

# Fall, winter great time to visit Marion Lake area



**INTO THE OUTDOORS**  
BY JAYSON JACOBY

**M**arion Lake, located just inside the western boundary of the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness Area, is the largest back-country lake in Oregon not accessible by car. Dur-

ing July and August, though, the 340-acre lake often hosts hundreds of visitors on sunny weekends, and at times the noise and crowds can be as bad as at any roadside campground.

That's why fall and winter are the best times to visit this lake, when the crowds are gone and fall colors and pristine snow can be enjoyed. Usually by this time of the year, the trip is made more difficult because

the road to the trailhead is at least partially snowed in, turning a relatively easy 2.5 mile walk into a seven- or eight-mile trek.

But this year the hiker, rather than the cross-country skier or snow-shoer, is in luck, because the recent spell of warm rain has melted the early snow and the trailhead can be reached by car.

To get to the Marion Lake

trail, take Highway 126 east of Eugene-Springfield to Santiam Junction north of Clear Lake. Turn left at the junction, following signs to Detroit and Salem. At Marion Forks, a small community 15 miles from the junction, turn right at the road immediately past the highway bridge over Marion Creek.

Follow this road, which is paved for the first mile or so, past numerous summer cabins

on the right side. Four miles of good gravel, which can be driven in cars without four-wheel drive, then leads to the well-marked trailhead, which is at the end of the road where a large parking area can accommodate dozens of cars.

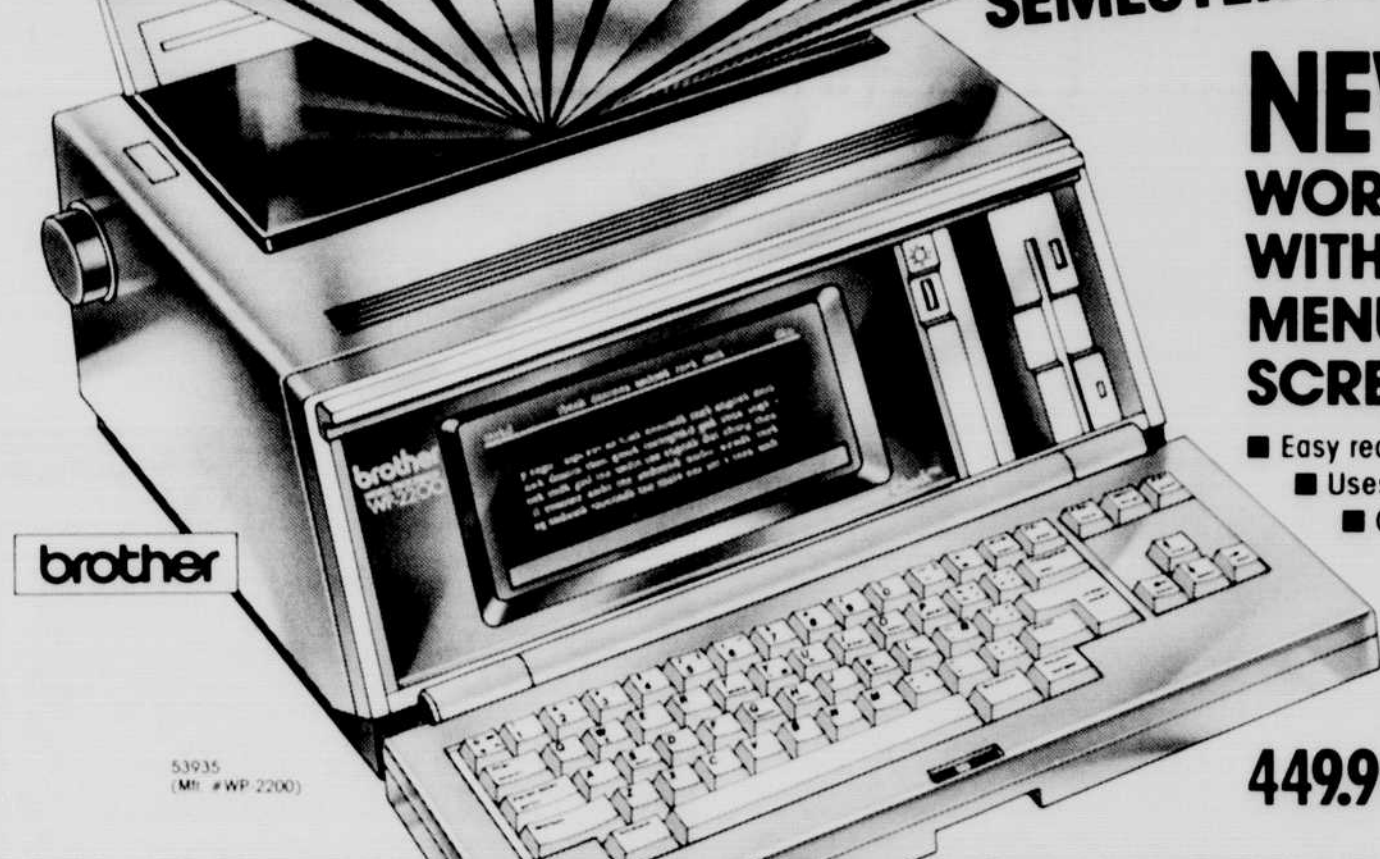
The wide, well-graded trail leads southeast through huge Douglas Fir trees, following the

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