

CASCADE CHRONICLES

Issue 11, 2026

The mission of Cascade Volunteers is to connect individuals and communities to the Willamette National Forest and adjacent public lands through programs, stewardship, and education.

Pacific NW – Autumn



Tiniest of Tiny – *Cheryl Friesen*

Issue 10 included an article by Cheryl about the 'tiniest of tiny" aka Red Tree Voles and an individual, Dr Eric Forsman who has spent time making videos of these creatures while swinging from the treetops. Due to our oversight, the photos were not included. In recognition of the creatures and Eric, here are the photos for your enjoyment.





Upcoming Events

Volunteer Appreciation Night – Save the Date – *Jennifer McDaniel*



The appreciation night is hosted by CV in partnership with the Willamette National Forest

Please join us for a night of fun, food, drink and camaraderie as we celebrate and recognize **YOU** – Willamette National Forest's hard working and passionate volunteer stewards.

This is a chance to connect with old friends and an opportunity to make new ones from other program areas.

Event Times:

- **4:00 – 5:00 Social Hour, Appetizers and Drinks**
- **5:00 – 5:30 Dinner Served**
- **5:30 – 7:30 Presentation, Awards, Raffle**

We'd love to have you contribute to the evening slideshow, showcasing the past year's accomplishments, and the beautiful places and faces who made it all happen. Upload your photos to the Google shared drive: WNF Volunteer Appreciation Night - November 7, 2026 - Photo Album

If you have any questions, please email: volunteer@cascadevols.org We look forward to seeing you!

Fall Chainsaw Class – Open for Registration – *Jennifer McDaniel*

When: November 21-22, 2026 **Where:** HJ Andrews Experimental Forest, near Blue River, OR

What: This is a two-day class that can result in USFS chainsaw certification at the A or B level. These classes need to have at least some in-person component. All students must attend both days. Day one is primarily classroom with some outdoor activities and day two we will be cutting in the field. A voluntary donation is recommended, however not required.

Pre-requisites: You must be over 18 years of age, have both a First Aid and a CPR card, an account with Cascade Volunteers and a signed Volunteer Agreement with the Willamette National Forest.

The class is full, however if you wish to be added to the waitlist, please contact Beth Dayton or Brad Engelbert

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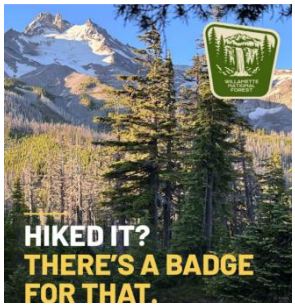
Other News & Stories

OHLEC – What it Stands For – *Trail Crew Volunteer*

It's the 5-step situational analysis used by the US Forest Service and trail crews to keep sawyers safe before a blade ever touches wood. The acronym helps you evaluate the physics and hazards of a log before making a cut:
O – Objective: Where do you want the wood pieces to go?
H – Hazards: Check for overhead dead limbs or environmental risks.
L – Leans & Binds: Calculate tree lean and internal log tension so your saw doesn't get pinched.
E – Escape Routes: Clear at least one or two unobstructed paths to retreat safely.
C – Cut Plan: Finalize your specific cutting technique and technique sequence

Next time you head out, take a 30-second pause and walk through OHLEC. It could save your life.

National Forest Foundation



The US Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation announced the launch of the National Forests and Grasslands Passport – a free digital stamp experience that will let you check in at all 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands, share your adventures, and collect virtual badges along the way.

Each badge represents a specific forest, and reflects the unique landscapes, plants, and animals of that forest! Download the free OuterSpatial app Here.

CV Staff Hit the Trail – *Stacy Rudisill*

Jennifer and I have been busy with the Volunteer Coordinator onboarding process; preparing for the Volunteer Appreciation Night coming up November 7th; assisting volunteers with year-end hours logging; and planning for the upcoming Willamette Valley Visitor's Association Ornament Hunt. Most days we find ourselves behind a computer or laptop screen, in meetings or taking phone calls.



