



# High Desert Voices

*A newsletter published by and for volunteers*

**HIGH DESERT  
MUSEUM**



Everyone, at some time in their lives, has experienced some form of sensory overload in a public space. Enjoyment of the experience could be enhanced if there were fewer people, less noise, or brighter or dimmer lighting. Whether it is crowds, noise, dim lighting, or difficult walking terrain, some visitors have difficulty accessing all the High Desert Museum offers. In 2018, the family of a vivacious 13-year-old named Maya asked if there was some way that the Museum could accommodate their daughter's cerebral palsy and low vision to experience the exhibits and wildlife more fully. Maya had grown up coming to the High Desert Museum and loved it wholeheartedly. Without hesitation, staff at the Museum began to explore how to expand access to the Museum for visitors

with varying abilities to interact with the exhibits. Thus, the program, Museum and Me, was born.

Every three months, on a Thursday evening from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, the Museum and Me program opens the doors of the High Desert Museum to individuals and their families with needs for sensory accommodations. Just having a reduced number of visitors creates a calm, less overstimulating experience. Families can relax and explore, while individuals can express themselves and feel free to interact with exhibits in their own unique ways. Some evenings there are up to 45 visitors and at other times just one or two families. Many families come to Museum and Me at every opportunity. One young man comes with his parents and enjoys taking photos of his train at the exhibits. The Museum and Me program offers him the freedom to explore his interests at his own pace, free from distractions and too much sensory input. His parents enjoy visiting the Museum as much as their son.

Other accommodations during the Museum and Me involve the other senses. For example, the sounds in certain exhibits like the *Sasquatch* and *By Hand through Memory* and *Spirit of the West* are turned off. In the mine shaft in *Spirit of the West*, more lighting is added for safer passage. Visitors may check out sensory bags during this event or at anytime they visit the Museum. These bags include pop-its and fidget spinners, as well as cards with visual cues so that visitors with limited verbal abilities can express their desires of what they want to see and experience at the Museum. The bags also have noise-cancelling headphones, puzzles, coloring pages, and crayons that allow visitors to take a break when needed. It is obvious that much thought has gone into how to make the High Desert Museum more accessible to people with a variety of needs and abilities.

Museum and Me is promoted within the communities of families with members that would benefit from the sensory accommodations. It is recommended that groups register when they plan on attending, but it is acceptable to just show up and enjoy the Museum too. This program is another example of the inclusive vision of the High Desert Museum. As stated in the Museum's values, "The High Desert Museum welcomes everyone and strives to provide accessibility for all." It leads by addressing community challenges, encouraging dialogue, and building meaningful partnerships. These are not just words on a website, but are expressed through the Museum and Me program.

To really understand the value of the Museum and Me program, one only needs to see Maya's brilliant smile and joy as shown on the promotional video. You can watch her at [this link](#) or look up "The High Desert Museum Through Maya's Eyes" on YouTube. Or you may witness the delight of the young man walking through the town square of the *Spirit of the West* as comfortable as any townsperson from that era. Museum and Me is another reason to be proud of being a part of the High Desert Museum and its commitment to reaching out to all people. It is the people that make this such an extraordinary place. The next time this program will be available is on August 8, 2024.



## Mother Knows Best

by Andrea Stuart, Newsletter Writer

Offering a rich exploration of the unique wildlife and ecosystems of the Oregon High Desert and Eastern Cascades, maternal behaviors of its native animal species are the keystone to their survival. Understanding how these animals care for their young reveals the intricate survival strategies they have developed in response to the challenges of their environment.



### Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

Mule deer are one of the most iconic species in the High Desert. During the spring, pregnant mule deer, also known as does, often stay with other deer for safety and may move in groups to protect each other. As the pregnancy progresses, a doe becomes more secretive and less active, seeking secluded areas to give birth. They typically give birth to one or two fawns.

To protect her offspring from predators, such as coyotes and mountain lions, the doe employs a strategy known as "hider" behavior. She leaves her fawns concealed in tall grasses or shrubs while she forages and nurses them periodically throughout the day, reducing the risk of drawing predators to them. The fawns, which are born with a spotted coat to help them blend into their surroundings, remain still, and rely on

their camouflage and lack of scent to stay safe until they are strong enough to follow their mother.

