

AUTUMN 2015

My Public Lands

The Bureau of Land Management Magazine

The Colors of Fall

From Alaska to Arizona, get lost in our pictorial of 30 million of the most beautiful acres in the world

+ Mountain Biking, Moab Marathon, Malpais Badlands, Mushroom Gravy and the Man of Iron





THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

ALASKA IS BIG. We're talking more-than-twice-the-size-of-Texas big. So how does the BLM fight wildfires in such a huge, remote environment? Two words: air power.

BLM Alaska drops more firefighting cargo via parachute and plane than the rest of the BLM combined. Head to Fairbanks with us in one of our main stories to see how the BLM can get thousands of pounds of supplies from a warehouse to a nearby drop zone in an hour.

Next, I'd like to introduce the BLM's very own Ansel Adams.

Bob Wick is a gifted photographer who works for our National Landscape Conservation System, which in 2015 celebrated its 15th anniversary.

His landscape images of America's National Conservation Lands help us understand why these monuments, rivers and wilderness areas deserve this special designation and protection for future generations. The White House, CBS News and The Wilderness Society are among the fans of Bob's photography.

We also check out an all-terrain marathon in Utah, an authentic cowboy roundup in Arizona and Colorado's big game hunting season—all of which take place on public land managed by the BLM.

So take a trip with us across the BLM landscape in this fourth edition of My Public Lands magazine!

—Neil Kornze @blmdirector

MY PUBLIC LANDS

THE MAGAZINE OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

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PHOTOSTREAM

Starring you! We showcase your photos from around the country. This month you take us mushroom hunting, mountain biking and on a late night trip to Black Rock.

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STORYBOARD

Remember when Wyatt Earp ran the Moab Marathon with Iron Man? No? Hmm...better reread this one.

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RESCUE FROM ABOVE

Look out below! Across Alaskan tundras, high-flying adventurers deliver critical supplies by parachute to fearless firefighters battling blazes on the ground.

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FIFTEEN

Get lost! You'll love losing yourself on 30 million acres of our nation's most beautiful treasured lands as we celebrate 15 years of careful conservation.

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THE NATURAL

Say cheese! As a reward for quitting smoking, Bob Wick bought himself a camera—and quickly became one of America's pre-eminent nature photographers.



Raise the Flag for Public Lands

A Spanish Conquistador re-enactor hoists the historic Royal Standard of Spain along the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail. This early trade route dates back five centuries when it covered 1,600 miles from Mexico City to modern New Mexico—an arduous journey that often required up to six months to travel. Today this special protected area is part of the BLM's amazing National Conservation Lands which commemorated their 15th anniversary this year. See more of these incredible American icons on page 20.

Cover and Contents Photos by Bob Wick

SHHH.
BE VEVY, VEVY
WE'RE HUNTING



ANY QUIET. BIG MUSHROOMS.

Well, ok, you don't need to be quiet.

But 'tis the season for seasoning your pizzas, pasta and pot pies with all-natural wild mushrooms.

Mushroom hunting makes for a great outing with friends and family, and is the perfect guest at Thanksgiving dinner in your favorite stuffing and gravy.

Plus in most cases you can pick up to 5 pounds of mushrooms per day for personal use—and if you've seen mushroom prices at your local supermarket, this adds up to big savings. Go for a hike and pick some for yourself! (Just be wary of the more poisonous varieties of mushrooms.)

Now, if only we could pick a wild pepperoni...

A GOOD TIME TO BE BAD.

In Spanish, El Malpais means, "The Badlands."

And that's good. Because thanks to its natural rugged archaeological and geological charms, the prehistoric El Malpais National Conservation Area in New Mexico has been protected to remain in its pristine natural state for perpetuity.

PHOTO ABOVE BY JULIE FRANCOIS (FLICKR.COM/JULIEFRANCOIS)

PHOTO BELOW BY ANNA LAXAGUE (IMBA.COM)

BLAZING A NEW OREGON TRAIL

Lewis & Clark never imagined a trail like this.

At Oregon's award-winning Sandy Ridge trails, bikers go for miles with big smiles thanks to the local community who rolled up their sleeves and helped the BLM design and build this roller coaster ride for downhill dive bombers.

“WHAT’S UP, PLAYA?”

It's only been a few weeks since the Black Rock Desert was populated by fixie unicycles and steampunks with polyvinyl parasols handing out artisanal freegan crullers.

