

SPRING
2015



MY PUBLIC LANDS

#SeeBLM

Destination:
2015

SUN'S DANCE

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SKIING IN SILVERTON

All Thrills, No Frills • page 8

GET YOUR KICKS

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Winter is nearly over, but there is still time to grab the skis, boots and snowshoes and head out to the nearest trail.

In this issue of *My Public Lands*, you will find out just how much BLM lands have to offer in the colder months.

You'll read about the many recreational opportunities that are ushered in with

the first stirrings of spring, from skiing Nordic trails in southern Oregon to bird-watching hotspots in Utah and northern Idaho.

You'll learn where to best view the aurora borealis's light show in Alaska and where in Montana you might see the ghost of a sharply dressed man running into the hillside in an old mining camp.

BLM-managed public lands offer numerous ways to see America, whether visitors choose to stay in a rental cabin, venture out on the snowy slopes of Colorado, or explore the historic ruins of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in New Mexico – the BLM's newest national monument.

In any season, we hope that the second edition of *My Public Lands* encourages you to explore our nation's spectacular BLM public lands.

Neil Kornze

Director, Bureau of Land Management

Your Passport to America's Great Outdoors

Vol. 2, Issue 1

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Mission

The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

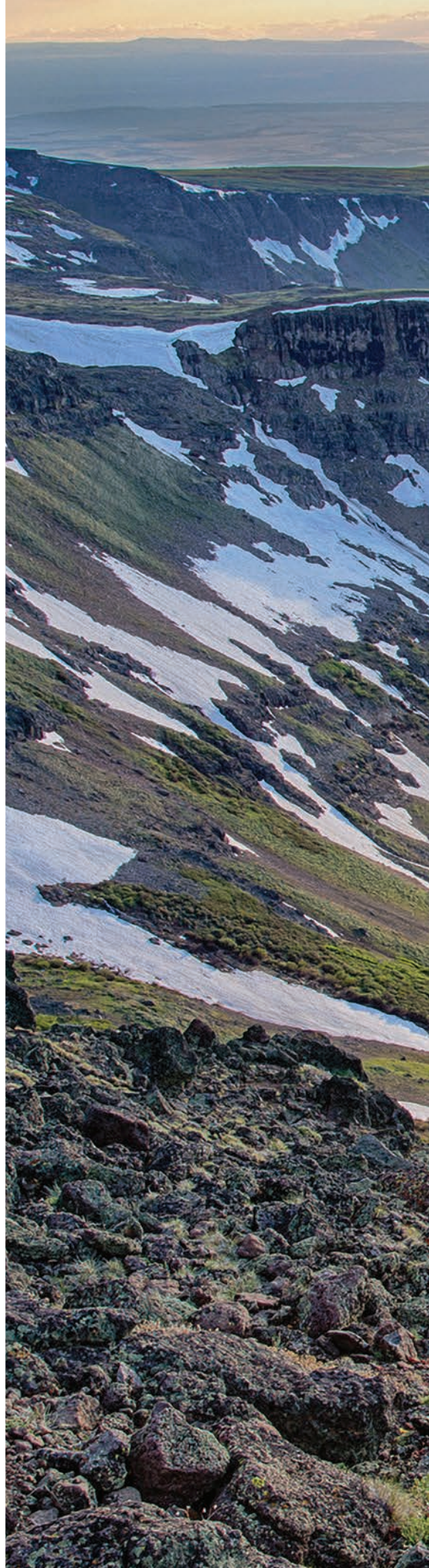


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turning the tide

**'Call of the Seas' Draws People,
Sea Turtles and Beach Mice**
By Shayne Banks

Poet John Masefield wrote, "I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied."

Each year thousands of people – and some animals – hear this same call and make their way to the white sand beaches of Gulf Shores on the southern-most tip of Alabama on the Gulf of Mexico. The beaches are considered some of the finest in the world, and the Bureau of Land Management manages a small slice of them.

In the early 1950s much of the remaining public domain land on the Fort Morgan Peninsula was classified for so-called "disposal," or sale, pursuant to the Small

Tract Act of 1938. By 1960, most of the identified 190 small tracts had been sold to World War II veterans who were given a statutory preference. However, six small tracts, totaling 28 acres, were specifically "set aside" by the classification orders "and reserved as recreation areas for use by the general public."

"On these small, but important, beach tracts we are committed to preserving the coastal dune ecosystem, protecting threatened and endangered species, and

providing recreational opportunities," BLM Wildlife Biologist, Faye Winters says. "Only here will you find BLM-managed lands that are also nesting sites for loggerhead sea turtles."

Locating a sea turtle nesting spot and watching a hatching isn't easy because momma turtles like to hide and lay eggs at night. Local volunteers from a group called Share the Beach help the BLM patrol the beaches and watch for signs of turtle nesting. In fact, the last nest for





The beaches of Gulf Shores are the only BLM-managed lands that are nesting sites for loggerhead sea turtles.



The Alabama beach mouse is endangered, preferring a dune ecosystem for their habitat.

the season just hatched this past October. Females may nest several times during a season, laying 100 to 145 soft, round white eggs per nest. The eggs incubate in the sand for 48-70 days. Hatchlings typically emerge from the nest at night, running quickly toward the open ocean.

The tiny endangered Alabama beach mouse also calls these sand dunes home. The beach tracts are designated as a critical habitat and contain primary dunes, the preferred habitat for this species.

“If the dune ecosystem were lost, the Alabama beach mouse would almost certainly become extinct,” Winters says of the small, pale mice with large ears and dark eyes. They are mostly active at night, spending the day sleeping in their burrows. Even though the beach mouse is small, it is an integral part of the beach ecosystem that the BLM protects.”

Shayne Banks is a public affairs specialist in the BLM's Jackson, Mississippi, Field Office.



The BLM works to conserve the fragile dune ecosystem.

OMG! It's the New OMDP!

If You Don't Need Snow, This Is the Place for You • By New Mexico BLM Staff

Folks looking for a unique winter getaway have a wealth of options, all wrapped up in one – the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, New Mexico's newest and, at almost half a million acres, largest national monument.

Managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the monument, referred to by its initials OMDP by locals, actually offers four separate destinations: the iconic Organ Mountains, so named because of the steep, needle-like spires that resemble the pipes of an organ, as well as the Sierra de las Uvas, Potrillos and Doña Ana Mountains – three areas deserving of attention in their own right.

“The monument is perfect for almost any type of winter recreation, excluding snow,” says Carrie Hamblen, executive director of the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce. “With sunny skies and mild winter temperatures all season long, there are many areas within the monument that provide perfect opportunities for mountain biking, rock climbing, camping, hiking, horseback riding and much more.”

The Chamber worked with other area groups to have President Obama establish the monument in May 2014.

“When the polar vortex swoops down from the North, seldom does it reach Las Cruces and the monument,” says Gill Sorg, president of the Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

Recreation opportunities are easily accessible in the Organ Mountains, where visitors can hike or bike on miles of trails, camp at the Aguirre Spring Campground,

or explore historic ruins. The BLM staffs a visitors' center there to answer questions and provide directions.

