



**THE REGION'S HUB FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES**

Each week in this section, you will find the area's most complete guide of what's open and closed; outdoor activities and events; top picks of places to explore; conditions of hiking and biking trails, fishing holes, water flows, camping spots, parks and more — as well as features from outdoor writers and field experts.

# Safety on the remote slopes

*In a perilous avalanche season across the nation, Central Oregon Avalanche Center helps to keep local backcountry enthusiasts safe and informed*



BY MARK MORICAL  
The Bulletin

It has been a dangerous, deadly winter from avalanches across the West.

As of Thursday, 33 backcountry users had died in avalanches in 2021, according



to the National Avalanche Center. Most of those deaths occurred in Utah, Colorado, Montana and Wyoming, where snowpack has been weak, said Kevin Grove, board member of the Central Oregon Avalanche Center.

Oregon has reported no avalanche deaths this winter, but there have been a fair number of close calls right here in the Central Oregon Cascades, according to Grove. "And every time we hear of those, that's probably just a small fraction," Grove said. "Three weeks ago, when we had 3 to 4 feet of snow over three days, that's when we were seeing a lot of the near misses. We're always monitoring layers down in the snowpack and paying attention to current storms, and what the winds are doing."

The Central Oregon Avalanche Center, or COAC, this winter for the first time is providing an avalanche danger rating four days per week (Fridays through Mondays) for the Central Oregon Cascade Range on its website [coavalanche.org](http://coavalanche.org).

"In general, the last 10 years, the average fatality numbers have remained constant," Grove said. "Which is really remarkable considering the exponential growth of backcountry users. As educators and forecasters, we like to think that all the work that we do is contributing to that. We like to think we're helping keep Central Oregon users safe in the backcountry."

See **Avalanche** / B9

John Sterling/Submitted photo  
**Bend's Kevin Grove stands on a ridge on North Sister during a backcountry ski trip last month.**

## 'Braiding Sweetgrass' author wraps up Nature Night Talk series

BY DAVID JASPER  
The Bulletin

Ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer, the acclaimed author of "Braiding Sweetgrass," will conclude Deschutes Land Trust's 2021 Nature Night Talk series with the lecture "Reciprocity with the Natural World" on March 17.

The New York-based Kimmerer — "mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation" per her

bio — will discuss via Zoom the subject of restoration and reciprocity; that is, the idea that restoring systems to their natural state not only heals the land, but also heals humans' relationship to the land.

That's a topic near and dear to the nonprofit's mission of conserving and protecting land in Central Oregon, for Central Oregonians. Since its 1995 birth, the Land Trust has preserved about 17,500 acres in the region, a mix of prop-

erties it either owns or works with landowners to protect for wildlife, plants and local communities.

In typical years, it holds its Nature Night Talk events at the Tower Theatre, according to Sarah Mowry, Deschutes Land Trust's outreach director.

"Our goal with Nature Nights has always been to help people learn about the nature of Central Oregon, and it's a really broad topic," Mowry said. "We've had folks come

and talk about bees. We've had people talk about river restoration."

Due to the pandemic, this year's talks have all been conducted virtually, "which is interesting and different, and also a great opportunity, because we can get a lot more folks in, and a lot more participation from all over Central Oregon, which is really cool," Mowry said. In January, Susanne Brander presented "A Closer Look at Microplastics," and in February,

Tara Cornelisse weighed in on "The Importance of Insects."

"What's really cool about (Kimmerer), I think, personally, is that she's got this blend of science — like the science, ecologist side that our culture really appreciates, but she's also got traditional ecological knowledge, which is from the indigenous culture, and then blends those two together to approach the natural world in a really different way."

See **Author** / B10



**Kimmerer**