As the fawns grow, the doe teaches them how to forage for food and guides them to nutritious plants. Fawns are introduced to the larger herd and learn social cues and behaviors from other members. The doe gradually spends less time with the fawns, encouraging them to become more independent before the next breeding season. By the time they are one year old, the doe's offspring are usually ready to set out on their own.



### Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

The red fox, particularly the Sierra Nevada subspecies, exhibits fascinating maternal behaviors. Here in Oregon, the Sierra Nevada red fox lives in the Cascades, while the Rocky Mountain red fox subspecies resides in the Ochoco and Blue Mountains, and in lower elevation areas. Female red foxes, or vixens, partner with a male before giving birth to an average of four to five kits in dens. These dens provide protection from predators and the elements and are often dug into hillsides or under fallen logs but can also include porches or other human structures.

Born blind and helpless, the kits rely entirely on their mother's care until they open their eyes at around two weeks old. They begin to explore their surroundings by the age of three to four weeks. They transition from their mother's milk to solid food at around eight to ten weeks of age. As the kits grow, both parents take part in their upbringing, with the male continuing to provide food and the female teaching them essential survival skills, such as hunting, foraging, and avoiding predators. By the time they reach seven to eight months of age, the kits are usually ready to leave the den and establish their own territories.

Their social structure, often involving extended family groups, provides additional support for raising the young. This cooperative care system enhances the chances of the kits' survival, ensuring they grow up healthy and capable of thriving in the wild.



### Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

Known for its powerful flight and keen hunting skills, golden eagles build large nests called eyries on cliffs or in tall trees. The female lays one to three eggs, which she incubates for 40 to 45 days while the male hunts and brings food. From time to time, the parental roles may shift.

## Mother Knows Best—continued

Once the eaglets hatch, both parents participate in feeding them. The young eagles stay in the nest for about 10 to 12 weeks—until they are ready to fledge (fly)—as the mother keeps them warm and feeds them food brought by the father. Both parents play the role of vigilant protector, warding off danger.

Golden Eagle parents gradually encourage their young to become independent by reducing the frequency of feeding as the eaglets grow stronger. This encourages the eaglets to begin practicing flying and hunting skills. This critical phase ensures that, by the time they leave the nest, the young eagles are capable of surviving on their own.



Source: Mid-Columbia River Refuges, CC BY 2.0

hiding of mule deer fawns to the nurturing care of red foxes, the vigilant protection by golden eagles, and the strategic egg-laying of Oregon spotted frogs, these behaviors highlight the resilience and ingenuity of wildlife in this region. The High Desert Museum offers visitors a chance to learn about and support the conservation of these remarkable species and their ecosystems.

Photos by John William & Siobhan Sullivan

### Oregon Spotted Frog (*Rana pretiosa*)

While not hands-on with her young once they hatch, the Oregon spotted frog, an amphibian native to the marshy areas of the High Desert, displays her maternal instincts in a nuanced fashion. These frogs lay their eggs in large, communal masses in shallow, sun-warmed waters.

The female chooses locations that offer optimal conditions for egg development, such as warm temperatures and abundant vegetation. Once the eggs hatch, the tadpoles—living independently of their parents—make the most of their strategic placement by their mother. The egg masses give them a head start by ensuring they develop in a protected and supportive environment.

The maternal behaviors of animals in the Oregon High Desert and Eastern Cascades are adapted to the unique challenges of their environment. From the careful



Source: USDA Forest Service

## High Desert Ranger Station Volunteer Opportunity

by Les Joslin, High Desert Ranger Station Team Lead



This summer, as they have since the summer of 2009 (except during the COVID-19 summers of 2020 and 2021), High Desert Museum volunteers will staff the venerable High Desert Ranger Station exhibit—the first thing visitors see as they arrive.

You can be one of them! You can be one of the High Desert Museum volunteers who will staff and interpret this important U.S. Forest Service history exhibit from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily, July 1 through Labor Day.

As he did beginning in 2009, Les Joslin—who worked out of this historic Toiyabe National Forest ranger station building in its original location east of the High Sierra in 1962, and with then High Desert Museum Western History Curator Bob Boyd acquired, moved, and restored it as a High Desert Museum exhibit—is recruiting and training a small group of volunteers to staff this unique exhibit.