In contrast, recreation within the Desert Peaks is more dispersed. While you'll find extensive pedestrian, equestrian and mountain bike trails, and rock climbing routes in the Doña Ana Mountains, there is little to no development in the Sierra de las Uvas and the Potrillos, where adventurers can explore for hours without seeing another soul.

Below: View of Mt. Riley WSA from the Aden Lava Flow WSA, Photo by Mike Howard

Opposite Page, Bottom: View from Picacho Peak looking at the Robledo Mountains, Photo by Lisa Phillips





“Every time I go into the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, I discover something new about the landscape. More importantly, I discover something new about myself.”

Above: The Organ Mountains are shown with an uncharacteristic dusting of snow. Photo by Lisa Phillips
Right: Biking the Sierra Vista Trail, BLM Photo

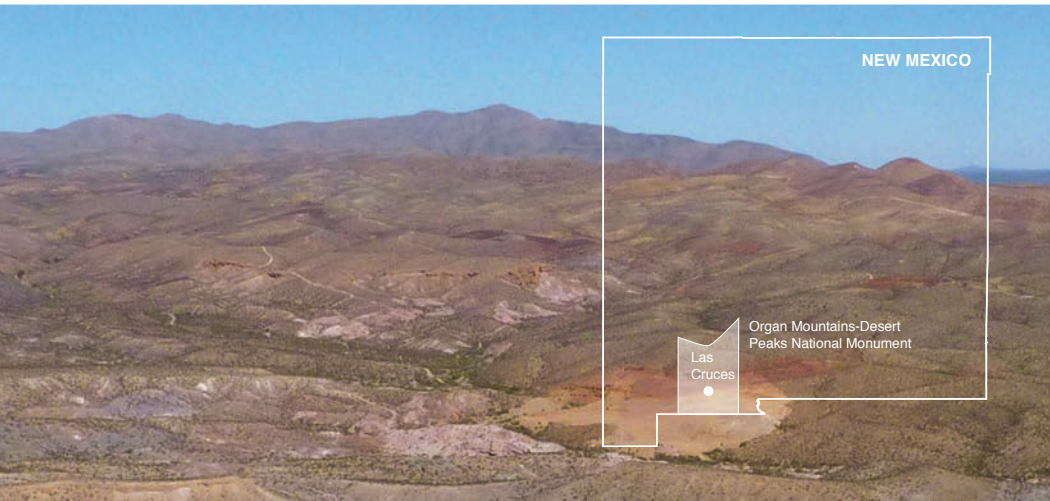
The creation of the monument came after years of work by the local community and businesses seeking increased protection and recognition for the area. More than 200 local businesses expressed support for permanent protection, as did leaders of tribal governments, conservation and sportsmen’s groups, and area residents.

The area is home to a high diversity of animal life, including deer, pronghorn antelope, mountain lions, peregrine falcons and other raptors, as well as rare plants, some of which are found nowhere else in the world, such as the Organ Mountains pincushion cactus. Hundreds

of archaeologically and culturally significant sites are found within the new monument, including some limited Paleo-Indian artifacts, extensive rock art sites, and the ruins of a 10-room pueblo, among other ancient dwellings.

“Every time I go into the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, I discover something new about the landscape,” says Dave Wallace, BLM Las Cruces assistant district manager. “More importantly, I discover something new about myself.”

For more information, visit:
www.blm.gov/nm/OMDP



FIRST TRACKS

Colorado Backcountry Gives Skiers Thrill of a Lifetime

By Shannon Borders

This Spread: Skiers ride the chairlift to around 12,300 feet in elevation and then hike to the run of their choice.

Photos by Matt Dayer, BLM Park Ranger
(Tres Rios Field Office)

Thrill-seeking skiers with advanced skills in gliding down Colorado's backcountry mountains will want to add Silverton Mountain ski area to their bucket lists. With an average snowfall of more than 400 inches per year, Silverton Mountain offers no frills and all thrills in some of the most pristine backcountry in the U.S.

Local ski enthusiast Tom Rice describes the area as the crown jewel of the San Juan Mountains because it offers extremely

steep terrain and specifically caters to the skier looking for a challenge. The ski area features guided, unguided and heli-skiing on black diamond runs on more than 13,000 acres near Silverton, Colorado.

"As the only ski area in the U.S. located entirely on BLM-managed lands, it is perfect for the thrill-seeking skier who wants to experience winter recreation at its finest," said Connie Clementson, BLM Tres Rios field manager.

The highest peak of Silverton Mountain ski area is 13,487 feet. The top of the chairlift is nearly 12,300 feet, and the base is at 10,400 feet in elevation.

"This ski area isn't for the faint-of-heart," Clementson said. "Before planning a trip we encourage everyone to learn about the endurance, stamina and safety precautions that are required to traverse high altitude, backcountry recreation areas."

“As the only ski area in the U.S. located entirely on BLM-managed lands, it is perfect for the thrill-seeking skier who wants to experience winter recreation at its finest.”



Skiers meet in guided groups of up to eight at the base of the mountain at 8:15 a.m. to rent equipment and learn about safety procedures. These guided skiing excursions are available from mid-January through March.

Unlike most ski areas that have multiple options for getting to runs, a single chairlift takes experienced skiers partially up Silverton Mountain ski area where there are no groomed runs and no cut trails.

“This is where the work really begins,” Rice said. “You have to be a skier who likes to hike, because you can’t rely on lifts to get you to the runs.”

From the top of the lift, guided skiers hike five minutes to an hour to some of the best powder conditions in the nation along with large open bowls and steep, tight chutes.

If skiers prefer to take on the challenges of Silverton Mountain Area without a guide, this opportunity is only available about 13 days per year. Specific dates are available at www.silvertonmountain.com.

If unguided skiing isn’t enough for adventurers, then skiing and snowboarding are available via helicopter drops that allow for extreme runs deeper in the backcountry.

Overnight helicopter tours and private guides are also available.

For more information or to make a reservation for the ski adventure of a lifetime, go to www.silvertonmountain.com or call 970-387-5706.

This area is also known for summer recreational opportunities. From Silverton, visitors can access the Alpine Loop where hiking, biking and motorized trails abound.

Shannon Borders is a public affairs specialist in Colorado BLM’s Southwest District Office.

Below: Skiers line up early to enjoy a day of skiing and snowboarding on ungroomed runs.

Below Right: The Silverton Mountain helicopter drops off a skier for a fun-filled day of black diamond runs in Colorado’s pristine backcountry.



THE MOTHER ROAD

Iconic Route 66 Opens Up California Desert to Visitors
By Steve Razo



In the heart of the California desert, between the towns of Barstow and Needles, stretches a 320-mile ribbon of history, most of which traverses public lands and serves as a symbol of the pioneering spirit of emigrants coming West and an icon of American freedom and mobility.

Dubbed “The Mother Road,” in John Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of Wrath,” Route 66 continues to be an international bucket-list item for many travelers wanting to – as the song goes – get their “kicks on Route 66.”

