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Beginning Saturday

The pre-dawn fishing exodus



Knots are tied, tackle readied and rain gear patched. The alarm is set for early opening day.

It's a tradition — a ritual. An event comparable to the opening season of baseball doubleheaders in the East.

Trout season has begun.

The pre-dawn evacuation from Eugene will begin Saturday morning as fishermen get themselves in place for the opening of the 1981 trout season.

It's Oregon's own Indy 500 as fishermen race their vehicles to their favorite hole on the McKenzie of Willamette Middle Fork — Oregon's largest trout rendezvous.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reports that the McKenzie River is the most heavily stocked and heavily fished river in the state.

Like every year, the stocking process begins this week to benefit fishermen on opening day.

When it all comes together, drift boats and bank anglers rub shoulders as the morning begins. It bears the resemblance of a large-scale canoe race.

But is a trout worth it? Is it worth the pain of leaving the Friday night hoe-down early, grabbing a couple hours sleep, finding a fishing spot in the rain and trying to weaken the odds of catching a rainbow or a cutthroat?

To borrow an old cliché, the early bird catches the worm — and often the trout.

Yet that's only one strategy. For the liberal nine-to-five college student/angler there are alternatives.

"Actually, opening day might be better suited for the middle of May," says Bob Hooten, staff biologist for the state game commission in Springfield.

"When the weather gets warmer, and the river temperature rises, the fish are

more active — more eager to feed.

"The weather is more pleasant and the numbers of fishermen decline," Hooten says. "It's often a better time to go."

The commission, which raises trout at the nearby Leaburg fish hatchery, does not limit its stock to just a few drifts along the local rivers. The county reservoirs such as Cougar or Cottage Grove and the high lakes in the Cascades are injected with trout.

One of the most common reasons for being reluctant to spend time trout fishing is fear of not knowing how it's done.

Like anything, casting, baiting, hooking and patience must all be learned. Anyone hampered by this fear is shortchanging the advantage of living near some of the hottest trout spots in the entire Northwest.

The process is simple, the equipment inexpensive. And the trout season, lasting from this weekend until the end of October, allows more than enough time to learn the ropes.

Following a few simple steps can calm the anxiety and instill the sense of challenge that calls fishermen yearly.

Buying equipment is comparable to purchasing shoes — the consumer buys what's comfortable. Fishing rods vary in length and should feel comfortable in the angler's hands. Most outdoor stores have trained help that can aid anyone in choosing the proper rod and reel.

Some packages begin as low as \$20, but anglers should avoid rigs that are so inexpensive that they are poorly manufactured. If a rod malfunctions on the first cast, the neophyte fisherman is discouraged from the outset. Fishermen must be cautious in the store and make their first investment pay off.

Few shops in the area offer rental poles because of breakage problems. So if you don't want to buy one, the next best

thing to do is borrow a pole from a buddy.

Like most outdoor sports in the state, licenses are required during trout season.

Resident anglers can purchase their season license for \$9, while non-residents can purchase an out-of-state license for \$25.

For fishermen only planning at a few days at the lakes or streams, lower-priced temporary licenses are available.

The most prominent guide to the local steams in found in the 1981 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations booklet.

The 56-page handbook, a must for anglers and free at local outdoor stores, lists the stocked waters in the state.

The booklet informs anglers of state regulations, outlines equipment limitations, lists fish limits and gives a detailed description of state zones.

The booklet covers both fresh and salt water fishing regulations as well as state guidelines for shellfish. (For more information, see story below).

Bait is also a major concern for anglers. Information on flies, worms, eggs, lures and other types of gigs can be obtained in local angling shops.

