

Getting to steelhead poses a challenge

By Tim Trainor
Wallowa County Chieftain

A snowy winter combined with more than a week of rain and warm weather have blown out local rivers just when steelhead fishing should be at its peak.

Before area waters rose sharply, the Wallowa River had been hitting full swing for steelhead, according to the Or-

egon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Beadhead nymphs tied below a jig or bait were doing a number on steelhead, trout and whitefish.

But the steady rise in temperature and precipitation kept most anglers away and kept Wallowa River fish pinned down trying to stay out of the main current.

That's also the case for the Grande Ronde River, which is

best for fishing when flows dip below 5,000 cubic feet per second. But on Monday, the river gauge at Troy measured water passing at more than 20,000 cubic feet per second, and that was on the way down from the weekend high near 30,000 cfs.

Mid-March is usually the time steelhead reach the Imnaha River in significant numbers, but good fishing will have to wait there as well until

high water comes back down.

Much of that high water is covering what is a below-expectations run, according to ODFW. Warm water last summer, when most fish were traveling back to the ocean, reduced the numbers of one-salt fish. But the two-salts have done fairly well, so while numbers are below expectations for quantity, what fish are there are of larger than average size.

Harvest on each of these rivers is limited to three hatchery steelhead per day and must be recorded on the combined angling tag. A Columbia River Basin endorsement is also required. Wild fish must be released.

But the high rivers don't mean that Wallowa County anglers are out of luck.

And although it is less sporting, a good option for har-

vesting a meal is at Marr Pond in downtown Enterprise.

Workers at the Wallowa Fish Hatchery placed 100 steelhead caught in their weirs into Marr. Those fish can be caught from the bank and no salmon or steelhead endorsement is required, nor must it be recorded on the combined angling tag. The limit, however, is one fish larger than 20 inches per day.



Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

ODFW has set the 2017 free fishing weekends.

ODFW announces free fishing days for 2017

Anglers and would-be anglers can enjoy a weekend of free fishing April 22-23.

On these two days, Oregonians and visitors can fish, crab and clam for free anywhere in Oregon without a license, tag or endorsement.

This free fishing weekend, as well as to two other free fishing holidays Nov. 25-26 and Dec. 31-Jan. 1, 2018 — is in addition to the traditional free fishing

weekend on June 3-4.

"April 22 is also Earth Day, and what better way for Oregonians to get outside and celebrate the natural world than by taking family and friends out for a day of fishing," said Mike Gauvin, ODFW recreational fishing manager.

While licenses are waived during free fishing days, all other regulations still apply.

Chance for youth to win guided turkey hunt on private ranch

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is offering 10 hunters younger than 17 the chance to win a guided turkey hunt on a private ranch in Jackson County during the spring 2017 turkey season.

Ten hunts will be raffled off on March 31. Winners will receive one day of turkey hunting on the C2 Ranch in Jackson County, accompanied by a guide who will help locate wild turkeys.

A parent or other family member may also accompany the youth on the hunt.

"The ranch has a lot of oak savannah and brushy areas, which makes for good wild turkey habitat," says ODFW wildlife biologist Vince Oredson.

Spring turkey season runs April 15-May 31 statewide, and youth hunters also get their own two-day season April 8-9.

Hunt applications are available online at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/hunting/index.asp>

Applications must be re-



Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Oregon youth hunters can apply to win a guided turkey hunt in Southern Oregon.

ceived at the Central Point ODFW office by 5 p.m., March 31, and may be submitted by mail, in person, or by emailing Vince.J.Oredson@state.or.us

There is no cost to enter the raffle, though winners

are still responsible for purchasing a hunting license and turkey tag before hunting. Winners will be notified on April 3.

Youth without hunter education certification may apply and hunt under the

Mentored Youth Hunter program by visiting http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/mentored_youth/index.asp, but only during the regular spring turkey season (April 15-May 31), not the two-day youth season.

SPRING

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Coach Johnson is originally from southern Oregon, but has called Wallowa County home for the last 37 years. Baseball is more than a hobby for him.

His grandfather played professionally while a grandmother played "League of Their Own" ball in the 1940s.

"I was pitching instructor at Joseph for five years, and I coached Babe Ruth in Wallowa for 17 years and helped out in little league whenever

I could," the baseball veteran said.

Despite the lack of spring-like weather, Johnson is optimistic about the upcoming season.

"We've got a pretty good group of core ballplayers," he said. "We haven't been outside enough to get our pitchers working or our defense going or our hitting. We've

been cramped up inside different gyms. We'd get started and they'd tell us we couldn't practice there, and we had to go someplace else. It was a constant hassle to get anything done."

Johnson longs for the days, years ago, when baseball was king in the county.

"I had over 30 kids out," he said. "We had a varsity team,

an A team and a B team and a junior varsity, and they all had schedules. We had good teams and good ballplayers. A lot of kids went on to play college ball."

For the moment, the coach is focusing on drilling fundamentals into his team.

"Over the years, we're lacking in fundamentals. That's the key to good baseball. Any team without fundamentals won't do good," he said. The Eagles strong points are speed and good arms. Not just on the field, but the mound

as well. Johnson said that hitting was questionable because gym hitting pales in comparison to hitting "out in the show, where you've got more light and have perspective on the whole thing." The following day saw the Eagles outfit the Pilot Rock Rockets 17 hits to 10 in an afternoon twinbill.

Coach Johnson believes that aggression in all aspects of the game will be key to the team's success this year. Johnson expects all his players to carry that trait if they expect to spend time on the field.

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Student of the Week

Malichi Roberts is the son of Corri and Willy Roberts and is a freshman at Joseph Charter School. He is actively involved in FCCLA, FFA, and the Class of 2020 Vice-President. He is also an integral part of our band program. Malichi plays basketball and baseball. Malichi is a student who makes our school a better place. The staff and administration would like to congratulate Malichi for being an outstanding student and citizen.

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