

## Owyhee-Malheur Basin

### Description

The Owyhee and Malheur basins lie in the remote and sparsely populated southeastern corner of Oregon. Together, their land area comprises nearly 12% of the state's total area. Most of the region is high desert, with elevations between 3,000 and 6,000 feet, but the middle Owyhee and upper Malheur drainages are rough and incised by deep canyons.

The dominant vegetation type is sagebrush steppe. Exposed volcanic ash in the Owyhee uplands ecoregion has yielded unique soils and related endemic plant species. Big sagebrush, riparian habitats (including riparian woodlands, riparian shrub-thickets, and native riparian meadows), wetlands, salt desert scrub, mountain mahogany and aspen woodlands all have been identified as important in the Owyhee-Malheur basin.

The Malheur River rises in the Strawberry Mountains (a southern spur of the Blues); the Owyhee rises in northern Nevada. Both are tributary to the Snake. There are no anadromous fish in these drainages. Bull trout, found in the Malheur drainage, are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Parts of the mainstem of the South Fork of the Owyhee, as well as parts of the mainstem Owyhee, are designated as state scenic waterways.

All priority ecological systems in the Owyhee-Malheur Basin are wetland or riparian systems. The relatively small number of systems and species identified as priorities reflects the large amount of publicly owned land in this basin.

### Priority Ecological Systems

Alkaline wetland  
Aquatic bed  
Foothill and lower montane riparian woodland  
Freshwater emergent marsh  
Lowland riparian forest and shrubland  
Subalpine or montane wet meadow

### Rare or At-Risk Plant Communities

Arroyo willow - creek dogwood  
Basin big sagebrush / basin wildrye  
Basin wildrye bottomlands  
Black cottonwood - white alder  
Black cottonwood / coyote willow  
Black cottonwood / Pacific willow riparian  
Black hawthorn - common snowberry  
California oatgrass - Idaho fescue  
Chokecherry

Basin Ecological Priorities  
September 14, 2004

Coyote willow - Pacific willow  
Curlleaf mountain mahogany / mountain snowberry  
Curlleaf mountain mahogany / pinegrass  
Inland shrub dunes  
Mockorange  
Mountain alder - western birch  
Sand dropseed  
Western birch - mockorange  
White alder / chokecherry  
White alder / hackberry  
White alder / mockorange  
White alder / water birch  
White alder / woods rose  
Wyoming big sagebrush - squawapple / Idaho fescue  
Wyoming big sagebrush / needle-and-thread

Owyhee-Malheur – Priority Species

<i>Fish</i>	<i>Birds</i>	<i>Mammals</i>	<i>Amphibians and Reptiles</i>	<i>Invertebrates</i>	<i>Plants</i>
No Priority Fish in this Basin	American Avocet Ferruginous Hawk (nest sites only) Grasshopper Sparrow Long-Billed Curlew Swainson's Hawk (nest sites only) Wilson's Phalarope Yellow-Breasted Chat	Pallid Bat Pygmy Rabbit Townsend's Big-Eared Bat Western Small-Footed Bat	Columbia Spotted Frog Northern Leopard Frog Western Ground Snake Woodhouse's Toad	<i>Stygobromus hubbsi</i> (Malheur Cave Amphipod)	<i>Amsinckia carinata</i> (Malheur Valley Fiddleneck) <i>Astragalus mulfordiae</i> (Mulford's Milk-Vetch) <i>Collomia renacta</i> (Barren Valley Collomia) <i>Stanleya confertiflora</i> (Biennial Stanleya) <i>Thelypodium howellii</i> ssp. <i>spectabilis</i> (Howell's Spectacular Thelypody)