These volunteers share the story of the Forest Service and the National Forest system—a key aspect of the natural and cultural history of the American West on which the High Desert Museum focuses. It's the story of how the Old West and its lifeways, based on natural resource exploitation, became the New West based on sustainable use and stewardship of natural resources.

Those who sign up as High Desert Ranger Station volunteers are individually scheduled for duty days based on their availability and convenience. They are individually trained on their first duty day, and independently carry out their job duties at the High Desert Ranger Station exhibit.

For more information about volunteering for this unique and rewarding High Desert Museum experience, contact Les at 458-292-4080 or online at [<lesjoslin@aol.com>](mailto:<lesjoslin@aol.com>).

*Note: Martha Henderson, Ph.D., who led this program the past few summers, has accepted a U.S. Forest Service fire lookout position for the coming fire season.*

Photo by Les Joslin

## Birding for Breakfast

by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor



On May 11, visitors were up bright and early to take part in the Birding for Breakfast event at the High Desert Museum (HDM). After eating a tasty breakfast provided by the HDM, the 63 participants listened to a talk in Classroom B. Jon Nelson, curator of wildlife, presented an informational slide show about local birds.

Participants received copies of bird checklists and made their way to various parts of the HDM's grounds, guided by staff and volunteers. Though most participants were adults, two enthusiastic young boys also attended. Those taking part included people living locally, as well as several visitors from more distant locations. One group visits the area once a year from their home in Canada.

On the morning of the event, birds were quiet at first but more appeared as temperatures warmed. We saw several more common

species like white-breasted nuthatches, hairy woodpeckers, and American robins. Some species seen often, like Cooper's hawks, stayed out of sight. A few species rarely seen at the HDM made an appearance. Jon spotted a colorful lazuli bunting. The group I led saw a black-backed woodpecker.

Though we would have liked to have seen more birds, this event was a great success. The high turnout is evidence that visitors are eager to see our local birds, even if it means arriving at the HDM at 7:00 am.

The High Desert Museum celebrated World Migratory Bird Day on the same day as Birding for Breakfast. Tours and informational displays set up for visitors included the following.

- Tour of the pollinator garden led by Hayley Brazier, curator of natural history at the HDM.
- Museum raptors out all day for visitors to observe, presented by the HDM.
- How healthy salmon streams benefit migratory birds, presented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- How beavers benefit insects and migratory birds, presented by the Western Beavers Cooperative.
- Information on bird window strike mitigation, presented by the HDM.
- Information on local insects, presented by HDM volunteer, Dr. Jerry.



Photos by John Williams



### High Desert Voices

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# HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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

2024



2024

June 2024	
1	<b>Museum Event:</b> <i>Experience Opening: Forest at Night.</i> 9:00 am–5:00 pm. Free with Museum admission.
6	<b>Museum Event:</b> <i>Sawmill Demonstration.</i> 1:00–4:00 pm. Free with Museum admission.
12	<b>Museum Event:</b> <i>Member's Mingle.</i> 6:00–8:00 pm. Free. RSVP <a href="#">here</a> .
15	<b>Community Event:</b> <i>Juneteenth Central Oregon: Jubilee, First Day.</i> 11:00 am–5:30 pm. Free. At Drake Park 777 NW Riverside Blvd., Bend. More information <a href="#">here</a> .
16	<b>Community Event:</b> <i>Juneteenth Central Oregon: Jubilee, Last Day.</i> 11:00 am–5:30 pm. Free. At Drake Park 777 NW Riverside Blvd., Bend. More information <a href="#">here</a> .
16	<b>Father's Day!</b> Free admission for fathers and those who serve as fathers.
20	<b>Museum Event:</b> <i>Happy Meower!</i> 6:00–8:00 pm. \$8 members, \$10 nonmembers. Adult beverages and food available for purchase. Over 21 only program. RSVP <a href="#">here</a> .
22	<b>Museum Event:</b> <i>CATurday.</i> 12:00–2:00 pm. \$8 members, \$10 nonmembers. Museum admission waived for CATurday ticket purchasers. RSVP <a href="#">here</a> .
26	<b>Museum Event:</b> <i>Bat Walk Wednesday.</i> 8:00–9:0 pm. \$8 member adults, \$4.80 member children 12 and under; nonmembers \$10 adults, \$6 children 12 and under. RSVP <a href="#">here</a> .
	To RSVP or register, click the link next to the event description or call 541-382-4754.