But tonight? Tonight is quiet. The stars illuminate your journey into solitude.

“According to photographer Beau Rogers, “I’ve never been to Burning Man, but I really like going to the Black Rock Desert when there’s hardly anyone else there.”

So if that’s your bag, looks like it’s gonna be a good night at Black Rock.

Later, playa.

MOAB MARATHON

Contributor: Jennifer Jones

**Think those wimpy
“regular marathons”
are too easy?**

The Nov. 7 Moab Trail Marathon in Utah sounds crazy.

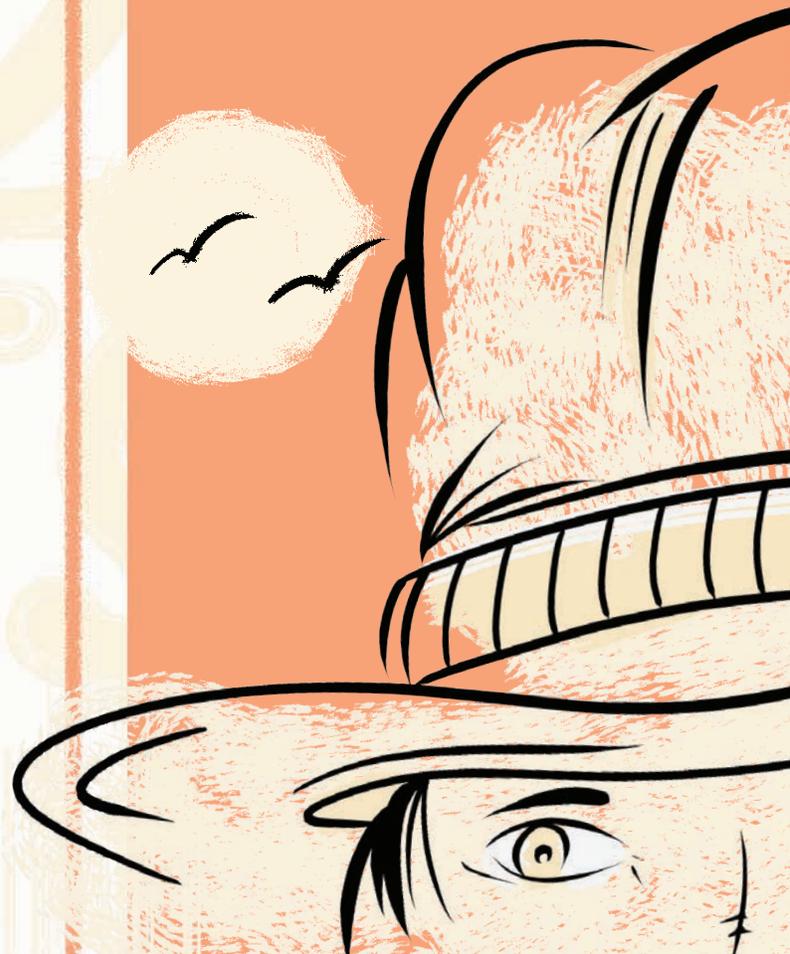
It’s still close to 26 miles, but instead of flat asphalt, racers are trail running over creeks, through deep canyons and even up a cliff using a rope course!

Even more unbelievable—the 2014 winning time: 3:02:05.