That's why when Andrea Bayliss, leader of the Camas Crew invited us to take part in the Taylor Burn work weekend earlier in the month to see her Camas Crew in action I found it hard to refuse a field day. This four-day extended work weekend brought together four different crews and five USFS staff to finish re-roofing the Taylor Burn cabin (started on a previous trip), complete a variety of projects on site, and work surrounding area trails. We couldn't spend the entire weekend at the cabin, so we opted to make a day trip out of it instead, hiking in with CV Board member and Social Media Coordinator, Melinda Martin. When we arrived at the cabin, we found Tom Schmidgal and Matthew Coady hard at work nailing fresh cedar shingles on the cabin roof and Matt Peterson, WNF Recreation Manger, adding a fresh coat of dark brown paint to the large storage building. After getting a tour of the site, Andrea led us down Wahana Lake Trail to catch up with the trail crew, but unfortunately, they were four miles ahead of us. We could, however, see evidence of their recent work, where saplings and brush had been removed from the trail. By the time the day was done, we'd hiked nearly 15 miles and surprisingly leaped a large boulder (see CV's Instagram)! How's that for those office folks?

There's nothing quite like a crisp Fall day to be on the trail to refresh your soul. Sadly, making time to head out on the trail is rarely at the top of my to-do list these days. The day out really reminded me what it is we are all working for here at CV – that shared goal of connecting people to our public lands through stewardship and education. It's easy to lose sight of that from behind a computer screen. How valuable it is to get out on the trail to see and participate in the work with our volunteers. Taking the time to connect with the folks on the ground doing the work is important and something to be cherished

To see all the great progress made at Taylor Burn, check out the Camas Crew Facebook page.

Interview w/Jennifer McDaniel – *Rhonda Levine*



I met with Jennifer recently to ask her how she came to be interested and very involved in the outdoors. She was born and raised in North Bend on the Oregon Coast…a true Oregonian. She went to school in Southern Oregon and studied environmental science, being very much about the outdoor industry. And then life sent her in another direction…banking. After 13 years, in 2013 she left to begin a business of hand dyeing wool, which she continues to enjoy doing. Her other interest includes Phenology.

In 2019 she and her hubby decided to hike the PCT. They liked the trail culture. No small undertaking! They decided it was now or never and were able to do 2,200 miles going from north to south before a family emergency pulled them away. Jennifer's trail name was "Close Call". They are doing the rest of the PCT when and as they can. She and her hubby have hiked extensively in Colorado, done the Tahoe Rim Trail, and the Wonderland Trail at Mt Rainier. Additional she is volunteering with the Siskiyou Mountain Club.

In 2023 she began volunteering for Cascade Volunteers doing trail maintenance, and with friends, adopting multiple lakes.

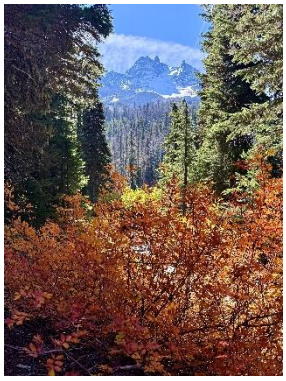
In 2024 she completed her Oregon Naturalist training with OSU. It's like the Master Gardener program. She was inspired by the PCT to learn more about the ecosystems and geology of natural landscapes. If you'd like to know more about the program, check out the Oregon State University website.

As the CV Volunteer Coordinator, she very much wants to facilitate getting people connected with its programs…informing others about the CV website and its list of volunteer options as well as other opportunities to help with. She loves backpacking and in her spare time, you can find her looking for long trails to hike. Next up could be the Arizona Trail, Mt St Helens or the Timberline Trail. And finishing the PCT.

Autumn Hike – *Melinda Martin*



On a mild autumn morning a couple of weeks ago, I filled my coffee mug, grabbed my gear, and hit the road toward the Whitewater Trailhead in the Willamette National Forest. The forecast promised clear skies, my pack was loaded with a jacket and snacks, and I'd lucked out by snagging a wilderness day permit just two days prior.



By 8:45 AM, the parking lot was already buzzing with about 15 cars. I laced up my boots, grabbed my trekking poles, and set off.