“Also called ‘America’s Main Street,’ the 2,400-mile highway extending from Chicago to Los Angeles quickly became the principal route of travel from the Midwest to the Pacific Coast.”

Above Left: The interior of Roy’s Diner on Route 66.

Left: Murals like this one by artist Dan Lauden grace some of the buildings along Route 66 in Needles.





Above: Amboy Crater is an extinct cinder cone located in the Mojave Desert just off U.S. Route 66 near the town of Amboy, California.

Route 66 had its beginnings in the West's old wagon roads of the 1800s. Later, the railroads followed much of this same corridor, further establishing routes that would ultimately become part of Route 66. Towns established themselves along the route and became hubs for trading posts, hotels and restaurants. Many roadside services such as gas stations and diners were established as a result of this road. In fact, it has been said that Route 66 led to the invention of the motel. As traffic increased between towns, a need for these main streets to become connected grew. On Nov. 11, 1926, U.S. Highway 66 was officially established and still serves as one of the most famous highways in America. Also called "America's Main Street," the 2,400-mile highway extending from Chicago to Los Angeles quickly became the principal route of travel from the Midwest to the Pacific Coast, carrying thousands of people each year to the booming West, particularly Southern California.

Because of its connection to the westward expansion, large portions of the historic highway pass through public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, making it a distinctive historical and cultural public lands experience.

Winter here, with its abundance of wildflowers, is a perfect time to explore Route 66 in Southern California where public lands contain iconic pieces of American history, areas of rich cultural diversity, and exceptional geologic landscapes. The route passes through small towns such as Amboy, a nearly empty ghost town in California's Mojave Desert. Amboy is home to Roy's Motel and Cafe, a Route 66 landmark that has been preserved, making it an ideal backdrop for photographers and filmmakers. Nearby, the 6,000-year-old, 250-foot-high Amboy Crater National Natural Landmark, managed by the BLM, is one of the best examples in the Mojave Desert of a volcanic cinder cone.

Throughout the years, Route 66 has become the subject of many stories, songs and even a 1960s TV show that celebrated freedom, the open road and the Chevrolet Corvette. Although it was effectively replaced by the interstate highway system in the 1960s, the road's aura of promise and possibility remains for the many visitors to the California Desert.

Steve Razo is a public affairs specialist in the BLM's California Desert District Office.



Right: Motels like Roy's took off with the popularity of Route 66. Photo © Dietmar Rabich



A Birder's Paradise

Winters Offer Chance to View,
Study Nonmigratory Feathered Friends
By Yanavey McCloskey



Canyon wren at Red Hills, St. George, Utah, 2013 Audubon Christmas Bird Count



The coldest months of the year are actually the hottest times for bird watching in Utah, and Bureau of Land Management-administered areas provide more than 430 species of birds with food, water and shelter, making winter a perfect time to go birding on public lands.

From mid-December to early February, hundreds of volunteer birders visit the BLM-Utah Color Country District to celebrate the region's many feathered friends. Bird habitats can vary widely – from grasslands to woodlands – and citizen scientists can engage in bird counts on all of them. Families and students, birders and scientists armed with binoculars, field guides and checklists go out on Utah's public lands during the winter months to support bird conservation efforts like the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and Feeder Watch.

Winter birds or resident birds, unlike their migrating friends, tend to stick around. They have learned to adapt to their environment, even in harsh winter climates, and can use the winter weather and natural elements as tools for their survival.

“Surveying winter bird populations gives us a much better understanding of population density,” says Sheri Whitfield, BLM wildlife

biologist in Utah. “We can learn whether specific species’ populations are stable, increasing or maybe decreasing.”

While many volunteers join bird-counting efforts for the love of bird watching, the annual nationwide bird census is also a vital conservation measure. Counting winter birds in North America started at the turn of the 20th century in response to declining bird populations from “Side Hunt” activities. “Side Hunt” was a holiday tradition of using side arms to bring in the biggest pile of feathered or furred game. Frank Chapman – an early officer in the Audubon Society – led the effort to replace “Side Hunts” with bird census activities.

“Data collected from bird surveys conducted throughout the year, including winter counts, breeding bird surveys and other activities, can help with decisions about proposed projects and their potential impacts to birds,” Whitfield says.

The citizen scientists, who brave snow, wind and rain, do more for bird conservation than they may realize. The data collected from winter bird counts is compiled and analyzed, then published by the Audubon Society in *American Birds*, a quarterly newsletter.

Yanavey McCloskey is a BLM public affairs specialist in Color Country District in Utah.

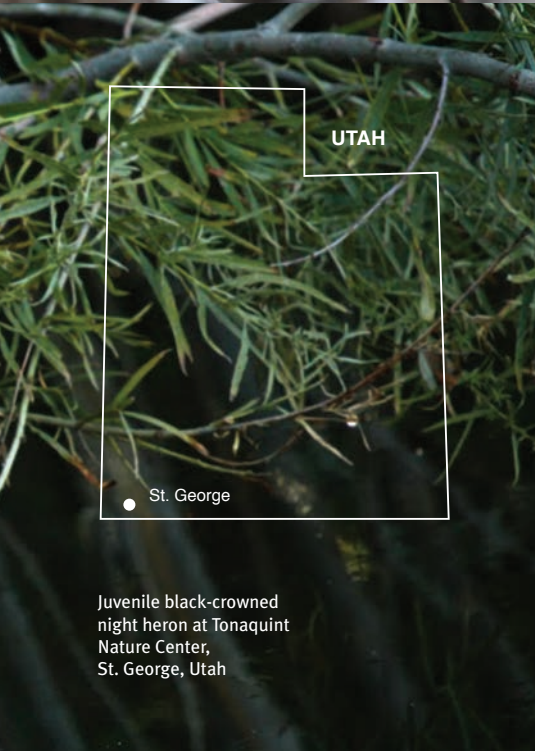
“While many volunteers join bird-counting efforts for the love of bird watching, the annual nationwide bird census is also a vital conservation measure.”



Above: Black phoebe, near St. George, Utah



Male verdin at the Slick Rock Park in St. George, Utah March of 2014



UTAH

St. George

Juvenile black-crowned night heron at Tonaquint Nature Center, St. George, Utah

SAFE



HAVEN

Wild Horses Find Home at Ecosanctuary

By Cindy Wertz

Photos by Jana Wilson

On a crisp autumn day, wild horses were standing around in groups, lazily grazing on the last of the summer grass. Rich and Jana Wilson began moving the horses from their lush summer pastures to where the horses will spend the winter, in the lower part of the ranch. This is all in a day's work for the Wilsons at the Deerwood Ranch Wild Horse Ecosanctuary near Centennial, Wyoming.

The 4,700-acre ranch offers a refuge for almost 300 wild horses gathered from public lands due to overpopulation. The Middle Fork of the Little Laramie River runs through the property, providing year-round access to running water. Abundant trees and wide open fields offer space for the horses to run or graze, and the rocky areas provide great material so that the horses' hooves are worn naturally without visits from a farrier.