COV
U

Contributor: Adam Milnor



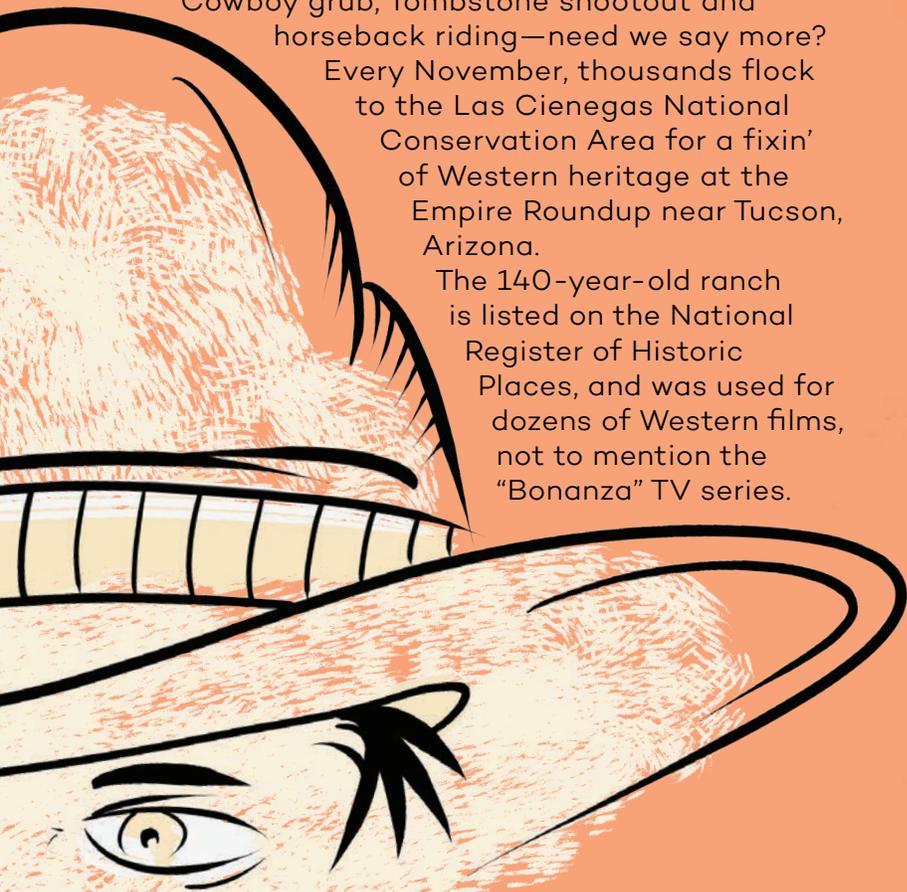
WBOY P!

“I’ll be your Huckleberry.”

Cowboy grub, Tombstone shootout and horseback riding—need we say more?

Every November, thousands flock to the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area for a fixin’ of Western heritage at the Empire Roundup near Tucson, Arizona.

The 140-year-old ranch is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and was used for dozens of Western films, not to mention the “Bonanza” TV series.



DOI POP!

Contributor:
Elaine Hanson



**I am
Iron Maaaaan!**

Remember that cool opening scene of “Iron Man” when Robert Downey Jr.’s character Tony Stark is pitching new missiles to the U.S. military in Afghanistan? Yeah, that was actually at the BLM’s

Alabama

Hills to the east of Fresno, California.

This is just one recent example of how Department of Interior land has intermingled with American pop culture for over 100 years.

The “DOI POP!”

exhibit is open now through winter at the Interior Museum in Washington D.C.



Fire Scene

from Above

Story by Toshio Suzuki

"Long final! Short final! Standby, kick!" the pilot shouts.

The kick is actually a choreographed push, but regardless, cargo rolls out the back of the plane, parachutes fill with air and Alaska smokejumpers get their supplies.

This is what wildfire fighting looks like in Alaska, where everything is bigger, the fires are inaccessible and the BLM smokejumpers base looks like a small FedEx or UPS air operation. That is, if employees at those delivery companies did chin-ups at work and everything, including the staff, came with parachutes attached.

In the sphere of dropping heavy cargo by parachute, known as paracargo, there is no comparison to the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska.

The U.S. military, of course, with its far-flung global bases and huge aircraft, is proficient in paracargo.

After that, the BLM in Alaska drops more pounds of cargo via airplane and parachute than anyone else in the non-military world.

"We're the civilian kings of paracargo," says program manager Doug Carroll, who immediately pounds his chest playfully with his fists.

Smokejumper bases are numerous in Lower 48, but large-scale cargo—think

industrial-sized pallets of goods—is rarely needed because of an established network of access roads, explained Jim Raudenbush, chief of the BLM smokejumpers in Boise, Idaho.

"It's all remote up there—you can't drive your supplies to where you need them," said Raudenbush, who was in the 1982 rookie class of Alaska smokejumpers. "Out of necessity they've developed a very robust paracargo operation."

In 2014, during what was considered a slow fire season, Alaska smokejumpers based in Fairbanks dropped about 94,000 pounds of paracargo. The annual average weight for the past 10 years is closer to 280,000 pounds.

Training Drops

At the drop zone, in the hot and dried out Chena River floodplain, the first pass from the twin-propeller cargo plane seems to wake up the Alaska-sized mosquitos.

