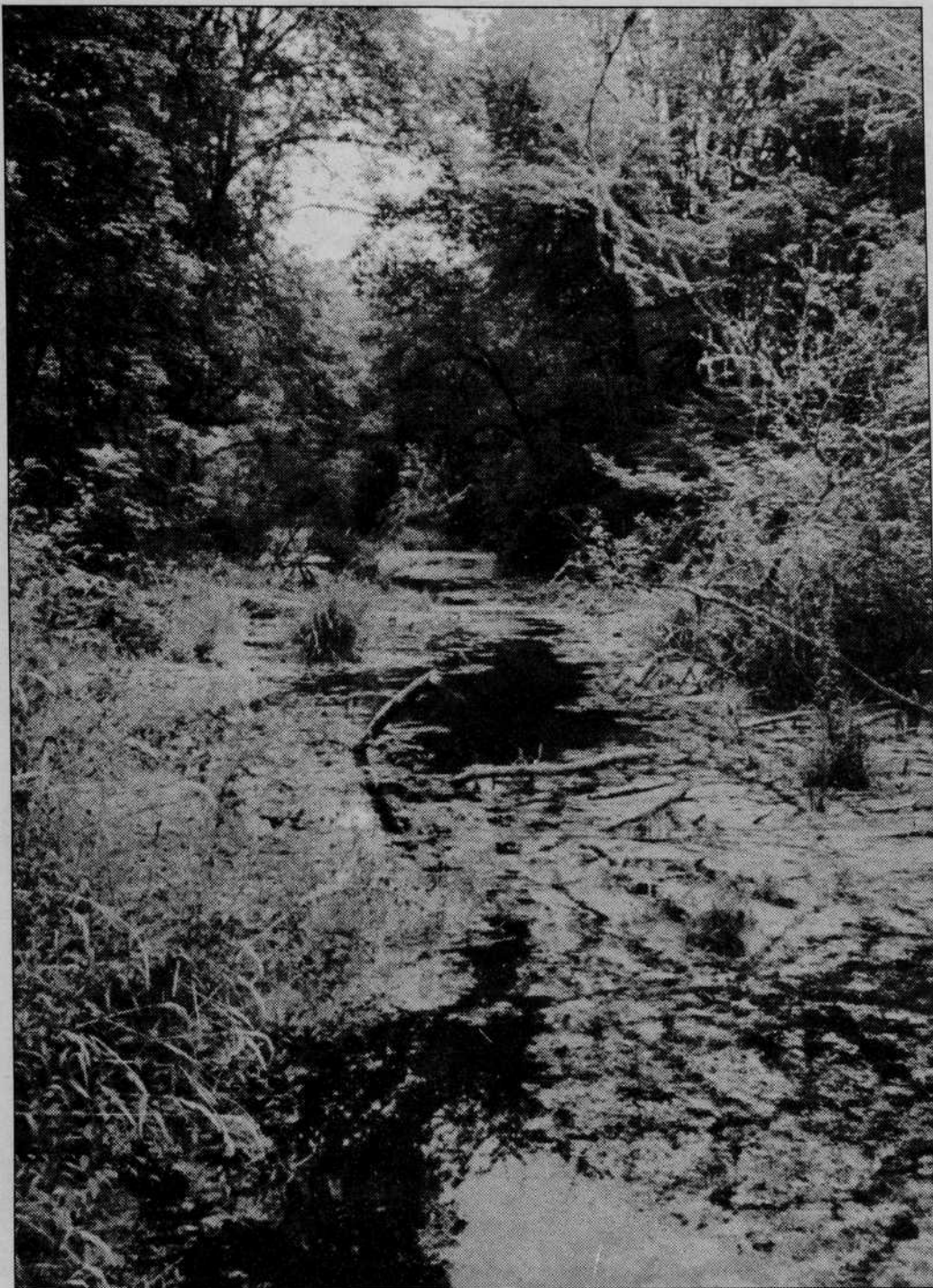


Rebecca Wilson Emerald

A panoramic view that includes a head-on shot of the Three Sisters (above) can be found atop Tidbits Mountain, near the town of Blue River on Hwy. 126.