Deerwood is the BLM's first ecosanctuary, which opened for business in 2012. This ecosanctuary is designed to be a place that safely provides a natural and healthy habitat for wild horses where they will be properly cared for, yet allowed to roam freely while conserving the environment and ecology of the lands.

The horses will remain in the winter pastures through May. During these months, the horses' diets will be supplemented with hay grown in these pastures during the summer. Like their counterparts in the wild, these horses pretty much fend for themselves. They do not have shelter or receive medical care, so they live as much as possible like wild horses that roam on BLM lands.

Unlike long-term holding facilities, where many horses are kept after being removed from fragile ranges in the West, the Wilsons welcome visitors. Tourism is a key component of the ecosanctuary concept. The Wilsons accept reservations throughout the year and visitors can come meet the horses up close and personal. They board a two-seat all-terrain vehicle to be driven out among the geldings. Some groups have even gotten to ride the hay wagon while the horses were being fed.

"Having visitors here to view the horses has been a very rewarding experience," Jana Wilson says. "Horses affect people in so many different ways. People love seeing a large group of horses running free and enjoying their life on the ranch. Horses are an icon of the American West and we are proud to have the horses here with us."

She said they had a very successful summer. This year, they welcomed almost 400 people from all over, including international visitors from Switzerland, Germany, Austria, England, Australia and France.

"We do offer tours in the winter, but it's a little more difficult with weather." She advises anyone interested to call, and she and her husband will do their best to accommodate visitors.

People who brave the cold and snow will be rewarded with picture postcard-worthy shots of these beautiful wild horses against the backdrop of Wyoming's snowy range.

For information call the ranch at 307-399-9956 or go online to www.deerwoodranchwildhorseecosanctuary.com.

| Cindy Wertz is a public affairs specialist in the Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne.

WYOMING

● Centennial



These horses are among the herd of 300 wild horses kept at Deerwood Ranch.

Nearly a quarter of a billion acres – about one-eighth of the landmass of the USA – is administered by the BLM. These public lands & resources contributed more than \$107 billion in 2013 to the U.S. economy on a budget that amounts to about 1% of that amount. Read on for what's happening near you!

Idaho

- Some of the mining activities in the 1920s that occurred around lands now served by the Coeur d'Alene Field Office, specifically on claims held by the Raskob family, helped pay for a major portion of the construction of the Empire State Building.
- Idaho's Salmon River near Riggins is the longest free-flowing river that heads and flows within a single state.
- The deepest river gorge in North America is Idaho's Hells Canyon (7,900 feet deep).

Nevada

- Even without leaving the city, public lands impact lives for the better every day. In southern Nevada, there are 122 parks, schools, fire stations and police stations built on public lands used under recreation and public purpose leases.
- Nevada's state rock – sandstone – is featured prominently on BLM-managed public lands in southern Nevada at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area and the Logandale Trails System.



EXPLORE

California

- In California, the BLM manages 87 wilderness areas encompassing 3.8 million acres. Wilderness landscapes are diverse and range from rocks, islands and reefs along the Pacific coastline to desert sand dunes to old growth redwoods to snow-covered peaks, all in one state!
- Alabama Hills, managed by the BLM, have served as the backdrop for more than 400 films since the 1920s including, "The Lone Ranger," "Star Trek Generations," "Gladiator," "Iron Man" and "Django Unchained."

Arizona

- The largest concentration of Saguaro cacti (*Carnegiea gigantea*) live in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, home to the BLM's Sonoran Desert and Ironwood Forest national monuments. Saguaros have a relatively long lifespan, 75-100 years, and the Saguaro blossom is the state's official flower.
- The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area is home to 100 species of breeding birds, and the river corridor provides an invaluable habitat for 250 species of migrant and wintering birds.

New Mexico

- New Mexico may be considered a desert state by some, but BLM New Mexico has a field office that manages three wild and scenic rivers. The Taos BLM Office manages the Rio Grande, the Red River, and the Rio Chama Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- The 5,280-acre Prehistoric Trackways National Monument was established to conserve, protect and enhance the unique paleontological resources of the Robledo Mountains in southern New Mexico. The trackways contain pre-dinosaur prints of numerous amphibians, reptiles, insects, plants and petrified wood dating back 280 million years.

Montana

- Designated as part of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in 1983, the Bear Trap Wilderness Area in southwestern Montana became the first component of the National Wilderness Preservation System to be managed by the BLM.
- Paleontological resources collected from BLM-managed lands in North Dakota are featured at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C. The exhibit titled, "The Last American Dinosaurs," is on display through 2018 and is expected to draw 15 million visitors.

Wyoming

- BLM Wyoming manages the largest known trona reserves in the world, estimated at over 100 billion tons. Wyoming produces about 90 percent of the nation's soda ash, which is 30 percent of production worldwide. Wyoming trona is processed into soda ash or baking soda. Soda ash is used in glassmaking, soap, paper manufacturing and water treatment.
- Wyoming was ground zero for the formation of the U.S. Grazing Service, which later became the BLM. The Grazing Service created five Grazing Districts in Wyoming in the mid-1930s. Each Grazing District was headed by a District Grazier with clerical support and a Grazing Advisory Board.

Utah

- The dwarf bear-claw poppy, an endangered plant, is found in southwest Utah including lands managed by the St. George Field Office. The ivory-flowered plant is named the bear-claw poppy for its claw-like leaf tips.
- Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry in the area managed by the BLM's Price Field Office is home to one of the most impressive dinosaur fossil collections worldwide. More than 12,000 bones have been excavated from the quarry. Fossils from Cleveland-Lloyd are on exhibit in over 65 museums worldwide – more than any other single fossil deposit.

AMERICA

Colorado

- The BLM works with the Colorado Department of Corrections to support the Wild Horse Inmate Program, one of only five in the nation. Through the program, mustangs and burros receive extensive training so they are suitable for adoption, and inmates gain meaningful and marketable work experience. Last year, the Border Patrol adopted 30 horses, and in 2009, horses from the Colorado program were part of the Border Patrol's contingent in the presidential inauguration.

Arkansas

- Arkansas is well-known for hidden treasures. During the 1800s the outlaw Jesse James was known to have buried treasure in the state. Through local legend, we know that the BLM-managed Calf Creek Tract in Searcy County was a well-known hideout for James and his band of outlaws.

Alaska

- The coldest temperature ever recorded in the United States was a bone-chilling minus 80 F at Prospect Creek Camp in northern Alaska. The creek is located along the BLM's Dalton Highway Corridor, bisected by the rugged 414-mile Dalton Highway. This farthest-north road traverses rich boreal forests, the rugged Brooks Range and the coastal plain on the North Slope of Alaska.

SUNN'S

Solar Activity Produces Northern Lights,
Stunning Views • By Karen Deatherage



Above Alaska's frozen landscape, every so often during the coldest, clearest and darkest part of the winter, the sky lights up with a dancing celestial curtain of brilliant green, red and purple swirls illuminating much of the nearly 72 million acres of Alaska's public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

This phenomenon – the aurora borealis or northern lights – has inspired awe in poets, artists and songwriters for hundreds of years. Every Northern culture has legends about the once mysterious lights. Some have explained them as magic, dancing spirits, temperamental gods or blood raining from the clouds.