Covered in spray-on bug repellent, four smokejumpers on the ground set up a target for the training drops and radio the plane with wind speeds.

"Turning final for live cargo if drop zone is clear," the plane radios back after planning an approach. The shadow of the Spanish Casa 8, coming in low at about 450 feet elevation, looms larger than the plane in the air.

Some context for Alaska's dimensions: more than twice the size of Texas; more coastline than all other states combined.



photo by Kim Wincer

to their base on the U.S. Army's Fort Wainwright, Alaska smokejumpers can load and deliver 5,000 pounds of paracargo in one hour.

Catching Air since WWII

Smokejumper parachutes are painstakingly cared for, repaired and packed, because the cargo is priceless. Their craft is done in spacious, well-lit laboratories dedicated to parachute performance.

For those who obtain the title of senior parachute rigger, the Federal Aviation Administration even issues an official laminated license, which one Alaska smokejumper calls his "license to use a sewing machine."

Most paracargo chutes began their careers as smokejumper chutes and were altered to have a larger diameter.

And some of those careers started in the World War II era, well before the Alaska smokejumpers had their first jump in 1959.

In a random grab of 35-foot paracargo chute bags, the first one pulled was from the Air Force and dated 1960, and the second was made in 1943 by the Irving Air Chute Company in Lexington, Kentucky.

Cargo for all Firefighters

At Bill Cramer's smokejumper base, everyone jumps.

"It'll keep you honest," says the tall and lean Alaska smokejumper chief from his office that looks out onto the runway.

On the wall next to two flower paintings from his little girls he keeps a state map with numbered pins marking each of his over 200 jumps. Most of the pins are in the interior of the state, but there are a few strays in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge to the north and in the islands to the south.

"These guys deliver stuff up to the North Slope, they deliver things down to the Bering Glacier, and every place in between," said Kent Slaughter, BLM Alaska Fire Service manager.

If this scope of distance doesn't easily impress, some context for Alaska's dimensions: more than twice the size of Texas; more coastline than all other states combined; and the BLM alone manages a land mass in Alaska about the size of New Mexico.

It takes a lot of warehouse space, at least four contract planes and plenty of repetitive practice for Alaska paracargo to operate safely during a fire season that logs so many miles.

"Paracargo is one of the most dangerous things we do, but it's also one of the most common," said Cramer.

The commonality is that all wildland firefighters in Alaska from all the different agencies rely on the BLM's paracargo program.

If state firefighters need 1,000 feet of hose and pumps, or if Forest Service hotshot crews need an ATV and fuel — the call eventually gets made to BLM Alaska paracargo where the phone is always answered the same way:

"Jumpers." ▼

Once the cargo is out the rear door, the pallet is falling 8 to 12 feet per second with the aid of the massive round parachutes—three or four depending on the weight.

Some pallets crack upon impact, some end up on their side due to momentum, and all of them hit squarely with an anticlimactic thud no more than 30 yards from the bull's-eye.

The varying results from the mid-May training didn't surprise the crew members, who have seen hundreds of landings for those cargo pallets that individually weigh up to 1,300 pounds.

"When it is the same pilot with the same weight, same aircraft and using the same parachutes—it's almost in a vacuum—but still they get different results," explained Gabe Lydic, a paracargo specialist and one of only five year-round employees.

"There's an art to it but at the same time, there's some variables that you can't control," he added.

***"It's all remote up there—
you can't drive your supplies
to where you need them."***

CG for Safety

The art of flying with cargo comes down to center of gravity. If the freight shifts or isn't packed evenly, the results can be tragic, as a deadly 2013 crash of a military cargo plane in Afghanistan showed when it was caught on camera.

"Aft center of gravity is the worst scenario—it'll pitch up uncontrollably and there's no way to recover from it," said Russ McCafferty, a pilot for Alaska smokejumpers and paracargo.

Putting the heaviest cargo in the middle of the plane and the lightest near the back door keeps the aircraft even, said McCafferty.