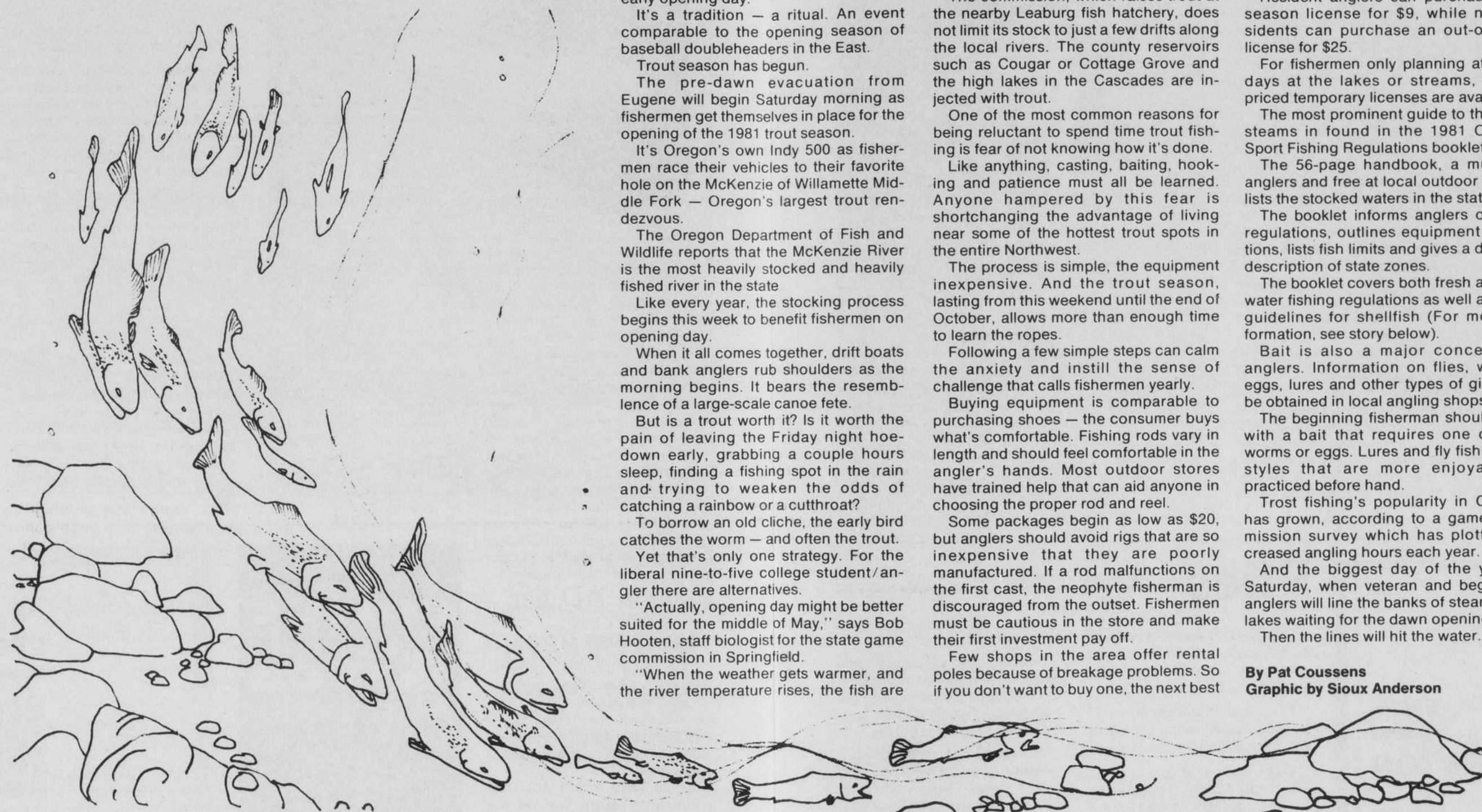
The beginning fisherman should start with a bait that requires one cast — worms or eggs. Lures and fly fishing are styles that are more enjoyable if practiced before hand.

Trout fishing's popularity in Oregon has grown, according to a game commission survey which has plotted increased angling hours each year.

And the biggest day of the year is Saturday, when veteran and beginning anglers will line the banks of steams and lakes waiting for the dawn opening.

Then the lines will hit the water.

By Pat Coussens
Graphic by Sioux Anderson



Laws protect game fish for future state anglers

Before setting the first hook in the water, anglers should be familiar with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's regulations and suggestions.

Not only will it prevent an unwanted citation, but the laws protect Oregon's game fish from overfishing and disappearance from state waters.

First, every angler of age 14 or over must obtain a valid angling license, obtainable for \$9 at any fishing or sporting goods supplier.

And while there, anglers should obtain a copy of the department's 1981 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations booklet — free at outdoor stores — which details the state's regulations.

Next, the angler must be familiar with rules governing the size and number of trout that can be taken in one day. No matter how many places the angler tries only 10 trout can be removed from any lake or stream, river or reservoir in a day.

At reservoirs, lakes and ponds (except beaver ponds), each trout must be at least six

inches long and not more than five of the trout can be over 12 inches in length. Only two may be 20 inches or longer. During seven consecutive days not more than 10 fish may be 12 inches or longer and only four 20 inches or longer.

In streams, anglers may bag five trout six inches or over, with no more than two over 20 inches.

In streams and bays, the length of the trout climbs to eight inches with the same five-and-two trout limits.

Lane County anglers should familiarize themselves with the regulations for zones 1, 2 and 3 in the booklet, since each of the three areas is partially situated in the county.

The cities of Eugene and Springfield are in Zone 2, which, like the other zones has its own regulations.

Cottage Grove, Dexter, Dorena and Fern Ridge reservoirs, along with Creswell Ponds and Delta Ponds, are open for angling the entire year.



The rest of the county lakes and streams, including the Willamette and McKenzie rivers will be open from next Saturday through October 31.

Fishermen should be aware that portions of the county's two major rivers are closed at all times.

McKenzie River — Closed to the taking of trout 14 inches or longer in the mainstream or its tributaries up to the Trail Bridge Dam, and in the South Fork up to Cougar Dam. Closed to all angling in Leaburg Powerhouse Tailrace. Closed to angling in the Waltherville Canal Powerhouse Tailrace from the salmon rack downstream to the McKenzie River, including the bypass canal from the salmon rack to the McKenzie River.

Willamette River, Middle Fork — Angling from Dexter Dam downstream about ½-mile downstream to powerline crossing is permitted from the south shore only. Only one single-point hook ½-inch or smaller may be used (multiple hook points prohibited) and all weights (if not part of the conventional lure) must be attached above the hook.

Hooks are measured from the point of the hook directly across to the body of the hook.

No more than three hooks may be used while angling.

Live, dead or preserved fish or fish parts may not be used as bait in angling except eggs of steelhead or salmon. Live or dead non-game marine fish may be used in the Ocean zone or Zone 1.

Dead fish may be used in the mainstream and flood plain lakes, sloughs and slack-water areas of the Willamette.

Anglers should also know how to release under- or over-size fish unharmed.

The use of barbless hooks aids in releasing fish. Before touching any fish an angler's hands should be wet and the fish must be handled gently, never squeezed or touched on the gills.

If the hook cannot be easily removed, cut the leader and leave it in place. If the fish shows signs of exhaustion hold it in a swimming position and move it back and forth until it swims.

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