Primordial forest scenes (right) accompany an easy, level hike in Elijah Bristow State Park off Hwy. 58.



# HAPPY trails ahead

■ Hiking around Western Oregon offers great stress relief as well as some unforgettable scenery

By Rebecca Wilson  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Well, here it is: my very last issue as Pulse Editor. Being an Emerald employee has been an excellent experience. I enjoy the writing, the people and especially the free CDs. However, the time has come for me to establish a few priorities — I came to college to be a student, after all. I will definitely miss the energy of the newsroom, but I will appreciate having some extra time to occasionally attend class and to pursue other interests.

So what will I be doing this spring? Instead of withering away in the humid stuffiness of the Emerald office, I will be breathing the fresh air of the Central Oregon Cascades; rather than toiling away under fluorescent lights, I will be walking along sunlit ridgelines. And because Oregon is experiencing a debilitating drought, I probably won't even have to navigate around mushy or snow-covered trails.

I always feel really annoyed when I hear people complain about how there is nothing to do in Eugene. Besides all the musical, theatrical and artistic events in town, hundreds of outdoor activities can be found within an hour's drive in any direction. So you don't have a car? I bet you have a friend who does. And hiking with a buddy can be just as fun as going solo.

Hiking is a wonderful activity for several reasons:

1. It requires little skill. Many outdoor activities — skiing, rock climbing, snow camping, snow mobiling — require at least nominal skill and a lot of equipment. But most people already have a thorough knowledge of walking, and that's all that is required. Also, many parks have paved flatland trails so that people who depend on wheelchairs and walkers can enjoy fresh air and exercise as well.

2. It's free — usually. Sometimes there are parking fees and a Northwest Trail Pass is required for most trails in National Forests. The passes cost \$5 a day or \$30 a year, and can be purchased at ranger stations and outdoor stores. Aside from these small fees, all a casual

hiker needs are sturdy hiking shoes or boots, water, a map and a camera. Most people have these things laying around their houses already.

3. It's quiet. When was the last time you were isolated from the sounds of modern life? A 40-minute drive and a 90-minute walk can completely remove a hiker from the sounds of cars, trucks, planes, trains, and all-terrain vehicles. This leaves room for the tweets of songbirds, the screeches of hawks and the sound of wind in the trees.

4. Hiking often results in spectacular photographs. I usually come back from my hikes with a full roll of film. Months later, I get around to dropping the film off at the University Bookstore. The pictures are always a nice surprise, but the best part is showing them to my friends. They always say, "Wow! You were on top of THAT?" or "You WALKED there?"

5. You acquire hard-core driving skills. Many trail heads are located off old, abandoned, narrow logging roads. This can be challenging for timid drivers or cars with manual transmission. Just remember, high-centering a vehicle can result in hitchhiking and expensive

repairs. So be careful.

Last summer, I explored 35 hikes in the Central Oregon Cascades. Most of them were within an hour's drive of Eugene, and none were more than two hours away. I found the most spectacular hikes located off Highway 126 in the Three Sisters Wilderness or near the McKenzie River. The most accessible hikes are off Highway 58 because the trailheads are located near the side of the road. However, these trails are much more popular than the more remote mountain trails. Most trails are clearly marked and easy to find with the aid of simple maps. There are also some excellent and inexpensive books available for the recreational hiker. I recommend "100 Hikes in the Central Oregon Cascades" by Eugene writer William L. Sullivan. This book facilitated most of my wilderness ventures of the summer and during the past few weeks I have begun gazing at it once again as I try to decide which hike I will try next.

So on sunny days this spring when you drive to the mall to spend another day checking out the new Abercrombie fashions, I will be traversing the peaks and valleys of Western Oregon.