DANCE

Today, we know that the spectacle is created by solar activity. Occasionally, cool, dark regions known as sunspots form on the sun's surface at sites of intense magnetic activity. When sunspots flare, a stream of electronically charged particles 100,000 times hotter than boiling water is ejected. This burst of particles snaps off the sun like a rubber band, creating powerful

gusts in the solar winds traveling across the galaxy. A few days later, the solar winds may reach the Earth's upper atmosphere where fast-moving electrons collide with the Earth's magnetic field, gravitating toward the North and South poles. The result is aurorae – geomagnetic storms that lights up the sky.

(Story continued on page 20.)

Right: Eleazar's Cabin in the White Mountains National Recreation Area is available for public use.





Northern lights can cast unusual, yet familiar images, across the sky, appearing like a butterfly or the “Mockingjay” emblem from “The Hunger Games” movie franchise. Photos by David Bachrach



Aurorae as seen between two mountains along the Dalton Highway in Northern Alaska. BLM Photo by Karen Deatherage



Wickersham Dome Trailhead in the White Mountains National Recreation Area shortly after midnight. BLM Photo by Craig McCaa



“For the hardy and adventurous, BLM-managed public lands offer perfect vistas for viewing aurorae.”

Driving through Alaska on the Steese Highway, also known as State Route 6, the lights illuminate the public lands around you. Photo by David Bachrach



Above: Sukakpak Mountain rises against the backdrop of the lights near the Dalton Highway, state Route 11. Photo by David Bachrach

Left: Summit Trail in the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

The best time to view aurorae in the Northern Hemisphere is typically during early fall and late winter when the Earth's tilt is toward the sun. As darkness settles upon the land after a brief, sun-saturated summer, visitors flock to public lands hopeful that clear skies and a little luck will give them the chance to experience the magic and mystery of a northern lights display.

For the hardy and adventurous, BLM-managed public lands offer perfect vistas for viewing aurorae.

For instance, skiing out to one of the BLM's remote public-use cabins in the White Mountains National Recreation Area offers the opportunity to escape light pollution and capture breathtaking photographs.

There are also seasonal direct flights to Fairbanks and charter tours out toward BLM's Steese National Conservation Area that will afford more than a glimpse of the lights over endless rolling hills and tundra.

You can even catch the aurorae in Anchorage, Alaska's biggest city. The BLM's Campbell Tract offers outstanding shelter from the bright city lights and is just minutes away from local amenities.

A trip up the Dalton Highway, made famous by the reality TV show "Ice Road Truckers," provides one of the best chances to see the northern lights in Alaska. Tourism operators provide opportunities for visitors to venture by van or bush plane through the BLM's Dalton Highway

Corridor. Locals from Coldfoot and Wiseman provide a warm bed and/or hearty meals, and even wake-up calls when the aurorae get active.

For BLM staff working in this region, the thrill of witnessing a stunning display of lights never grows old.

"It's amazing to return to the cabin after a day of measuring snow depths in temperatures as low as minus 60 degrees and to look out that window and see aurorae dancing in the sky," says Kelly Egger, an outdoor recreation planner for the Central Yukon Field Office. "I'm lucky to work in a place like this."

Karen Deatherage is a park ranger and interpretation specialist for the BLM Central Yukon Field Office in Fairbanks.



THE AWAKENING

Red Rock Canyon Comes to Life When Others Hibernate

By Kirsten Cannon

When winter storms and freezing temperatures drive most of the nation indoors to hibernate, the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area west of Las Vegas comes alive with campgrounds at their yearlong busiest and recreationists taking to nearby public lands for a variety of pursuits.

Across southern Nevada, that means climbing rock walls, riding bikes, horses or off-highway vehicles, or simply enjoying the desert's vast stark beauty – much of it on Bureau of Land Management-administered lands.

Marj and Craig Purdy have been hosting BLM campgrounds in central Montana in the spring and summer for four years, and this will be their third year coming to Red Rock Canyon in southern Nevada for the fall and winter seasons.

"We sometimes see the same people at both locations," said Craig Purdy. "They will canoe and kayak at Judith Landing Recreation Area (near Big Sandy, Montana) in the summer and rock climb in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area in the winter. It keeps them doing what they love year-round."

The campground is so busy during the winter season because Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is considered one of the finest rock climbing areas in the world.

"Red Rock Canyon features hundreds of established sport, bouldering and traditional climbs, varying from one-hour climbs to multipitch routes that are nearly 2,000 feet in length," said Josh Travers, supervisory outdoor recreation planner at Red Rock Canyon. "Climbing is so popular that there is an assortment of guidebooks dedicated to climbing routes."

While snow does sometimes blanket southern Nevada, recreationists are most likely to see the Mojave Desert's version of the white stuff when they visit the 500-foot-tall Big Dune in southwest Nye County, northwest of Red Rock Canyon.

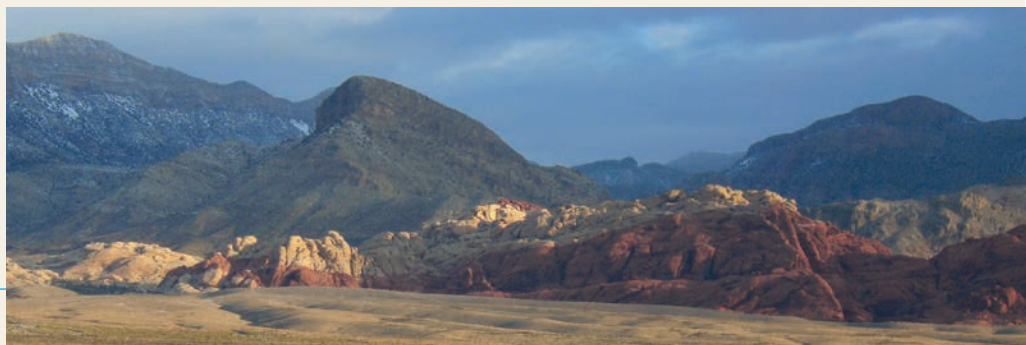
About 24,000 visitors a year rave about the primitive recreation experience at the 1.5-square-mile complex. Most visitors enjoy off-highway vehicle options including rides on nearby trails and on-dune experiences. Big Dune is also home to four threatened or sensitive beetle species and the threatened desert tortoise, so wildlife viewing and photography are popular. In addition, recreationists enjoy a rather unique way to enjoy the dune: sandboarding and sandskiing.

Those looking for a more motorized public lands experience often head out to the Logandale Trails System in northeast Clark County. Visited by 168,000 people a year, the trails offer gorgeous red rock formations, sandstone cliffs, and multiple sand dunes and desert washes within the 21,100-acre area.

Kirsten Cannon is a public affairs specialist in the BLM's Southern Nevada District Office in Las Vegas.

Above: Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area provides some of the best opportunities for rock climbing in the world.

Below: The Mojave Desert provides a striking backdrop of a getaway in any season.