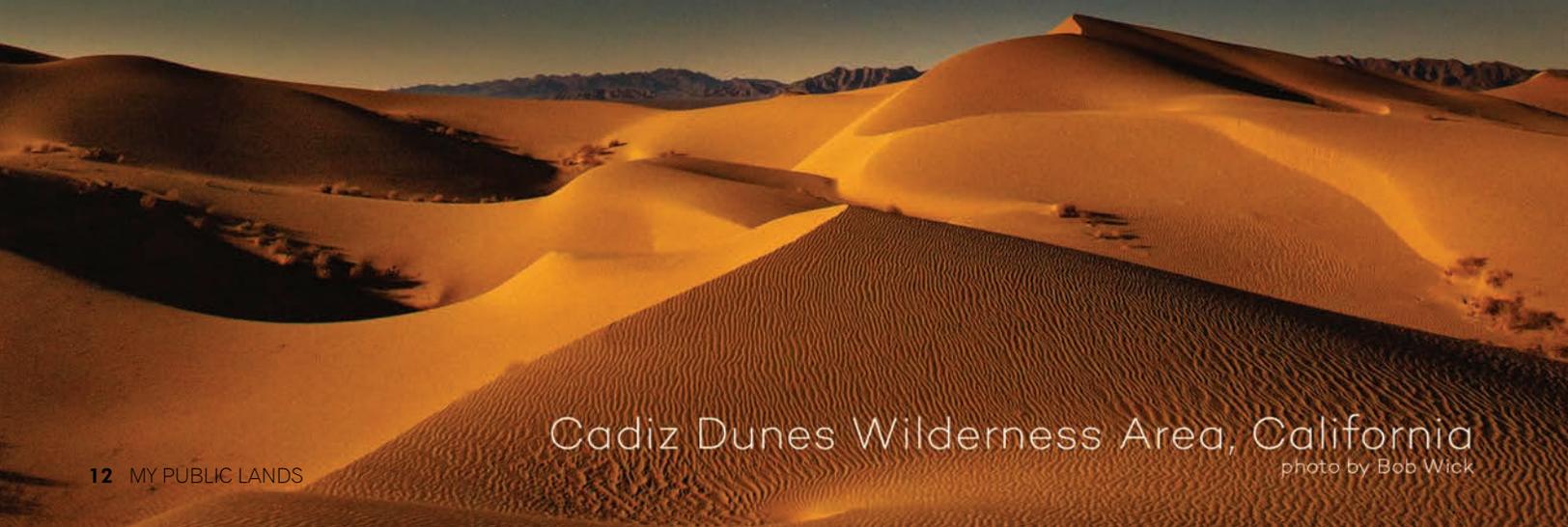
Smokejumper loadmasters arrive at the empty plane via forklift, skateboard and cargo bicycle.

Loading is meticulous trial and error because space is tight and the straps used for each pallet have to be a precise length to reach the rear ramp.

Once loaded, the pilot and smokejumper in the role of lead 'kicker' communicate the total weight and then make fuel calculations. For fires close



AN AMERICAN CELEBRATION



Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area, California
photo by Bob Wick

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The name is National Conservation Lands.

You may have heard of it. It also goes by the names Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area in California, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon and the National Historic Pony Express Trail in Wyoming, to name a few.

In all, the conservation system encompasses about 30 million acres of America's most treasured public lands at nearly 900 different parcels. Not bad for only being 15 years old.

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“Conservation lands are some of the best of what we manage,” said BLM Director Neil Kornze from a 15th anniversary event this year at the Headwaters Forest Reserve in California. “And it has become, I think, an amazing bounty for the country.”



As Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell said at the same anniversary event, the National Conservation Lands are important because they recognized the word 'conservation' in the BLM's multiple-use mandate to service the American people on public lands.

"These are places we want to make sure, that as we borrow them from our children, they are left intact for those generations," said Jewell.

Happy 15th Birthday,
National Conservation Lands.



