

SPORTS

Warm winter weather creating hiker heaven

INTO THE OUTDOORS
BY JAYSON JACOBY

This has just been one of those winters.

Here it is the middle of February, and there is no snow to be found below about 3,500 feet. Not particularly good news for cross-country ski enthusiasts whose favorite trails are at lower elevations, albeit elevations that usually have their maximum snow base right about now.

But what a winter this has been for hikers. I can't remember a year when so many trails have been snow-free for so much of the season.

The warm weather has opened up a multitude of unusual opportunities for hiking enthusiasts who usually have to wait until May or June to start visiting their favorite trails.

The meager snow conditions offer other benefits as well, such as keeping forest roads open along with the trails. If you've got half a day or so, the trip to Stahlman Point combined with a drive along Blowout and Straight Creeks is worth the time.

First drive to the Stahlman Point trailhead. Take Highway 22 east of Salem to the Blowout Creek road, which leads southwest (right side of highway) from a point midway between the small towns of Detroit and Idanha.

Drive on this paved road almost four miles, passing numerous summer cabins on the left side and Hoover campground on the shore of Detroit Lake, to the trailhead sign on the left side of the road.

The trail, which is a little more than two miles long, leads into the trees at the edge of a small parking area just off the main road. The wide, well-graded path winds through dense forest, climbing gradually along the side of a ridge.

At about the one-mile point the forest changes from mostly second-growth Douglas Fir to old-growth fir and cedar trees. This classic ancient forest is filled with numerous downed logs, and the ground is carpeted with moss and ferns.

The trail crosses a few small creeks along the way and climbs at a moderate grade, still following the side of a steep ridge. Just before reaching a saddle about a quarter mile from the top, the trail passes through the middle of a large field of rhododendron plants, which bloom bright red in May or June.

There's a good resting point just after the rhododendron grove. The trail makes a sharp turn to the left, passing right by huge cedar trees. Vandals have defaced the tree by carving initials into it — interestingly one did his carving way back in 1949.

From this point the trail climbs a bit more steeply, switchbacking twice before reaching another saddle 100 feet below Stahlman Point's summit viewpoint. The first views down to Detroit Lake and Piety Knob, a small, densely forested island, are along this stretch.

The view from the top is expansive, dominated by Mt. Jefferson to the northeast and flat-topped Coffin Mountain to the east. The foundation posts of the old fire-lookout remain. It's easy to see why this spot was chosen, as the flat summit — which undoubtedly was blasted out of the rock there — is only about 20 X 20 feet. Small children should be watched carefully, as there are sheer drop-offs of more than 100 feet to the north and east.

Detroit and Idanha, as well as cars traveling along Highway 22, can be seen, and the gurgling sound of the North Santiam River is quite loud, even from this point more than 1,400 feet above the water.

After descending back to the trailhead, continue along the paved Blowout Creek road along the lake. This two-lane road is well-marked, but it isn't plowed. Follow the signs to Highway 22, which is about 21 miles from the trailhead. There is a five-mile stretch of gravel, but it isn't rough and is passable to regular passenger cars.

The road travels past steep rock cliffs, two small but impressive waterfalls at the Lost Creek bridge, and skirts the deep canyons of Lost and Kay Creeks. The gravel turns back to pavement again at a five-way junction and follows Straight Creek to the highway about three miles south of Marion Forks, or about 15 miles from the Blowout Creek junction.

Weather conditions being what they are, there is still the possibility of heavy snowfall along both the trail and the road. But this is an enjoyable trip even if part of the road or trail is snowed in. Rockfall can also block the loop road at times, so inquire about current road conditions at the Detroit Ranger Station along Highway 22.

Jayson Jacoby is a sports reporter for the Emerald.



The North Santiam River can be seen through the trees from the former lookout site at the top of the Stahlman Point trailhead.

Oscar the Freshman

Neal Skorpen



Weasel's World

Kraig Norris



R.I.M. RESULTS

Basketball
Season League
Feb. 13
ATO '1' d. Theta Chi '1' 58-46/M1
Team Phi d. Yapple Dapple 65-60/M1
ATO '2A' d. ATO '2B' 61-53/M2
Sigma Chi '1' d. Tauers 95-47/M2
Rim Job d. Sigma Chi '3' 49-44/M2
Pull My Finger d. TKE-Party Fouls 48-14/M3
Chumps d. Criminal Apathy 30-24/M3
Sensitive Artists d. Team Dougy 49-37/M3
Feb. 14
Phi Psi 'B1' d. The Bricksters 64-46/M2
Da Busk d. Outdoor Pursuers 56-41/M2
Tree's Team d. Phi Psi 'B2' 49-42/M2
Beta Hoops d. Team Turbo 52-28/M3
Hackin' Brothers d. Beta X 41-40/M3
Feb. 15
Beta '1' d. Sigma Nu 68-47/M2

Earth, Wind and Fire d. Phi B — Jorliu/M2
Dus Dedos d. Dallas 54-41/M2
Pike '2' d. Air Jesus 58-51/M2
Feb. 17
Second to None d. Bad Omen 59-57/M1
SAE d. Kut & Phil 49-38/M1
Chase Us d. Green Axe — Jorliu/M2
The Bad Men d. All-Pau 55-37/M2
In-a-Out d. Young Hall Borderrun 77-48/M2
Ball Handlers d. See Ya 55-54/M2
Phi '2' d. Chaos — Jorliu/M2
Urine Trouble d. Beard 113-26/M2
Sig Ep '1' d. Hovering Llamas 68-38/M2
Kappa Sigma IIA d. Theta Chi '4' 46-29/M2
Feb. 18
Phi '1' d. The Gravy Boats 52-28/M2
Hair Club for Men d. Delta Upsilon Reign 70-69/M2

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