The first 1.5 miles weaves through a burned area, climbing long switchbacks up to the saddle where the route splits toward Triangulation Peak or deeper toward Jefferson Park. With my eye on the massive peak ahead, I pressed on. About two miles further, I crossed Whitewater Creek, which was flowing a milky chocolate brown—a classic sign of glacial silt from Mount Jefferson's melting ice.

Shortly after the creek, the trail intersects the Pacific Crest Trail and opens into Jefferson Park. Autumn had fully arrived: the meadows shifted in shades of green and gold, huckleberry bushes flamed brilliant red, and Russell Lake sparkled beneath the towering, imposing face of Mount Jefferson.

I hiked out to my furthest point first, Russell Lake, for a quiet lunch on the shore. On the way in and out, I passed many fellow hikers and backpackers, everyone eager to squeeze the most out of Oregon's finest outdoor season.



Five and a half miles later, back at the truck, I was reminded why this corner of the Mount Jefferson Wilderness remains such a treasure and why keeping these trails open and accessible means so much to our community.

Total miles hiked – 12; Total hours on the trail – 6; Total satisfaction - Immeasurable!

Surprising Findings

Mountain Meadow Morning – *Cheryl Friesen*

> *Hey everybody! The sun is just about to rise over the horizon. Here comes the heat and light – fuel for our daytime industries! Night crew members: meadow voles and deer mice, pocket gophers and star-nosed moles -- time to duck down for the day in the labyrinth of tunnels beneath my roots. Your underground activity aerates and refreshes my soil. Plants: time to start your engines! Dew will be evaporating off your leaves and petals – let photosynthesis begin to roar. Pollination crew – let's get bbb-busy! Bees and flies: time to start your awakening-shivers. You little ones, you know you will warm sooner and be first to hit the flowers for their nectar. Bumble bees, oh ye of heavy body, your turn will come as you are released from your nighttime torpor and spread your wings to fly. Hummingbirds, it's also your time to shake and shiver and enter the fray. Flowering plants await! Ants! I haven't forgotten you. I know you are key to moving seeds around when wind and gravity just don't cut it. Time to get to work! Elk…you cows of the mountains…time to rise from your grassy beds and chow down – every bite means rejuvenation of my grasses and forbs.*

And the morning unfolds in one of the most diverse ecosystems in the Cascades….

The power of the sun awakens the meadow community. There is industry. There is order. There is movement. Some activities were unknown to humans before Dr. Julia Jones and her students started watching and taking meticulous notes. Over 6 summers of observation, they documented 137,916 interactions between 178 different flowering plants and 688 flower-visiting species. Drawing on wells of patience, perseverance, and dedication to discovery, the young researchers uncovered a complicated world. They learned that roughly one third of the species visiting the flowers are actually forest-dwellers, slipping into meadows to mate; one third are meadow-residents that make their home across several meadows scattered on the landscape; and one third are full-time meadow-dwellers that are perfectly content to hang out within a couple hundred yards of their nest sites.

Meadows occupy less than 2% of the Willamette National Forest, but they are hotspots for biodiversity. Do yourself a favor: go sit in the middle of a meadow, watch the sunrise, absorb the energy, and observe the bustle that happens every day, whether someone is watching or not.

The Hare and the Hawk – *Cheryl Friesen*



Gazing across the brilliantly white and bitterly cold landscape, there is a pink spot. It twitches. A skilled observer might also spy two dark spots above the pink. They blink. Witness a simple but elegant survival strategy for snowshoe hare in winter. Molt to white. Be still. Blend in. Blink and twitch only when necessary. Persist for another day.

But what if that evolutionary anti-predator strategy, an adaptation shaped over tens of thousands of years by advancing and retreating glaciers, is betrayed by the unprecedented pace of climate change? Would the “be-still-blend-in-blink-and-twitch-only-when-necessary” behavior still work?
Researchers at University of Montana ponder this question. In Dr. Scott Mill’s lab, their focus has been on the “mismatch” between a hare’s pelage color and the seasonal persistence of snow. As glaciers came and went, hares adapted, becoming reliably brown in summer and white in winter. Be still. Blend in. Photoperiodicity, or the length of daylight, tells them when the seasons will be changing. But when the days become shorter and snow hasn’t fallen, they still turn white. At odds with their environment, “blending in” fails. They sit exposed with white fur from December to April when there is only snow from January to March. Is persistence still possible?

