

THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE

Sagebrush to Sea: A Journey across the Siskiyou Crest

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The defining geographical feature of our region, the Siskiyou Crest, is a rugged, incredibly wild, and spectacularly diverse mountain range straddling the border of northwestern California and southwestern Oregon. It is renowned as a connectivity corridor and for its biodiversity, being the axis for biodiversity on the West Coast and home to some of the most diverse conifer forests in the world.

Yet few people have actually witnessed the extent of that diversity or experienced the solitude and beauty of the most remote and inaccessible watersheds of these mountains. Even fewer have walked this vital connectivity corridor from its eastern edge in the sagebrush clearings and quaking aspen groves near Mount Ashland to its western end in the fog-drenched redwoods of the Smith River.

In June 2019, after decades of exploring this wild region in shorter excursions, my wife, Suzie, and I hiked nearly 200 miles across the Siskiyou Crest connectivity and climate migration corridor, ambling across the landscape like dispersing wildlife.

We began on the Pacific Crest Trail at Interstate 5 near Siskiyou Summit above Ashland, on the western edge of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, where the Siskiyou Crest and the Cascade Mountains collide. Our journey ended 10 days later on the shores of the Pacific Ocean south of Crescent City. The journey traversed the headwaters of the Applegate River, the Illinois River, the Smith River, and many, many miles of the rugged Klamath River watershed.



Scraggy Mountain in the Condrey Mountain Roadless Area at the headwaters of Elliott Creek, just south of the Applegate over the California border. Photo: Luke Ruediger.

Our route through the heart of the Siskiyou traversed two states (Oregon and California), five counties, two Wilderness Areas, three National Forests (the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, the Klamath National Forest, and the Six Rivers National Forest), as well as the Smith River National Recreation Area and Redwoods National Park.

With small, portable solar panels strapped to our backpacks for charging our phones and cameras, we filmed our journey, documenting the spectacular

views, stunning wildflowers, clear flowing streams, old-growth forests, and lush mountain meadows, as we hiked east to west across the Siskiyou Crest. Hiking through long hot days, cold misty mornings, persistent summer downpours, and windy afternoons in the high country, we then dropped into a thick marine layer of fog and out to the crashing waves of the Pacific Ocean. With our feet in the wet sand, we realized that a different kind of journey, a longer, harder one, still lies ahead—the journey

leading to the permanent protection of the Siskiyou Crest.

Visual journey

Two and a half years later, with that same goal in mind, we have created *Sagebrush to Sea: A Journey across the Siskiyou Crest*, a video that documents our journey, highlights the region's beautiful, often unprotected wildlands, and explores the area's spectacular biodiversity.

Even after decades exploring the backcountry of the Siskiyou Crest, our appreciation and understanding grew as we traversed the vast unbroken ridgeline through both highly scenic and wildly diverse landscapes. Our hope is that this visual journey will build appreciation for the Siskiyou Crest and its unique biological values, support a stronger sense of connection to place in the local community, and encourage the protection of this vitally important connectivity corridor.

We held our premiere screening in Ruch in November and are planning more showings throughout the region. Both screenings begin at 6 pm:

Thursday, December 2, at the Siskiyou Field Institute's Deer Creek Center, 1241 Illinois River Road, Selma

Wednesday, December 8, in the Medford Library Large Meeting Room, 205 South Central Avenue, Medford.

Admission is free and the public is welcome. Masks are required. We hope you'll join us for one of these or another presentation of our video, *Sagebrush to Sea: A Journey across the Siskiyou Crest*.

Luke Ruediger

siskiyoucrest@gmail.com

**CECE SHOOP
HOUSE KEEPING**

**CT Shoop
Incorporated**

P.O. BOX 5557
Central Point, OR 97502
(541) 930-2437
ctshoop15@gmail.com

**BOB THOMAS
AUTOMOTIVE, INC.**

FOREIGN / DOMESTIC
SERVICE AND REPAIR

"We care about your repair."

Robert Thomas, Owner
535 Rossanley Drive
Medford, OR 97501
www.BobThomasAutomotive.com

Mail Tribune
Readers' Choice
2020 - 2021
541-734-3743
Fax 541-245-3784

Bradley Realty

Broker

Julie McCue
Cell: 541.291.6624
Office 541.582.0111
114 E. Main St. P.O. Box 1887
Rogue River, OR 97537
Email: jmcuerealtor@gmail.com
www.bradleyrealty.biz

MLS

**HAVE YOU CONSIDERED
STRAW BALE CONSTRUCTION?**

Natural Plasters

Why Straw Bale Buildings?

- Fire-resistant
- Energy-efficient
- Environmentally healthy
- Locally sourced natural building materials
- Beautiful!

Rainwater Harvesting Systems

New construction, remodels, owner-builder consulting

MANY HANDS BUILDERS
Jim Reiland CCB #198392
541-899-1166
manyhandsbuilders.com

Call Today for a
No Obligation
Consultation!

Get your free vaccine

The Oregon Health Authority reports cases of COVID-19 are far more common in unvaccinated people—four-and-a-half times higher than in vaccinated people. Find out where you can get a free vaccine at getvaccinated.oregon.gov, or call the public health department at 541-916-7030 (Josephine County) or 541-774-8209 (Jackson County). Vaccines are now available to everyone age five and older.