King Range NCA, California

photo by Bob Wick



Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon

photo by Jacob Holden



Hanging Peak WSA, Colorado

photo by Bob Wick

Historic Pony Express Trail, Wyoming

photo by Bob Wick

The first time he tried
smoking, he bought
a new camera as a r

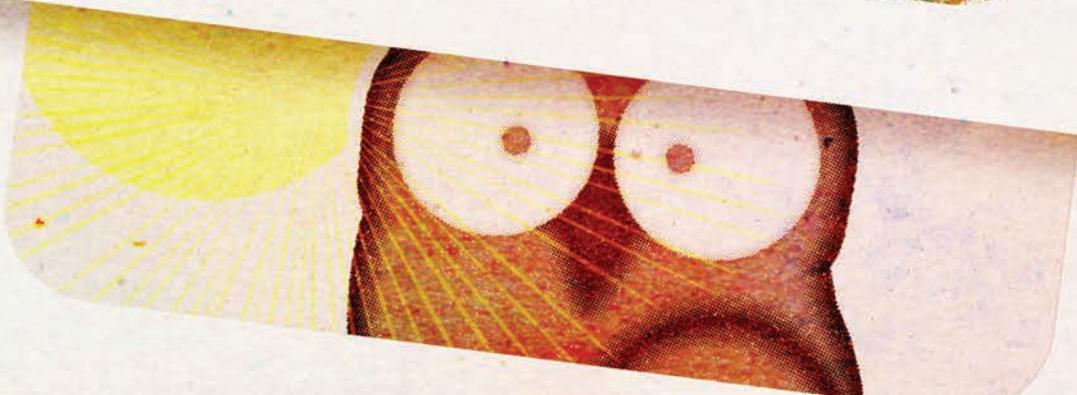


The Natural

Illustration by
Matt Christenson

d to quit
himself
eward.

Story by
Toshio Suzuki





After one tobacco relapse, the college kid tried again, this time using a new tripod as personal incentive.

“That time it stuck,” said Bob Wick. “I figured I’d save money on cigarettes.”

And that is the story of how the Bureau of Land Management’s most famous photographer began his craft of looking through the viewfinder.

Nearly 30 years and 5 terabytes of digital photos later, Wick’s imagery is now synonymous with BLM public lands. Just ask the Internet.

Any simple online image search shows Wick’s portfolio of photography work, which isn’t even his main job function for the agency. The Washington Post, The Wilderness Society, CBS News, Wikipedia, the Conservation Lands Foundation, and many more, have used Wick’s landscape photos of BLM public lands.

One particularly proud moment, Wick said, was when the White House used one of his images last year to announce the designation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in New Mexico.

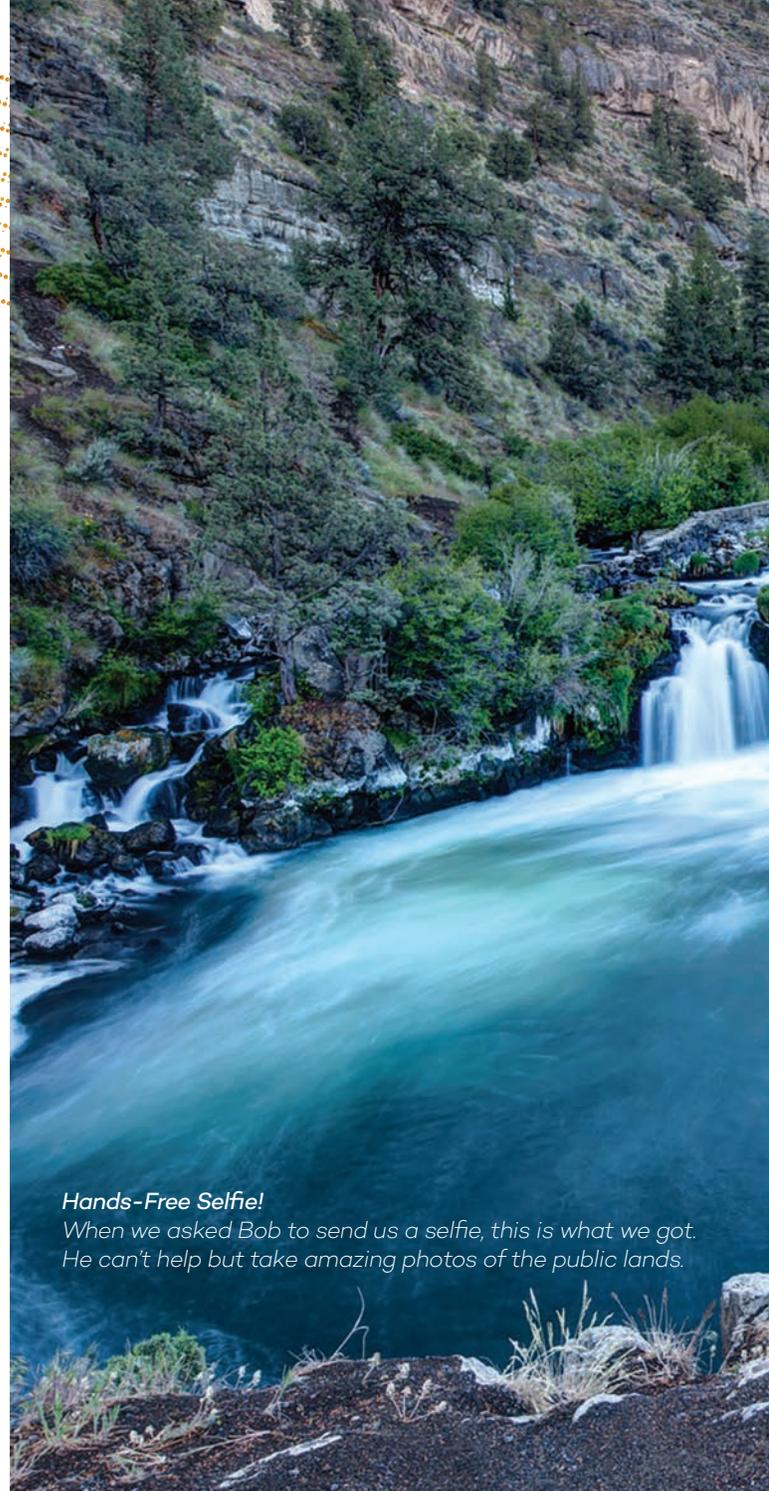
On the slick and sliding ocean rock of the Oregon Coast, Wick barely breaks stride as he walks down to the tidal pools at Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area.