RECREATION: RED ROCK CANYON, NV

NEVADA

Red Rock Canyon
National Conservation Area

Rock climbers haul
their gear to a climbing area.





Above: The area is perfect for snowshoeing and skiing.

The names say it all: Nordic trails and a winter play area.

Soon after the snow falls in southern Oregon, the ski, snowshoe and snowmobile trails at the BLM's Hyatt-Howard Prairie area are ready for action.

"We're hoping for a great winter recreation season and we have everything in place to make it a success," says John Gerritsma, an area BLM assistant field manager.

Situated among towering firs and pines, the interconnected trail system is 17 miles on public and private lands on the ridges near Howard Prairie and Hyatt Lake reservoirs. From these ridges, just outside of Medford, visitors can see stunning views of the Rogue Valley and Mount McLoughlin.

The trails are maintained by the Southern Oregon Nordic Club (SONC), a partner that

Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Manager Joel Brumm labels as, "passionate and hardworking."

"Not only is this relationship beneficial to BLM's public lands, but the recreational opportunities and access would not be available to the public without this vital partnership," Brumm says.

One example of the teamwork is a new snow groomer, purchased recently by the BLM and SONC with help from an Oregon State Parks grant. Volunteers will do the grooming, with some trails left untouched to provide a backcountry experience.

This development can make the trail network a "world-class Nordic resort area," says SONC board member Michael Dawkins, "because our terrain is incredible, our snow is incredible."

"The recreational opportunities and access would not be available to the public without this vital partnership."

GO WITH THE SNOW

17 Miles of Trails Make for Varied, Snowy Experience



There are many other exciting options, too, for dogs (and dog owners), skiers and tubers:

Buck Prairie II is a dog-friendly area where cross-country skiers can have a 5-mile stretch of trails available for canine tromping. For more info: blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site_info.php?siteid=353

At the original Buck Prairie, ski lessons and ski tours are available during the season for winter adventurers of all levels. For more info: southernoc.tripod.com

And at Table Mountain Winter Play Area there is a long main hill and two smaller ones for snow tubing. Patient parents can rest on the benches and tables and warm up at the fire pit. For more info: blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site_info.php?siteid=355

Photos and story by BLM public affairs staff in Oregon.

The site includes restrooms and an area where you can build a warming fire. One area is specifically designed for snow tubing.



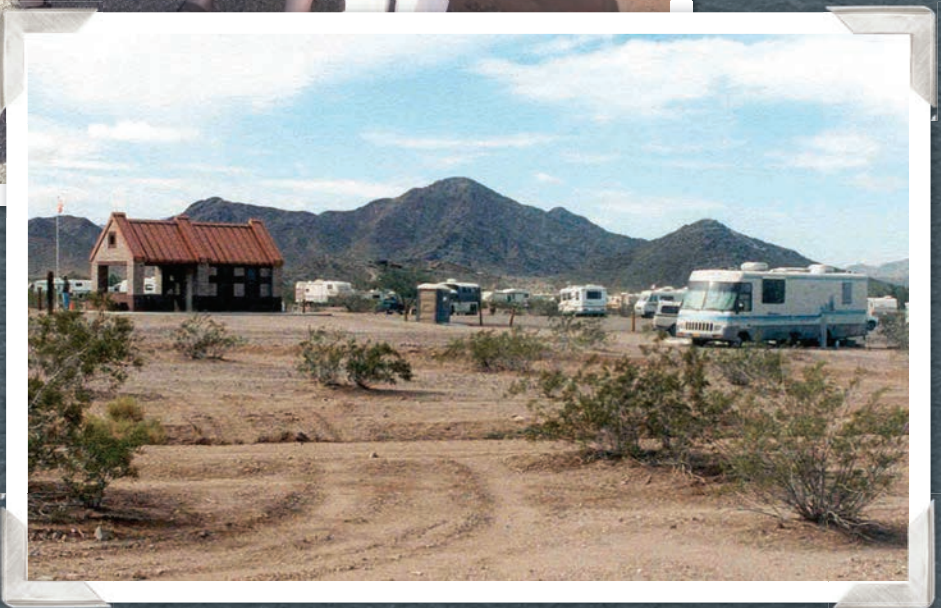
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WHERE FRIENDS ARE LIKE FAMILY

BLM Stretch of Desert Winter Home to 40,000
By Dennis Godfrey



Volunteer coordinators for the La Posa Long-Term Visitors Area gather at one of the entryways.



RVers flock to the La Posa Long-Term Visitors Area near Quartzsite, Arizona.

When it comes to magnificent Arizona landscapes, the name Quartzsite may not be the first place that comes to mind. After all, it's no Grand Canyon.

While the small community on Interstate 10, about 18 miles east of the California border, is mostly flat, not-quite-barren desert, the surrounding mountains in the distance are beautiful and inviting. And the annual influx of winter visitors makes Quartzsite one of Arizona's most interesting and off-beat locations.

Each winter, the population of this otherwise nondescript community of fewer than 4,000 increases to more than 40,000 as recreational vehicle-users from across the country flock to the Bureau of Land Management's nearby 14-day free camping areas and the La Posa Long-Term Visitor Area, called an LTVA in BLM speak.

So what's the draw?

"Spend a week with us and you'll find out," said Jim Butcher, a volunteer coordinator at La Posa LTVA, which is about two miles from Quartzsite. Jim and his wife, Carol, spent much of their lives in Redding, California. Now they live in an RV and go where they want. In the fall and winter, that place is Quartzsite. "This is our home," Jim says, with a gesture indicating the 11,000-acre LTVA.

"It's the people," says Alice Clark, a young 70-year-old who works part time six months of the year at her home in Washington

state. She spends the balance of the year at Quartzsite.

"There's a lot of magnetism here," says Stan Shaw, who still has a house in upstate New York, which he hasn't seen in four years. He and his wife, Judi consider Quartzsite and La Posa LTVA their permanent home. Shaw is a 2014 national "Making a Difference" award recipient, honored for his work at La Posa LTVA.

"You can find the same desert 100 miles that way," Jim Butcher says, "but it's not the same."

Carol Butcher listed a half-dozen or more states where they have traveled to this year. By August, they were ready to go "home" to La Posa and Quartzsite, despite temperatures well over 100 in the desert at that time.

Most residents in the LTVAs are older, usually retirees with RVs. But younger people settle in as well. And not everyone has an RV. Some spend the seven-month season in tents.

Perhaps the biggest attraction initially is the low cost. The fee to stay in one of the BLM's seven LTVAs in Arizona and California from Sept. 15 to April 15 is \$180, less than \$1 per day, says Bill Alexander, the lead park ranger for the La Posa and Imperial Dam LTVAs, which are managed by BLM Arizona's Yuma Field Office. The low cost was what brought Donnie and Patty Marshall originally. "But now it's our friends, our camaraderie," he said.

Long-Term Visitor Areas Managed by BLM Arizona



Many La Posa campers spend time in and around the hills on off-highway vehicles. Others may join McKuhn and Wilson digging for gold or rockhounding. Some do crafts or socialize over cards and other games. Occasionally, they will drive into a city for shopping.

