



Sage Spirit: The American West at a Crossroads

Dave Showalter

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America's Sagebrush Sea is one of its most extensive natural landscapes, yet this sensitive ecosystem is unprotected and being fragmented by development .

Located on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains and stretching from Greater Yellowstone to Telluride, Colorado, the region known as the Sagebrush Sea is a unique wildlife habitat with an abundance of natural resources. For this reason it is treasured by conservationists, private land owners, and energy developers alike.

In the eyes of organizations such as Audubon and the World Wildlife Fund, the loss of this habitat would be catastrophic for important species like the Greater and Gunnison's Sage-grouse. Greater Sage-grouse were once found across thirteen western states, but due to energy development and conversion of land for agriculture, they now inhabit only half of their historic range.

In addition, the gradual disappearance of sagebrush habitat in the West is having a profound effect on other wildlife species such as Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, pygmy rabbit, mule deer, pronghorn, and more. Sage Spirit features each of these species and the threats they face. Photographer and writer Dave Showalter has documented the seasonal changes, animal behaviors, and migrations within the Sagebrush Sea. He is working with conservation leaders, government agencies, Native communities, and private landowners to tell the complete story of the ecosystem and the way humans are using the landscape.

Through images and essays, Sage Spirit explains why responsible management of this fragile habitat is so vital.

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