Two cowgirls, steeped in friendship and love for the cowboy way of life, shared their songs and poetry at the High Desert Museum on Thursday, March 21, the first day of spring.

Performing their artwork to a packed house, Jessica Hedges so graciously said, “Thank you for being here. You are keeping our artwork alive. When there is no one to listen to the things we create out in the middle of nowhere inspired by nothing but the horses and the rocks, it is dead, and we no longer exist.”

These women took time out from their worlds to offer their unique spin on ranching life in the west.

Jessica Hedges cantered in from her ranch in the Owyhee region of eastern Oregon. Hedges updated us about her year: her oldest buckaroo is now in kindergarten and Hedges has become a sports mom. In addition to time spent with her family, she continues to cowgirl and to run her business supporting western women who are starting their own businesses. She commented on the uniqueness of being a cowgirl. “It is about how I present myself to my animals and doing the job right.”

Her life continues to be shaped by cattle, horses, gear, and people she feels privileged to work with. She resonated with pride as she openly related a proud mama moment when her young son asked to learn some cowboy poems for a school project.

Trinity Seeley, a close friend of Jessica’s, bantered back and forth with the audience, laughing and sharing stories of growing up in British Columbia in a ranching family where she learned her skills. Seeley’s relaxed cadence of poetry and song moved the crowd.

Seeley recently relocated from Nebraska to Montana. After six months, she is grateful for her new home. Before settling in Montana, she ranched with her husband and three sons in Nebraska, Wyoming, and California. Her optimism and tender songs shown through as she sang about the adventures of her ranch life.
**A February to Remember**

*by Imelda A. Cerillo, Newsletter Writer*

“*A cheer for the snow—the drifting snow!*  
*Smother and purer than beauty’s brow!*  
*The creature of thought scarce likes to tread*  
*On the delicate carpet so richly spread.*  
*With feathery wreaths the forest is bound,*  
*And the hills are with glittering diadems crown’d;*  
*Tis the fairest scene we can have below.*  
*Sing, welcome, then, to the drifting snow!***

(Eliza Cook, *Snow*)

Where were you when February’s historic snowstorm struck Central Oregon in 2019? The amount of snow broke previous records set in 1901 and 1993, The National Weather Service reported that the storm dumped 48 inches in La Pine, 30 in Redmond, 27.5 in Sisters and 25 in some areas in Bend. Flights were grounded at Redmond Airport, schools and offices were closed, garbage collection delayed, and the kings of the road were the snow plows.

I was snowed-in in Sisters amid the pine trees covered with white velvet, randomly glistening as the sun shyly peeked through heavy clouds now and then. I watched the news that day, noting the hysteria slowly building up in the reporter’s voice and in my own mind. However, as my eyes feasted on the beautiful, unique wonder happening outside my window, I found serenity instead of fear. Mother Nature intervened and even for just a moment, provided relief from the otherwise frustrating daily political fallouts. That February day was, in fact, a beautiful day!

Between gusts of snowfall and flurries, the inner child in me hazarded going out in flip-flops, dressed only in pajamas, to feel the purity of my surroundings. I breathed the cold and fresh air around me, tasted the freshly falling snow, and brushed the soft ermine mantle with my bare fingers. I heard, “*The sounds of winter too, sunshine upon the mountains – many a distant strain...*” (Walt Whitman, *Sounds of the Winter*)

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**Cowgirl Poetry & Music**—continued

**Springtime in the Sandhills of Nebraska**

*by Trinity Seeley*

The mist’s hangin’ over the meadow  
As we trot through the morning dew  
Spring calves are bawlin’  
As they cry to their mommas  
It rings back to me and to you

Like the green of the cool season grasses  
Yucca, greasewood and cactus  
I need one more day  
To live this way  
On a cowboy’s wage.

Each year these magnificent cowgirl poets grace the halls of the Museum. They uplift spirits and ground listeners in a way of life that still vibrates strongly in the west. If you are interested in purchasing Seeley’s music, check out her website at [www.trinityseeley.com](http://www.trinityseeley.com). To view Hedge’s poetry, visit [www.cowboypoetry.com/jessicahedges](http://www.cowboypoetry.com/jessicahedges).

Photos by Todd Cary
February to Remember—continued

This wonderful palette and landscape was frozen for several days, as if time refused to let go of a dream. I searched hard for some Van Gogh in me, alas, I found none. Thank God for the iPad!

Then came the sun and Act II of Mother Nature’s belated Christmas gift unfolded before my very eyes: icicles and the bluest of blue skies amid the still frozen trees and roads, denizens of the woods foraging, winter birds aflight, yet another moment to seize! Shoveling a path in the 25-inch snow pile in our backyard turned into a playful adventure with our dogs frolicking in the snow.