But mostly they are content with their home in beautiful-to-them Quartzsite.

Information about the La Posa and Imperial Dam LTVAs is at www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/recreation/camping.html.

Dennis Godfrey is a public affairs specialist in the Arizona State Office in Phoenix.



"You can find the same desert 100 miles that way," Jim Butcher says, "but it's not the same."

This camper has worked to beautify the area that is home for up to seven months of the year.

'SPIRITED'

Winter Visitors Undaunted by Remote Location, Reports of Ghosts • By David Abrams



Davey's Store, once the hub of Garnet's shopping district, is closed during the winter, but visitors can still peek inside the windows to look at the few historic relics that remain on its shelves.

Photos by Maria Craig, except where noted.

WINTER VISITORS TO GARNET, MONTANA, MAY FIND THEMSELVES SHIVERING FROM SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE SNOW AND COLD.



The historic mining town, devoid of year-round permanent residents since the mid-1940s, is reportedly populated by ghosts.

Now publicly owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management and supported by the nonprofit Garnet Preservation Association, the ghost town can be positively spooky during the winter months when up to 5 feet of snow covers the ground. But it can also be serene and a welcome tonic for people wanting a remote getaway weekend: no cell service,

no city traffic, no rush to be anywhere but the next snow-flocked pine tree.

"It's a true ghost town in winter," says Maria Craig, outdoor recreation planner with the Missoula Field Office. "Snow blankets everything and it's so quiet. If I had to sum up Garnet in the winter in one word, it would be 'tranquil.'"

The BLM has two cabins available to rent from December through April at the old mining site 40 miles east of Missoula.

GET AWAY



Garnet Ghost Town is filled with abandoned buildings like this one. Two of the cabins at the historic site are furnished and winterized for overnight rental.



Garnet in the winter. BLM photo



A snowy road winds through the now-deserted mining town of Garnet in western Montana.

It is a popular destination among winter recreation enthusiasts who enjoy skiing and snowmobiling in the rugged terrain around the small cluster of historic buildings, tucked away in the Garnet Range at about 6,000 feet.

The BLM's Missoula Field Office holds a lottery for cabin rentals in early November and those reservations fill up faster than you can say, "Boo!" Last year between December and April, about 600 people stayed in the cabins that together accommodate 10 people.

More than a century ago, Garnet was a prosperous gold mining town that boasted

a dozen saloons, numerous hotels, brothels, stores, blacksmith shops and homes for more than 1,000 residents. Today, nothing is left except memories, a cluster of weather-beaten buildings and more than 100 miles of trails open to snowmobilers and skiers.

Garnet is one of Montana's most actively haunted sites, according to several books on the subject. In his "National Directory of Haunted Places," author Dennis William Hauck gives this report: "The ghost of a man dressed in an old-fashioned black coat has been seen running from behind the general store here. The phantom runs directly into the hillside and disappears."

In addition, visitors have reported that

they have heard music and laughter coming from inside the old Kelley's Saloon, which predates the gold boom of 1898.

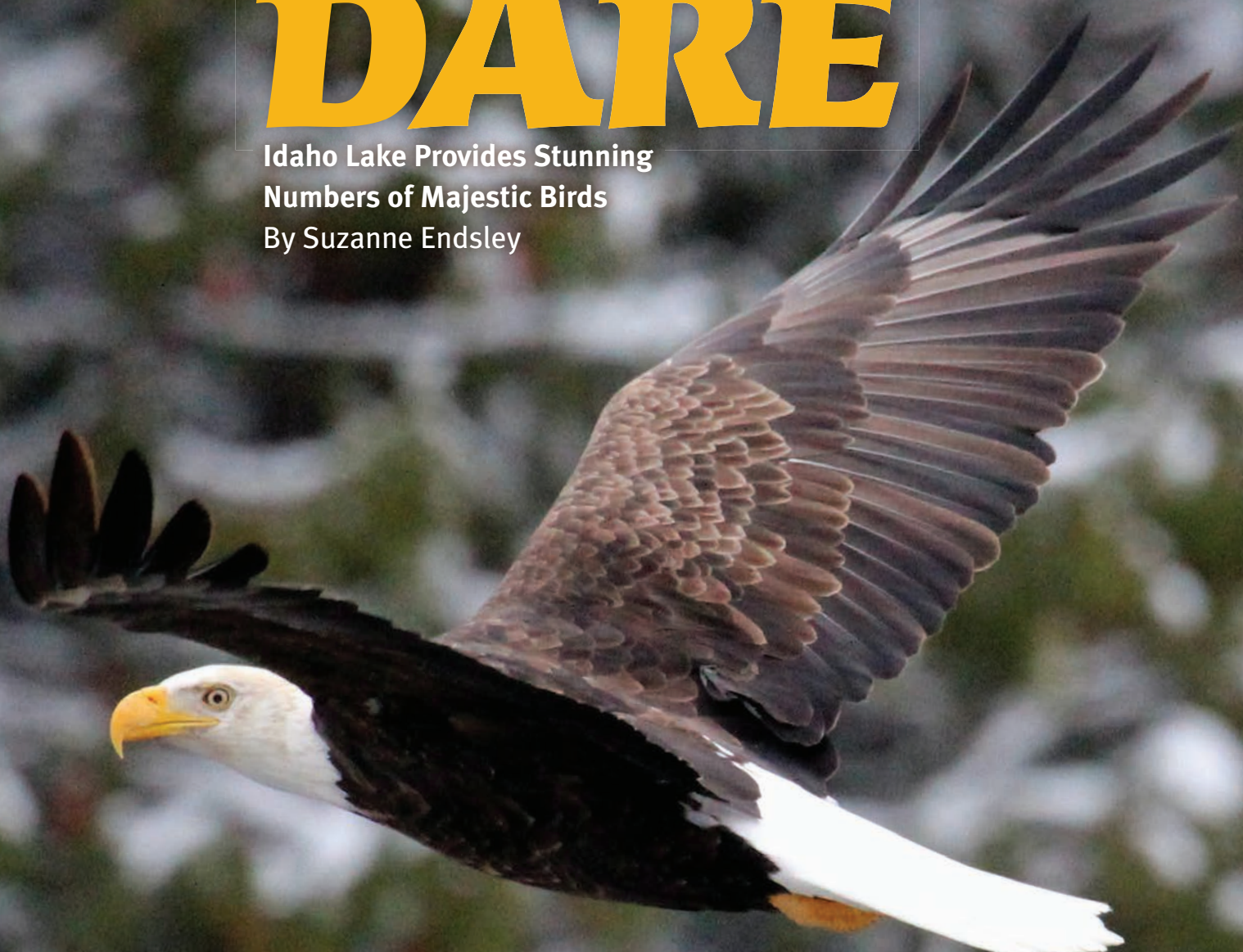
Part of Garnet's charm is the fact that all roads leading to the remote town are closed in the winter. Those who want to stay at the cabins must travel by skis or snowmobile by one of two routes – either 5 or 12 miles, depending on which direction they're coming from.