“Gosh, look out, we’re getting some sky texture,” he says while swapping out the wildlife lens and stretching the legs of his tripod.

He wants a particular shot—tide pool sea life in the foreground with the cliff-based Yaquina Lighthouse in the background—and he’s willing to crouch, squat and kneel on slippery rocks for over 30 minutes to get it.

David Welz, associate communications director for the Conservation Lands Foundation, said Wick is known for his commitment to getting the shot, even if it means long hikes and waiting for midnight to get the right moonlight conditions.

“Bob has a real knack for just capturing arresting images that become iconic.”



Hands-Free Selfie!

When we asked Bob to send us a selfie, this is what we got. He can't help but take amazing photos of the public lands.

“Bob has a real knack for just capturing arresting images that become iconic,” said Welz.

“He seems comfortable shooting in the desert or from a bush plane in the arctic.”

For Wick, who grew up camping with his family in the Pennsylvania outdoors, it’s all about exposing the public to America’s special places that aren’t as well-known as, say, an Ansel Adams photo of Yosemite Valley.

“I get to show people these new landscapes, and I really love that,” said the BLM photographer. ▼



#1: Tick Tock—be timely
The first thing I always tell people is make sure you have a loud alarm clock and you get up early in the morning. I'm usually on site about 15 minutes before sunrise.

#2: As G.I. Joe says, "Knowing is half the battle"
One of the things I use a lot is Google Earth—you can really tell what kind of angles you might get on site.

#3: Big storms = big shots
I'm on the weather page all the time. One of my favorite times to photograph is when storms are breaking up.

#4: Lighting is the most important thing in photography

- don't be afraid to shoot towards the sun
- sunlight at 90 degrees can create a 3-D quality
- don't shoot at midday
- cloudy days are good for forests

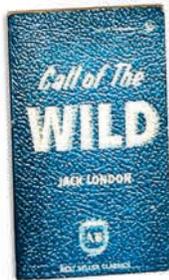
#5: Three legs are better than two
I use a tripod 80 percent

of the time, because I like to shoot at a really small f-stop (light exposure).

#6: In the digital era, trial & shoot
Don't be afraid to experiment. Point and shoots are OK... just having a camera is the big part.

Check out even more of Bob's tips online at blm.gov/or/mypubliclands

#GOWILD



PACK IT OUT

Any day is a good day to start your weekend. But before your next outdoors adventure, pack wisely. Good luck Gummy talisman? Check. Super-fine shades? Got it. Granddad's hatchet? Yep. Just be sure to bring along a copy of Call of the Wild. (Ours is a first edition, NBD.) And while we'll never be as cool as Jack London, his prose'll make our quiet nights by the fire come alive. This gear (plus our 10 essentials) will guarantee some mighty nice memories. Get outside and go wild!

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