl poetry is and how she uses the rhythm of the movement of her horse to set the cadence for the poems she creates.

In one poem, she captured the essence of the humorous unspoken cowboy rule: watch out for the dog in the back of the truck.

Joining these two women, Ellen Waterston, author of four volumes of poetry and recipient of several awards, delighted the crowd with an interactive poetry call back with the audience. Her most recent book, *Hotel Domicos: Poems* published by Moonstone Press, is a collection of poems written about Costa Rica, Central Oregon, and other wild places.

Each year these magnificent cowgirl poets grace the halls of the Museum uplifting spirits and grounding listeners in a way of life that still resounds strongly in Oregon. I felt fortunate to be able to witness this event and will follow these poets during the cold winter nights.

The band Coyote Willow provided entertainment at the evening event.



Tales of Hallows Eve



Photos by John Williams

Mule Deer Migration Field Trip

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor



At this time of year, mule deer are migrating and breeding in Central Oregon. Your best chances of seeing this nighttime-feeding deer are in the early hours of the morning or in the late evening. On a chilly November morning, High Desert Museum Curator of Wildlife, Jon Nelson, led a group of people eager to learn more about mule deer.

The mule deer is uniquely adapted to the environment of the American West. In the spring and summer they browse on plants in mountainous areas. As winter approaches, mule deer pack on the calories and move to lower elevations. Deer in the Cascades migrate eastwards and have to navigate their way past Highway 97. Underpasses help large numbers of deer make that journey. As the deer continue eastwards, hundreds can be seen in the area between Silver Lake and Fort Rock during fall and winter months.

In Central Oregon, deer feed mainly on bitterbrush, Idaho fescue grass, and sagebrush. They are not as dependent on the availability of water since they get much of what they need from their diet. On the field trip, Sand Spring was one of the few water sources we saw. It's fenced to keep cattle out but the deer, as you probably know, can easily clear most fences if they want to get a drink.

Should you feed deer in your yard? No. If deer eat food provided by humans, it can have devastating effects. Their gut has evolved to process certain foods. If they eat other foods, it can kill the good bacteria in their stomachs. This can cause illness or even death. Certain diseases are spread to other deer via their saliva so you may not want to give them salt licks either.



Mule deer can often be found in *ecotones*, edge habitats between two plant communities. They can also find their preferred food plants in areas that are becoming re-established, including those affected by fires and clear-cutting. Deer seek out certain areas using *behavioral thermal regulation*. For example, they bed down on south and east facing slopes where it tends to be warmer.

Mule deer are adapted to living in areas with high snowfall. However, depths deeper than 20" for extended periods of time, like we had last winter, can cause many deer to die. Scavengers benefit by feeding on winter-kill deer. On this trip, we found a dead buck and bald eagles and ravens were congregating nearby to feed on it. It appeared that coyotes had been there as well.

When you see numerous mule deer around Central Oregon you may assume they are doing well. That, unfortunately, is not the case. The number of mule deer in Oregon is steeply declining. In the 1960's, there were more than 300,000 mule deer in the state; now the number is estimated to be around 200,000. On this trip, we drove south on the China Hat Road, east of the Museum. Several years ago it would have been common to see lots of deer in this area. We didn't see many deer until we were many miles away from Bend.

There are several factors contributing to declining numbers. Fences affect deer populations by excluding them from some areas and also entangling them, which can lead to injury or death. Other factors include disturbance due to more people living in and visiting the area. Activities such as OHVing, mountain biking, and hiking with off-leash dogs, disturb deer. The many roads of Deschutes National Forest (more than any other National Forest in the U.S.) help in firefighting but also bring more people into the backcountry.





Poaching is a big problem in Oregon. More deer are taken illegally than legally. Due to budget constraints, the few officers responsible for enforcing the laws must cover huge geographic areas. On January 1, 2017, fines for poaching increased. The fine for poaching a deer with four or more points on at least one antler is now \$7,500. While that is a lot, some people are still willing to break the law to bag a deer.