"It's a hard trek to get there," Craig says, "but it's well worth it."

David Abrams is a public affairs specialist based in the BLM Butte, Montana, Field Office.

WHERE EAGLES DARE

Idaho Lake Provides Stunning
Numbers of Majestic Birds
By Suzanne Endsley



When winter arrives in northern Idaho, the days grow shorter, snow graces the banks of Lake Coeur d'Alene, and the locals know their annual guests are about to arrive.



Above: A bald eagle takes flight from its wintery roost. Photo by Rod Stamm

Each year, bald eagles from Canada's Fraser River Valley congregate along the eastern edges of Wolf Lodge Bay, migrating to the Coeur d'Alene area before moving further south to the Snake River Plain in southern Idaho. Pushed by winter's creep into British Columbia, these majestic symbols of our nation arrive in north Idaho, lured by the plentiful supply of kokanee salmon in the lake. This is when eagle watch season begins.

Biologists from the Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Fish and Game have tracked the annual migration to the area since the 1970s. Historically, about 150 birds wintered each year around the lake. But in 1996, those numbers declined after a flood devastated the shallow, gravelly

banks of Wolf Lodge Bay that provide spawning areas for the kokanee, a landlocked salmon considered a delicacy for the migrating birds.

Biologists helped restore the damaged habitat and since that time, the fisheries have rebounded and the number of eagles migrating to Lake Coeur d'Alene has approached record levels. In 2013, a one-day record of 275 eagles was counted along the east end of the lake by BLM Wildlife Biologist Carrie Hugo.

Hugo conducts a weekly count of the birds roosting in trees on a designated route. With the significant increase of eagles to the area, the public eagerly anticipates and tracks the weekly numbers. "Keeping track of the weekly eagle count is a fun

activity for all ages," Hugo says.

"I know there are many 'trackers' out there because if I'm tardy posting the count, I get lots of phone calls wondering whether the numbers have increased."

Taking in the annual migration has become a fun-filled tradition in north Idaho. Since 1991, the BLM's Coeur d'Alene Field Office and Idaho Fish and Game have teamed up to offer events and interpretative sites set up at the BLM's Mineral Ridge trailhead parking area and the Mineral Ridge boat launch. Here, hundreds of spectators get an opportunity to observe the bird in its natural environment – soaring, hunting or perching in a tree.

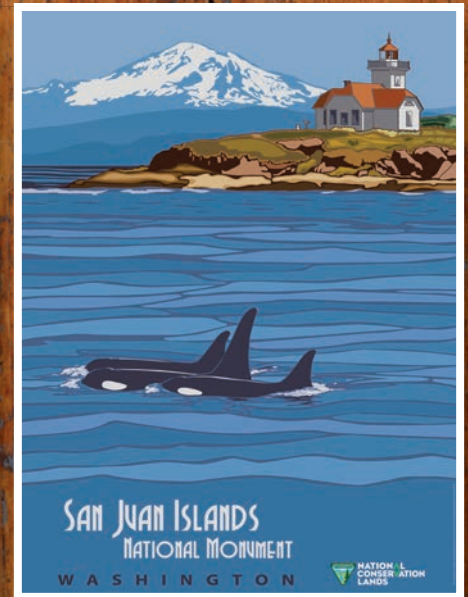
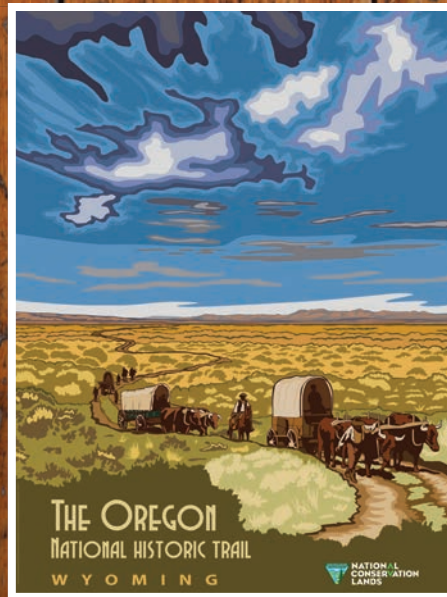
Suzanne Endsley is a BLM public affairs specialist from the Coeur d'Alene District Office.

Left Page: Our national symbol powerful, yet majestic in flight. Photo by Rod Stamm

Below: A bald eagle skims over Lake Coeur d'Alene in search of kokanee salmon. BLM photo



"In 2013, a one-day record of 275 eagles was counted along the east end of the lake."



LANDSCAPES THAT ENDURE

Enduring landscapes deserve a lasting depiction of their beauty and importance in an art form that acquaints the public with their lands. In 2014, the BLM began publishing vintage-style posters to showcase some of these iconic lands. The most recent of these posters use a mid-20th century artistic style to highlight three spectacular areas that are part of the BLM's National Conservation Lands: Río Grande del Norte National Monument in New Mexico, the Oregon National Historic Trail in Wyoming, and San Juan Islands National Monument in Washington.

The BLM's National Conservation Lands comprise nationally significant places with outstanding cultural, scientific and ecological values. Created in 2000, the system now includes approximately 900 special sites – such as national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness and wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, and national scenic and historic trails – encompassing more than 30 million acres across the United States. These landscapes, which are mostly in the Western States, remain largely primitive, but continue to support traditional activities such as hunting, fishing and livestock grazing.

See and download these posters and more on the BLM National Tumblr at <http://tumblr.co/Z9wNeu1XfIBxE>.

Río Grande del Norte National Monument in New Mexico, which was designated in March 2013, is a showcase of stark, wide open spaces covering 242,500 acres. At an average elevation of 7,000 feet, the monument is dotted by volcanic cones and cut by steep canyons. An amazing array of wildlife dwells among the piñon and juniper woodlands and the mountaintops of ponderosa, Douglas fir, aspen and spruce. The area has also seen human activity since ancient times, as evidenced by petroglyphs, prehistoric dwellings, and many other types of archaeological discoveries at the site.

The Oregon National Historic Trail, which spans more than 2,000 miles across six states, includes a stretch of more than 350 miles across public lands in Wyoming. National historic trails help visitors recreate a unique chapter in American history when some 500,000 emigrants made their way overland to the western edge of the continent. Their determination resulted in 12 new states joining the Republic between 1840 and 1890, all west of the Mississippi River. As caretaker of more miles of national historic trails than any other federal agency, the BLM interprets this great westward migration and other aspects of American history via these landmarks.

San Juan Islands National Monument, designated in March 2013, is part of a uniquely beautiful archipelago of islands, rocks and pinnacles in Washington state's Puget Sound. Woodlands, grasslands and wetlands are intermixed with rocky balds, bluffs, intertidal areas and sandy beaches. This varied habitat supports a wide variety of wildlife including blacktail deer, river otter, mink and a diversity of birds. Orcas, seals and porpoises also attract a regular stream of wildlife watchers. With two historic lighthouses and a 12,000-year heritage of Coast Salish communities, the historical landscape is equally evocative.