

Rafting

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"It's a great way to meet people and get connections to get outdoors," said Kat Smith, a trip initiator. "It suits everybody and you don't have to be a student."

The 24-year-old Smith just became involved with the trips this summer, and on Sunday initiated her own trip in a six-mile white water rafting excursion down the McKenzie River.

"I thought it was a beautiful day," she said. "I love seeing other people have a good day. Water is very healing and (the situation offers) a chance to reconnect with people."

For trip initiator Steve Carper, who also joined Sunday's rafting expedition, the Outdoor Program has been an essential part of life since 1996. Carper was a temporary employee at one point and was introduced to the program by a friend who invited him out on a rafting trip.

"I can't imagine a relationship without it," Carper said. "When I'm away from it, I miss it. You meet different personalities and people of all ages where everybody contributes."

The Outdoor Program is also very cost-effective. Guides are not paid to

lead trips and commercial permits aren't required either. Rental equipment is the only major expense, so trips cost about \$15 for interested students.

The program, which offers more than 175 trips a year, functions on four basic components. First, the co-op trips that are offered are the core of the program, which is primarily funded through student incidental fees.

Co-op trips include everything from rafting to hiking to skiing in the winter and even rock climbing.

"There is no limit," Geiger said. "Over the years, we've had some remarkable trips."

Some of those trips include Geiger's recent rafting expedition in the Northern Yukon Territory on the Firth River. It was the first Outdoor Program trip above the Arctic Circle, and it lasted for 11 days and covered 80 miles.

"It was incredible," said Geiger, who was subjected to 24-hour daylight. Among the occasional hiking trip that left at midnight, Geiger and his crew saw all kinds of wildlife, from grizzly bears to some 2,500 caribou.

Other adventurous trips in the Outdoor Program's history include

the first mountain biking trip from Tibet to Nepal and the first ever descent along Nepal's Carnali River.

The second component of the Outdoor Program is its events. The year-round events include "how-to" clinics and seminars about emergency ski repair and river rescue. The Bannf Mountain Film Festival and ever-popular fall and spring equipment swaps that draw up to 500 to 700 people are among the Outdoor Program's larger events.

"It's like a big garage sale or flea market of equipment," Geiger said. Geiger said he also enjoys the laid-back atmosphere of the swap that allows anyone to come without registration or paperwork.

The Outdoor Program's Resource Center, which sits in the EMU's basement, is the program's third component. Maps, guidebooks, magazines and some small equipment are all made available for students to check out for free.

The final aspect to the Outdoor Program is the rental program available at the Barn, the program's equipment shed. The rental program allows students to check out virtually any kind of equipment they could need, from rafts to backpacks, but it



Jessica Waters Emerald

Andrew Orahoske maneuvers his inflatable kayak through the chilly McKenzie waters during an Outdoor Program white water rafting trip.

does come at a cost.

Trips during the remainder of summer include rafting on the McKenzie River this weekend and a more advanced white water excursion on the Upper Klamath River Aug. 15.

Contact the sports editor at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com

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This position will begin Sept. 22, one week before school begins. Candidates must be enrolled at the University of Oregon at the time of employment. Submit a resume and no more than 5 work samples along with application. Applications are available in the Daily Emerald offices, EMU, suite 300. Deadline is Aug. 8 at 5 p.m. The Oregon Daily Emerald is an equal opportunity employer committed to a culturally diverse workplace.

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