The mule deer's iconic antlers can affect their population levels. Some hunters prefer bucks with large antlers but another type of hunter is out looking for antlers. *Shed hunters* look for antlers that have been shed where deer tend to congregate in the late winter and early spring. This activity disturbs the deer at a crucial time of year. Selling the antlers, priced by the pound, is a lucrative business. Some states regulate how long shed hunters are allowed to collect antlers so that deer are not disturbed in the spring, when fawns are born.

Deer are managed through hunting throughout the U.S. Here in Oregon, seasons run from September through early December. Different types of firearms and restrictions are allowed at different times of the season. Hunters report their success and this information is used to set future seasons and manage the population.

Predators also affect deer populations. Cougars are the primary predator of deer in this region. Black bears and coyotes sometimes prey on fawns. Wolves have moved into the state over the last few years and they too prey on deer. One of the ways mule deer ensure more of their young survive is through a behavior known as *swamping*. All of the does become pregnant at about the same time. There are so many young fawns at once that predators can't possibly get them all.



In the fall, breeding season starts for mule deer. The hormone levels in the bucks skyrocket. Their antlers grow at the amazing rate of up to an inch per day. The bucks shed the velvet on their antlers by rubbing on trees - or unlucky signposts. Big antlers attract mates and deter other males. The slim necks mule deer have in summer, become muscular and massive. Their eyes turn red and they sometimes drool. The rutting bucks are ready to fight any male that gets too close to their harem of does. Harems can contain 15-20 does. The does choose which bucks they want to breed with. Fawns are born in late May through June after a 212 day gestation.



Once they are more than a year old, does often have twins.

Mule deer have a lifespan of about ten years in the wild but their life may be shortened by disease. Two diseases affecting deer were mentioned on this field trip. Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) is passed through direct contact, bodily fluids, and airborne routes. Symptoms may include a blue-colored tongue, mouth ulcers, severe weight loss, and weakness. AHD affects mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, and pronghorn and is often fatal. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a disease with symptoms similar to mad cow disease. It occurs in deer, elk, moose, and reindeer and is always fatal.

You may have heard a story in the news recently about a local person cited for possessing a deer bagged in Montana. Oregon is CWD free and does not allow certain parts of deer and elk to be imported into the state from Montana, 24 other states, and one Canadian province that have the disease. Once it was determined that this particular deer had CWD, the deer meat was confiscated and every place it had been stored or disposed of had to be decontaminated. This highly contagious disease could be a serious problem here in the future.

So the next time you are concerned about mule deer eating your landscaping, keep in mind that their numbers are declining. Do what you can to keep them away from your most treasured plants and appreciate them for their beauty and grace.



High Desert Museum Area Updates from November 2017

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

Living History - The new schedule for volunteers is being worked on. The *Miller Ranch* will be open seven days a week through New Years Day - if temperatures are above 30 degrees at 9:00 am. *Mining Day* and *All Hallows Eve* events were a big success. Father Christmas will be at the Museum on December 9. There is a new volunteer leading Spirit of the West tours.

Wildlife - There are two volunteers for every time slot in the Desertarium and for Mammals. There are still openings for volunteer interpreters for mammal talks. Heavy duty shelving was recently installed in the behind the scenes part of the Desertarium. Two new rubber boas will be going on display. The names selected by the public were "Roberta" and "Boafett." The baby otter is getting along better with the other two otters. He will be with them full time soon. Kids have been taking cars from a nearby exhibit and throwing them in the turtle tank. Additional work is being done at the Museum related to animal hygiene, food storage, and enrichment.

By Hand Through Memory – The tipi in the hallway needs maintenance soon. Visitors are curious about the empty space where the small basketry exhibit was recently featured.

Silver Sage Gift Store – They have a cute bumblebee push toy for sale. There is new stationery featuring nature photos by Sisters resident, Dan Richards. Items for sale under the Old Fashioned Christmas theme include ornaments, hot cocoa mix, paper napkins, and tea towels. There are pine scented candles and also Christmas themed soy candles. *Who's Who in the Woods* is a cute pop up book for young children. *Snow Play* is a book featuring ideas of things to do in the snow including making forts and slides. Reminder: All items are 20% off November 24 - December 3 for Museum members.