Master’s student Amanda Emmel travelled to Oregon’s Santiam Pass to study the mismatch. A strong elevation gradient and variable snowpack supports a unique population of hares: some molt to white and others molt to a “winter brown” when the days shorten. While white individuals face periods of mismatch during snowless periods of fall and spring, brown morph hares are mismatched against snow throughout winter. Both situations may face increased risk of predation. Do they behave differently to reduce that risk? Are their predators more likely to predate mismatches?

Amanda affixed radios to dozens of hares of both morphs and observed whether the hares sought resting sites that better matched their pelage. She found no behavioral differences between winter brown or winter white hares: neither did they increase their flight initiation distance when trained goshawks were released nearby, nor did they select more concealed resting locations to mitigate any mis-match risk. Be still. Twitch and blink only when necessary.

She also experimentally evaluated how raptors perceive white and brown lures in snowy and bare ground conditions and assessed how motion influenced attack distance. She found that goshawks had trouble detecting lures of either color when they were stationary and had even more trouble when they matched their background habitats. But moving lures were easily spotted. Evolution has shaped the hare’s anti-predator behaviors (be still, blend in) over thousands of years to capitalize the visual limitations of predators.

Brilliantly white landscapes are rapidly shrinking as our planet warms and seasons falter. The last time the planet warmed this much, 88% of life disappeared (Robert Devoy, climate scientist). Twenty-one species globally molt from a summer brown to a winter white coat to maintain camouflage with seasonal snow – will they persist?

The hawk and the hare will continue to share a complex relationship, but for now, the hare is holding its own by being still. Blending in. Blinking and twitching only when necessary. And running like crazy when winged predators fall from the sky.

The Willamette National Forest's rich landscape has provided opportunities for hundreds of researchers over the past century. Ecosystems are complex, and the depth of our ignorance is profound. But intrepid souls, armed with calipers and cameras and a variety of other recording devices have scrambled through the Forest seeking answers to often simple questions that, in aggregate, can lead to profound insights.

These articles highlight the often-surprising findings from these endeavors. For more information on Willamette's Science-Management partnership, check out the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest webpage.

Rosary Lake Obsidian Stewardship Event – *Lyndell Wilken*

Eleven Obsidian Hiking Club members and one *Love Your Lake* person in training met at Rosary Lakes to carry out a fall cleaning. The day was perfect with sunshine and colorful views of the green waters and red huckleberry shorelines.



The first task was to rebuild a 4-foot diameter fire ring, reducing the size to 2 feet. Our strongest crew members moved large rocks while others removed ash and scattered it in the woods. The shorelines were checked for fishing gear and objects in the water, and the woods were searched for unburied TP. Items found in the area included 6 large tarps, a walkie talkie, a camp chair, glass bottles, a dog leash, a rope swing and yet more trash. The group insisted they could carry all the items the three miles to the trailhead. We gave those carrying the rolled-up tarps a head start while the rest of us cleaned the remaining three campsites.

We all felt a sense of accomplishment at leaving the lakes in pristine condition. The Love Your Lake program appreciates the help from members of the Obsidian Hiking Club. With so many hands working, much more was accomplished. *Photo: Lyndell, Denny, Betty, Teresa, Fred, Ane, Eva, Tamara, Paul, Heidi, Donna, Marguerite*

Huckleberry Trail Crew – *Karol Schrems*

The Crew teamed up with staff from the Sweet Home and Detroit Ranger Districts to install three new puncheons on the Tombstone Nature Trail at Tombstone Pass on the U.S. Forest Service – Willamette National Forest. The old puncheons crossed either wet spots or shallow intermittent streams and needed work. This was a two-day project that required hauling tools and materials into the work sites; demolition of the old structures, installing new sills, stringers, planks, and kick boards; and a variety of final touches. These new structures turned out awesome!

Win-Win – *Michael Smith*

Years ago, when I trained in neurology, I spent time at the Tucson VA Hospital. I remember a radiologist there, a pleasant man 30 years my senior, who once tried to get rid of extra chairs in his department. I don't know how he ended up with so many chairs, but in any case, he wanted to get them removed and had no success.