I shall remember February 2019 as a dreamlike experience in a frozen world that exists only in a Disney movie, and I became a child again. Carpe diem!

Who’s afraid of being snowed-in in Sisters? Definitely not me!

Photos by Imelda A. Cerillo, Abbott Schindler, Siobhan Sullivan, & Valerie Troyer (from video by Cody Rheault)
Introducing Gail Hodge, Director of Events
by Dave Gilbert, Newsletter Writer

Gail Hodge is on the phone. She’s planning a wedding to be held at The Miller Ranch in the High Desert Museum. There’s talk about tea in addition to coffee, the kind of cups, flower arrangements, etc. It’s all part of her work as the Museum’s Manager of Events, a job she’s held since July 2017.

Weddings? At the Museum? “Yes,” she says, “we host about six a year.”

Gail’s brown hair falls past her shoulders and her huge smile lightens her face.

Gail was born in 1984 to Susie and Joe Black, the eldest of five children. Their home was at Lake Arrowhead, a mountain town in Southern California. “I loved it,” Gail says. “It was a community-oriented small town.”

Joe owned a body shop and “could do anything with his hands.” He was also “outdoorsy” and Gail caught the bug.

“I’m like my father,” she says, “I got my creative side from him, and I like to be in the woods.”

The family lived in Lake Arrowhead until Gail finished junior high school, and then moved to Redlands where she completed high school. She attended San Bernardino Valley College, where, at 18, she earned an Associate of Arts degree. She transferred to California State/ San Bernardino, earning her tuition and expenses as a waitress and bartender.

“I learned that I had a talent for multi-tasking and attention to detail through working in the service industry,” she says.

At 23, she took a road trip to Tacoma, passing through Bend.

“I fell in love with Bend,” she says, and felt like she needed a change. A huge smile warms her face. Two months later, she moved here. Gail fell back on her talent as a bartender, working at golf courses, then at Mount Bachelor for seven seasons. She also attended OSU-Cascades, earning a degree in Human Development and Family Sciences. Gail planned to continue toward a Master’s in Social Work.

During an internship at a juvenile detention facility, she met a 14-year-old girl, and, to continue their relationship, they joined Big Brothers-Big Sisters. Eventually, her involvement led to a job as an enrollment specialist. Then her plans took another turn.

The parent company of Big-Brothers-Big Sisters is J Bar J Youth Services, which needed a fundraiser. That fit Gail’s talents and interests to perfection. It was while working at J Bar J, that Gail’s life took yet another dramatic turn.

One of J Bar J’s biggest fundraisers is the annual High Desert Classic horse show that draws hundreds of competitors from all over the west. “The show was booming,” Gail says.

She was building a round pen for exercising horses and had to remove pebbles from the sand. Not knowing how to do that, she called Hooker Creek. Their suggestion was to call Alex Hodge Construction, whose specialty is “moving dirt all around Central Oregon.” Hodge agreed to come out to see the project.

“I assumed that he was some old guy,” Gail says, “you know, a guy owning his own business.”

When the company truck drove up to J-Bar-J, it parked in the wrong place, so Gail, in high heels and a dress, began walking across the lawn to greet him.

“That’s when the sprinklers came on,” she says, laughing at the memory. She started running, not very efficiently, dodging the spray as best she could.

Alex Hodge, who also expected someone older because of the name Gail, watched her run through the sprinklers. Later, he said “that’s when the music started playing in my head.”

Hodge ended up doing thousands of dollars’ worth of work, writing it off as a non-profit donation.

In January 2014a Gail and Alex were married on the very spot he had parked. “I cried my vows,” Gail says.

Both Gail and Alex love the outdoors and traveling. She ticks off past trips: Mexico, Iceland, Belize, France, Spain, Italy…. And they have a “date night” every week since that first meeting.

In July 2017, Gail came to work at the High Desert Museum, as events manager.

The birth of a son, Harrison Alexander Hodge, last September doesn’t slow them down. A calendar with photos of her baby hangs above her desk.

Her work at the Museum is to plan all events on and off Museum grounds: holiday parties, talks, and, of course, weddings. She has eight people helping her and “amazing volunteers who will do anything.”
High Desert Museum Area Updates from March 2019
by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

Silver Sage Gift Store—The store is featuring several bee-related products including honey soap, a plush bee toy, a Mason bee house, a t-shirt, and a book about beehives. A colorful sleeping mask is also available.

Living History - There will be a workshop in the Spirit of the West area on April 4 from 9:00 am—12:00 pm. The team is looking forward to more outdoor activities, such as crosscut sawing, as the weather warms.