Birds of Prey - The new mew building is going up fast. This building will provide indoor and outdoor space for the birds of prey. They hope to get it completed before winter. There are currently four birds being trained for next year's summer flight program and educational programs. Staff have been introducing more activities to the birds for enrichment. For example, the raven was figuring out the best way to get food out of a six-compartment beer bottle holder.

Kudos Korner

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

Several staff and volunteers were thanked for their work in November. **Heather Duchow** was thanked for filling in for Thad Grudzien while he was away. She has been meeting with Shannon Campbell and Dana Whitelaw prior to the VAC meetings. They were thanked for participating in those meetings. By Hand Through Memory volunteer **Peter Clark's** work has been appreciated. He will soon be working on his own in the exhibit area. **Jon Nelson** led a field trip about mule deer on November 18 and he was thanked. All the participants learned a lot about deer. Everyone is encouraged to participate in Museum field trips. **Aron Smolley** was thanked for the great work he has been doing with enrichment activities for animals at the Museum. **All the volunteers and staff** that participated in the *Mining Day* and *All Hallows Eve* events were thanked. Kudos to all of you!



Pete French Round Barn

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor



Turning in his saddle and tilting his dusty hat to shade his eyes, he finally sees it in the distance. The round barn. The year is 1887 and he and the other *vaqueros* are moving a herd of horses collected over the sagebrush covered plains of the High Desert in Oregon. He had worked so many hours that week that when he finally settled down each night on a bed of hard sandy soil, he instantly fell into a deep sleep.

Moving cattle, horses, and mules for his boss, Pete French, was a hard but satisfying life. Guiding his horse with worn leather reins, he moves to the back of the herd of mustangs and starts driving them towards the barn.

The Pete French Round Barn, near Diamond, Oregon, was built in the 1880's and it was used by many *vaqueros*, also

known as “buckaroos”, over the years. The center pole and supporting poles are made from ancient western juniper trees. The juniper shows cuts and gouges from past use but is still strong. Umbrella-like beams radiate out from the center to support the rounded roof of this 100-foot diameter barn. Horses were stabled in the middle part of the building. The 63-foot diameter rock wall in the middle section forms a round corral in the building's interior. A 20-foot wide circular paddock surrounds it. During the long winters, 400 to 600 horses and mules were moved through and trained in the barn, safe from the harsh conditions outside.

Round barns allowed livestock to be sheltered and trained year round. Teams of horses and mules were trained to pull freight wagons. This particular barn has an interesting history.

In 1872, Pete French and a group of *vaqueros* were camping in an area south of present-day Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. He was working for cattleman and wheat baron, Dr. Hugh Glenn, moving 1,200 shorthorn cattle to better grazing lands on Steens Mountain. French met a prospector named Porter who had about a dozen cattle and squatter's rights to the land. He bought the cattle, rights to the land, and the “P” brand. The laws of the land were a bit different back then so when he moved the cattle onto unsurveyed land nearby, that land became his. Ranchers were required to build fences to keep cattle out of their lands.

French continued to work with Hugh Glenn and together they created French-Glenn Livestock Company. Pete French became president of the company in 1893. The company went on to become one of the best run cattle businesses of the time. French-Glenn Livestock Company had two round barns and numerous other buildings on their 150,000 to 200,000 acres of land.

Though successful as a businessman, Pete French was not well liked by some of his neighbors. Settlers were putting up fences on what they claimed was public land and French contested those claims in court. He fought with one neighbor, Edward Oliver, off and on for ten years. On December 26, 1897, they got in their last argument. Oliver shot and killed French and was later acquitted of all charges.

The round barn has been carefully restored by state and federal agencies. It is now protected as the [Pete French Round Barn State Heritage Site](#). Cycle Oregon and Trust Management Services have also put work into maintaining and improving the site.

The barn is in an isolated location but it's a remarkable structure well worth seeing. When you stand in it and look around, you really get a feel for the history of the place. It is a place full of many stories. For driving directions, click [here](#).



Round Barn - continued



There is also an impressive visitor center/store near the barn. The Round Barn Visitor Center contains a small museum and a store featuring clothing, jewelry, hunting knives, and a very good assortment of local and regional history books. The store also has a few snacks and beverages. The museum contains artifacts related to the Jenkins family, who have lived and worked in the area for several generations. Talk to Mr. Jenkins, the proprietor of the store, to learn more about the stories this land has to tell.