Then one day, an edict came down from the fire safety manager saying the halls were unsafe in many departments because of furniture clogging the space. In the future, anything not fixed in place was left in the hall to be removed. The radiologist was thrilled. He told his secretary to start leaving chairs out in the hallway.

Problem solved.

The Crew was working Rockpile Trail from the trailhead on Pioneer Gulch to Rockpile Lake junction, about two and a half miles. The trail was mostly in what had once been a fire and dug out in places so people could follow it. Logging out is hard work with long rests in between logs. Tread work is hard work that has no in-between.

At the trailhead, 600 vertical feet below where we needed to start, we lay all the tools out on the ground that we would need. Everybody would take at least one tool and maybe two. Not sawing that day, I left my axe, wedges, and hand saws out of my pack and off the ground. That was 10 pounds less right there. The last tool remaining was a Rogue Hoe/Rake, which was fine, although I prefer a Rinehart with a better hoe and no rake. I had reached a certain degree of competence in trail work and had used many different tools. An experienced crew member told me a couple years back he liked the Rinehart the most, and with time I agreed with him. But a new person to the crew took it. I could have pulled rank and taken it from him, but I can work with a Rogue Hoe. Both it and the Rinehart are light; I can use either as a walking stick, shovel, or a root cutter, especially in a burn, where roots are easy to pull out, or if not that, to cut with a hard whack. The tool is stable enough vertically that I can use it to pull myself up after kneeling. Little things like pulling oneself up on a tool matter a great deal when doing trail work, especially if one is old.

Starting the climb, I was slow, in part because of plantar fasciitis, which had me trying different sock combinations in addition to a boot insert. I found something that worked, but the day was additionally humid with a chance of thunderstorms, and that also slowed me down. Eventually passing the new person but staying well behind, I made it to the junction, where we regrouped. We planned to leapfrog each other up the trail; the saw groups by this time were well ahead of us. I used the rake part of the hoe to break up the soil and move it, either to fill a hole, to uncover the tread, or to make a place for flowing water to drain off to limit trail erosion. There had been some recent rain, so there was almost no dust; the last time we did trail work, even hiking left dust in the air.

About a hundred yards past the junction, I caught up to the new person, who asked me whether a gully on the side of the trail could be left as is. I preferred not to do that, so I used the rake to break up some dirt to put in the gully to fill it and uncover the tread where I thought it should be.

"Wow," the newbie said. "I should have taken your tool." Music to my ears. Quietly, I replied, "Want to trade?"

I got a look like really? You are going to let me use that? We traded tools.

The rest of the day went well. Why wouldn't it? I just traded away a tool I didn't prefer to somebody who wanted it and I had what I wanted. We were both happier and he might think I was nice to work with. Or maybe not. I had put the chairs I didn't want in the hall. Win-win.

See you on the trail.

Gold Lake Sno-Park Shelter Damage

In September the historic and beloved Gold Lake Sno-Park shelter in the Willamette National Forest was vandalized. This is the third time the cabin was targeted.

The theft included the stripping and stealing of the copper wiring from inside the structure, as well as the breaking of windows, damage to shutters, stoves, and the fireplace. The heating equipment and interior pipes were also impacted.

The cabin is vital as it is a base of operations to the 45 Willamette Backcountry Ski Patrol (volunteers) who provide maps, hot drinks, and Sno-Park permits. The damage will likely impact the planned opening date of November 28 since volunteer time will now need to be spent making repairs.

As of this writing, there is no further news as to the status of the investigation. Click Here for article and photos from the Statesmen Journal.

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Closing Note – *Rhonda Levine, CV Editor*

Watch for the Newsletter the last week of alternate months. We encourage you to volunteer, as we are doing, to make a difference. And if you'd like to write something and include photos for **YOUR** Newsletter… please do.

When submitting photos, please ID the individuals, the location(s), and ensure that permission to use the photo(s) for publication has been provided.

Please send email with your articles and (photos) to Rhonda. We ask that photos be an attachment or shared link rather than embedded in the text of the article.

The deadline for the December Newsletter is Friday, 12/11/2026.