



THINK WILD

Think Wild

2026 Rural Wildlife Education

Grant Report

Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society

August 14, 2026

This year, with support from the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Think Wild provided free, science-based wildlife education to rural, Indigenous, and underserved youth across Central Oregon in 2026. Programs included weekly after-school education at Warm Springs K-8 Academy and the Jefferson County Community Learning Center in Madras, monthly programs at Barnes Butte Elementary in Prineville and Sisters Elementary, programming in La Pine, and a free week of Wildlife Wonders summer camp for Jefferson County youth. Through recurring lessons and hands-on activities, students explored native wildlife, habitat, ecological relationships, human-wildlife coexistence, and conservation while building meaningful connections with wildlife professionals and the natural world.

ORTWS's \$500 grant helped cover the practical costs of bringing these programs directly to rural communities, including educator mileage and supplies such as owl pellets, nest box lumber and hardware, native plants and seeds, activity and demonstration materials, and software used to develop and present educational programming. Students participated in activities ranging from owl pellet investigations and wildlife adaptations to nest box building, native gardening, and habitat restoration. These funds were especially valuable because travel is one of the largest costs of Think Wild's rural education work, with educators traveling approximately 13,000 miles annually, and more than 70% of rural education programming offered at no cost. ORTWS support helped ensure that geographic distance and limited school resources did not prevent Central Oregon students from accessing engaging, hands-on wildlife education.

