

River jumping provides fun for some, citations for others

■ **JUMPS:** The Willamette provides some relief from the summer heat, but jumping is cause for a \$255 citation

By Nicole Kristal
Oregon Daily Emerald

One after another they plummet toward the water. Some fall stylishly, clapping their hands around their feet. Others fall fearfully, arms flailing, screaming from the depths of their lungs. All jump from the Knickerbocker Bridge on the Willamette River with a similar purpose in mind.

"It's a thrill," said Dan Ramirez, who brought his two nephews to jump from the bridge.

According to 10-year-old Sam Jewell, a neighbor of Ramirez's nephews, the exciting fall lasts for about three seconds.

Sometimes the impact of the water can be quite unpleasant.

"Sometimes you slap your arms," said Thomas Ramirez as he raised his left arm to reveal a bright red mark left from impact.

Thomas' 10-year-old brother Glenn won't jump anymore because of an unpleasant experience.

"Once, I did the splits, and I smacked the water," Glenn said. "And my nose became unplugged. Water squirted up my nose, and I got a brain freeze."

If the number of jumpers on the bridge is any indication of the amount of fun obtained from a single jump, most people must consider the experience quite pleasant. However, the fun momentarily stops when police patrol the bridge.

"No one was jumping while [the police officer] was there," said Ramirez. "But as soon as he left, everyone jumped."

Being caught, however, is not a huge concern.

"The police aren't going to jump in after you," Ramirez said.

Public information officer Jan Power said a person jumping from a bridge or a rope swing can receive a \$255 citation for disorderly conduct accompanied by a mandatory court appearance and

possible jail time. The charge falls under the category of disorderly conduct because it creates a hazardous condition and possibly causes alarm or public inconvenience.

"It's more the personal safety issue than anything," said Power. "You hit the bottom and drowning and broken bones are very possible."

But the Knickerbocker Bridge isn't the only popular area along the river. Various rope swings scattered along the riverside serve as a fun attraction as well — especially for the many University students who hit the river to dodge the summer heat.

"I come out here pretty much everyday," said Elijah Wood, a sophomore at the University. "There's not much else to do in Eugene this summer."

Another rivergoer, clad in sopping wet black pants, seemed to be enjoying the atmosphere.

"It's beautiful out here," said Warren Champneys, Eugene resident. "You couldn't ask for a better day."

One rivergoer complained about seeing state police on the bike path behind the river.

"The river should be a place where people can come and not be harassed by police," said a swimmer who referred to himself as Jimmy Buffett. "It's an invasion of privacy to some extent."

According to Jan Power, public information officer, police only patrol the city property along the riverfront.

"We've never had a river patrol," said Power. "It's something that's never been funded."

Buffett said he believes police should spend less time removing the homeless from the shores and more time maintaining the river.

"If the city wants the river to be a nice place, [city officials] should put some money into it," said Buffett.

According to Buffett, a good place to start would be the removal of hazardous boulders that line the riverbed.

"Maybe people could remove boulders for community service," Buffett said.



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald
Weekend river rafters pause to watch Jimmy Buffet fly off a rope swing, above, while Jed Smith, left, finds his fun on the heights of the Knickerbocker Bridge, Sunday afternoon.

▼ **EMERALD**
The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon. The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union. The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

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