Photos by Siobhan Sullivan



Museum Staff & Volunteer Holiday Party

December 6th 11:30 am-1:30 pm in classroom A

Soup and sandwiches provided
If you wish, bring cookies to share or exchange
You may bring a white elephant gift to exchange.



RSVP to Shannon

scampbell@highdesertmuseum.org

Visit Father Christmas

December 9th 11:00 am—3:00 pm

Bring a camera and take a holiday photo with Father Christmas. Our beloved 1880s character of holidays past will be waiting for your wish list in the historic ambience of the Spirt of the West.

Decorate your own cookie \$1

Sing along with Christmas carols performed
by the Thorn Hollow String Band

High Desert Voices

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**HIGH
DESERT
MUSEUM**
BEND, OREGON

*High Desert
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2017



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December	January - Save the Date! continued
1 Museum Collaborative Event: <i>First Friday Art Walk</i> . 5:30 - 9:00 pm. Free at Liberty Theater, 849 NW Wall St., Bend.	9 Natural History Pub: <i>Sage Grouse: Collaboration and Conservation..</i> 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Doors open at 5:30 pm. McMennamins, 700 NW Bond, Bend. Free. RSVP.
3 Exhibit Closing: <i>Legendary Landscapes</i> .	13 Thorn Hollow String Band. 11:00 am - 2:00 pm.
6 Volunteer Event: <i>Cookie & White Elephant Gift Exchange</i> . 11:30 am - 1:30 pm. Meal & drinks provided. RSVP.	13 Family Event: <i>Mining Day</i> . 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. Museum admission plus \$2 per miner.
9 Thorn Hollow String Band. 11:00 am - 2:00 pm.	13 Museum Workshop: <i>Conservation Photography</i> . 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. Members \$100, non-members \$150. Registration and pre-payment required.
9 Family Event: <i>Father Christmas</i> . 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. Decorate a cookie for \$1.	13 Museum Workshop: <i>Conservation Photography</i> . 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. Members \$100, non-members \$150. Registration and pre-payment required.
12 Natural History Pub: <i>Recreation and Wildlife Impacts: A Balancing Act at the High Desert Museum</i> . 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Doors open at 6:00 pm. Museum café will be open. Free. RSVP.	19-20 Museum Workshop: <i>Teacher Training: Our Changing Climate</i> . 9:00 am—4:00 pm. Free for 5th-8th grade teachers. Substitute funding for Friday available. RSVP.
15 Member's Exhibition Preview: <i>Blake Little: Photographs from the Gay Rodeo</i> . 6:30 - 8:00 pm. Hors d'oeuvres, No-host bar. Members free, guests \$5. RSVP by December 8.	16 VAC meeting. 2:00 pm in the Board Room. All volunteers are welcome!
16 Exhibit Opening: <i>Blake Little: Photographs from the Gay Rodeo</i> .	20 Museum Workshop: <i>Sketching Raptors</i> . 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Members \$20, non-members \$25. Registration and pre-payment required.
19 VAC meeting. 2:00 pm in the Board Room. All volunteers are welcome!	20 Museum Workshop: <i>Nest Box Building</i> . 10:30 am - 1:00 pm. Members \$40, non-members \$50. Registration and pre-payment required.
25 Museum Closed. <i>Happy Holidays!</i>	25 Museum Event: <i>Reducing the Impacts of Wind Energy on Wildlife</i> . 6:00 pm. Museum café will be open. Members \$3, non-members \$7. RSVP.
January - Save the Date!	26 Museum Event: <i>Queens & Cowboys: A Straight Year on the Gay Rodeo</i> . Film presentation and Q & A with director and one of the competitors in the film. 7:00 pm. Museum café will be open. Members \$7, non-members \$10. RSVP.
5 Museum & Me. 4:00-7:00 pm. Free. RSVP.	27 Museum Event: <i>Free Day</i> . 10:00 am - 4:00 pm.

To RSVP: www.highdesertmuseum.org/rsvp or call 541-382-4754. To pre-register: www.highdesertmuseum.org/program