Desertarium - Training is going well with the snakes and tortoises. Kelsey Yates had a live demonstration of training with one of the tortoises during the VAC meeting. Training the bearded dragon has been more challenging. The young rattlesnake appears to be happy. However, he occasionally rattles his tail if visitors get too close.

Naturalists – One volunteer is taking a break but two others are returning to cover Nature Walks on Saturdays. There will be two Nature Walks a day through Spring Break. The panels of the display table will be flipped to show spring and summer images in late March.

Birds of Prey - They are focused on training the birds for the Sky Hunters demonstrations that take place March 23-30. The demonstrations will occur twice a day and they’ll feature four to five birds.

Admissions/Greeters – Tickets for the Sky Hunter demonstrations can be purchased online for the day of the event. More than 1,000 people/day visited the Museum during Spring Break in past years. A new postcard features a photo of an owl that’s saying “Who’s new in the neighborhood?” This card was sent out to 2,400 new households in the Bend area. The card gives free admission to the Museum for two adults and three kids. It also gives a free month on new memberships.

Collections – The team is happy to have a new Collections Manager starting May 1. They are also glad to be back after time away from the Museum due to snow. The team is working on repackaging some of the clothing in the Museum’s collection, a process that has to be undertaken every five to six years. The ghost of John Maloney has been reminding Collections to take care of the mud wagon so they have been busy making it nice and clean.

Kudos Korner
by Siobhan Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

Several staff and volunteers were thanked for their work in March. The Newsletter Team was thanked for a great issue last month. It included articles on a history event about making & mending in the 19th century: an art exhibit by Native American artist, Rick Bartow; a nature-related fact sheet on white sturgeon; a hike through the colorful Blue Basin; and a profile of our Communication Director. Thad Grudzien was thanked for giving “absolutely fabulous” fish talks. Brian Hoover was thanked for helping to fix the sound system just in time for Thad’s talk. Kudos to all of you!

The Beauty of Wild Things: Drawings by April Coppini

The new exhibit of wildlife art by April Copinni just opened at the Museum. It runs through June 23, 2019. This Portland-based artist is well-known for her gestural charcoal drawings of wildlife of the Pacific Northwest. Photo by Todd Cary

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>April</th>
<th>May—Save the Date!</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Summer Hours Begin. 9:00 am—5:00 pm.</td>
<td>4 Museum Workshop: Oregon Spotted Frog Stewardship Adventure. 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. $10, Members receive 20% discount. RSVP.</td>
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<td>7 Exhibit Closing: Rick Bartow: Things You Know But Cannot Explain.</td>
<td>10 Exhibit opening: Kids Curate.</td>
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<td>9 Off-site Event: Natural History Pub: Water Management by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation 7:00 pm (doors open at 5:30 pm). Free. At McMenamins, 700 NW Bond St., Bend. RSVP.</td>
<td>11 Off-site Event: Birds Beyond Borders: A Migratory Bird Day Event. 9:00 am — 1:00 pm. At Tumalo State Park, 64170 O.B. Riley Road, Bend. Free, $5 state park fee per vehicle.</td>
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<td>13 Museum Event: Brooks Resources 50th Anniversary Community Appreciation Day. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Free admission.</td>
<td>11 Off-site Event: Metolius River Plein Air Landscape Drawing Field Trip. 10:00 am — 1:00 pm. $50, Members receive 20% discount. RSVP.</td>
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<td>20 Thorn Hollow String Band. 11:00 am—2:00 pm.</td>
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<td>27 Museum Workshop: Wildlife Conservation Photography. 8:00 am - 2:00 pm. $150, Members receive 20% discount. Registration and pre-payment required.</td>
<td>14 Off-site Event: Natural History Pub: Forest Ecology and Management in Central Oregon. 7:00 pm (doors open at 5:30 pm). Free. At McMenamins, 700 NW Bond St., Bend. RSVP.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Museum Workshop: Oregon Spotted Frog Stewardship Adventure. 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. $10, Members receive 20% discount. RSVP.</td>
<td>15 Senior Day. Free admission for everyone 65 and older.</td>
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<td>27 Exhibit Opening: Desert Reflections: Water Shapes the West. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm.</td>
<td>18 Off-site Event: Swainson’s and Squirrels. 7:00 am — 2:00 pm. $50, Members receive 20% discount. Registration and pre-payment required.</td>
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To RSVP: [www.highdesertmuseum.org/rsvp](http://www.highdesertmuseum.org/rsvp)

or call 541-382-4754.

To pre-register: [www.highdesertmuseum.org/program](http://www.highdesertmuseum.org/program)