

Life *in the* Valley

sanews@salem.gannett.com



PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Kelsie Lechleiter, Lucy Urness and Steve Lechleiter on Stahlman Point Trail.

High and dry above Detroit Lake

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

At some point during a trip to Detroit Lake, it helps to do something off the water.

The reservoir east of Salem is so ideal for boating, fishing and swimming that it's easy to transform into a waterlogged pile of sunbaked flesh after a couple of days.

To counteract that — and shake the water from your ears — take a hike that celebrates everything scenic about the Detroit area.

A hike up Stahlman Point offers shaded forest, wildlife and striking views of the lake and Mount Jefferson from a former lookout site.

The hike starts from the lake's south shore and runs 4.5 miles round-trip with 1,325 feet of climb. It's a gradual uphill trek best for motivated older children and adults in halfway decent shape.

I climbed Stahlman last week with my 2-year-old daughter, Lucy, and our hiking friends, 9-year-old Kelsie Lechleiter and her dad, Steve.

Kelsie, who plays soccer, had little trouble reaching the top.

"It was tough, but the view is so pretty," she said. "So, it's worth it."

A nice thing about the trail is that it's almost completely shaded. The forest is dense, and there are a few segments of old-growth after about a mile on the trail.

We stopped to count the rings on a downed tree and estimated 80 to 100 years.

Highlights for the kids were found in the flora and fauna. We saved a banana slug from death by boot by moving him off the trail. The girls were thrilled and grossed out by the slug's optical tentacles, which could extend and retract.

Closer to the top, we discovered a collection of sugar pine cones. The giant cones are the size of a football and provided another fun moment.

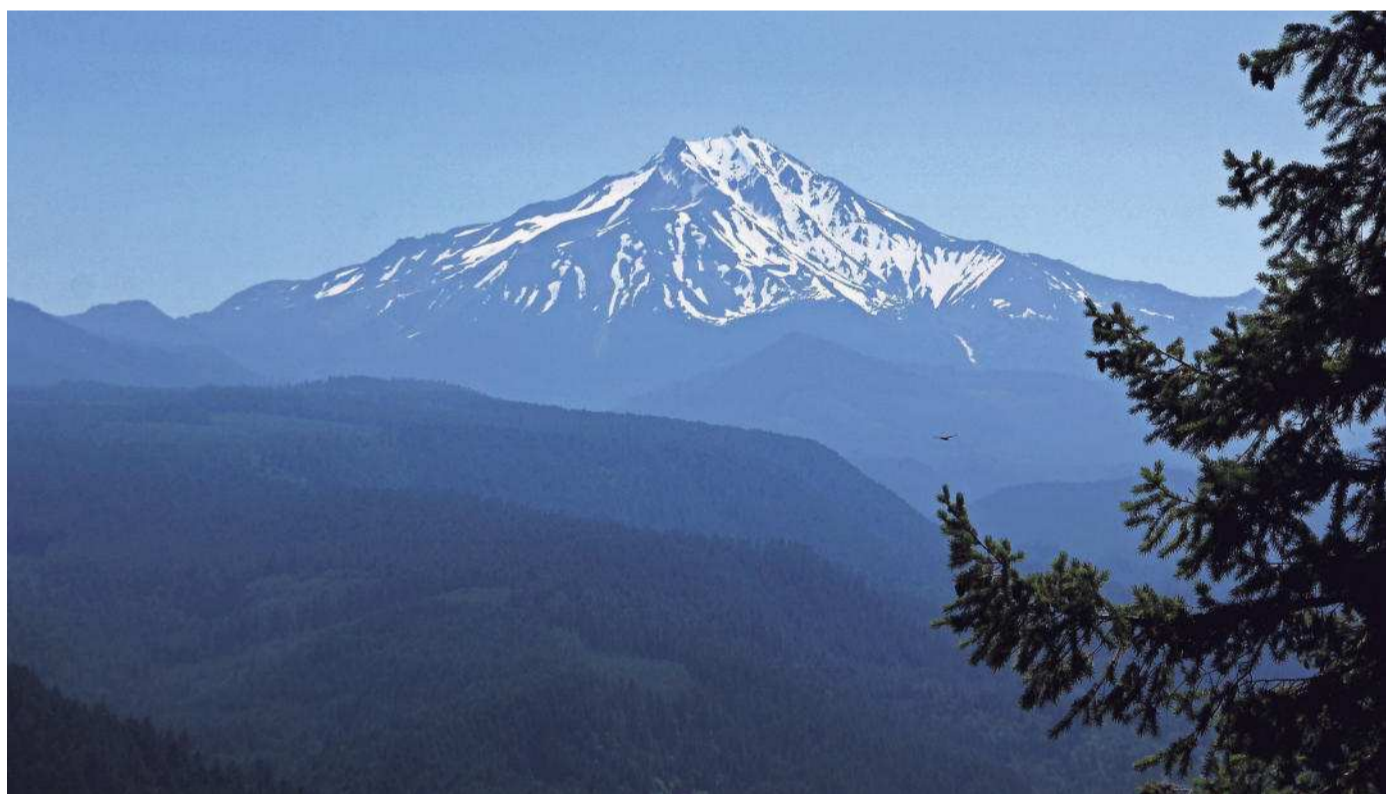
As we made our way uphill, we caught a few glimpses of Detroit Lake, but the trail was mostly a green tunnel.

That's what made the top so cool. From the forest, we emerged on a rocky point with panoramic views that included Mount Jefferson looking us straight in the face.

Concrete footings from an old lookout tower still reside here, even though the tower was removed in 1966. What's left is a small, flat area that feels as though you're on the tip of a pen. Steep cliffs drop away on every side, which was moderately terrifying with 2-year-old Lucy roaming around. It took a team effort to ensure she never wandered too close to the edges.

While views of Oregon's second-tallest mountain steal the show here, the sight of Detroit Lake is also excellent. The reservoir looks a bit like a wide river, curving its way around the green island of Piety Knob.

The blue view is enough to get you thinking about how good a swim will feel once you hike down from the top. Stahlman Point is a hike that pro-



View of Mount Jefferson from Stahlman Point.

Stahlman Point

In a nutshell: Steep-ish hike to a beautiful viewpoint above Detroit Lake

Distance: 4.5 miles round-trip

Climb: 1,325 feet

Difficulty: Moderately challenging

Highlights: View of Detroit Lake and Mount Jefferson; dense and shady forest

Crowds: Not overly packed, but small parking lot often fills by noon during height of tourist season (July and August)

Nearby campgrounds: Cove Creek, Southshore, Hoover, Santiam Flats, Detroit Lake State Park

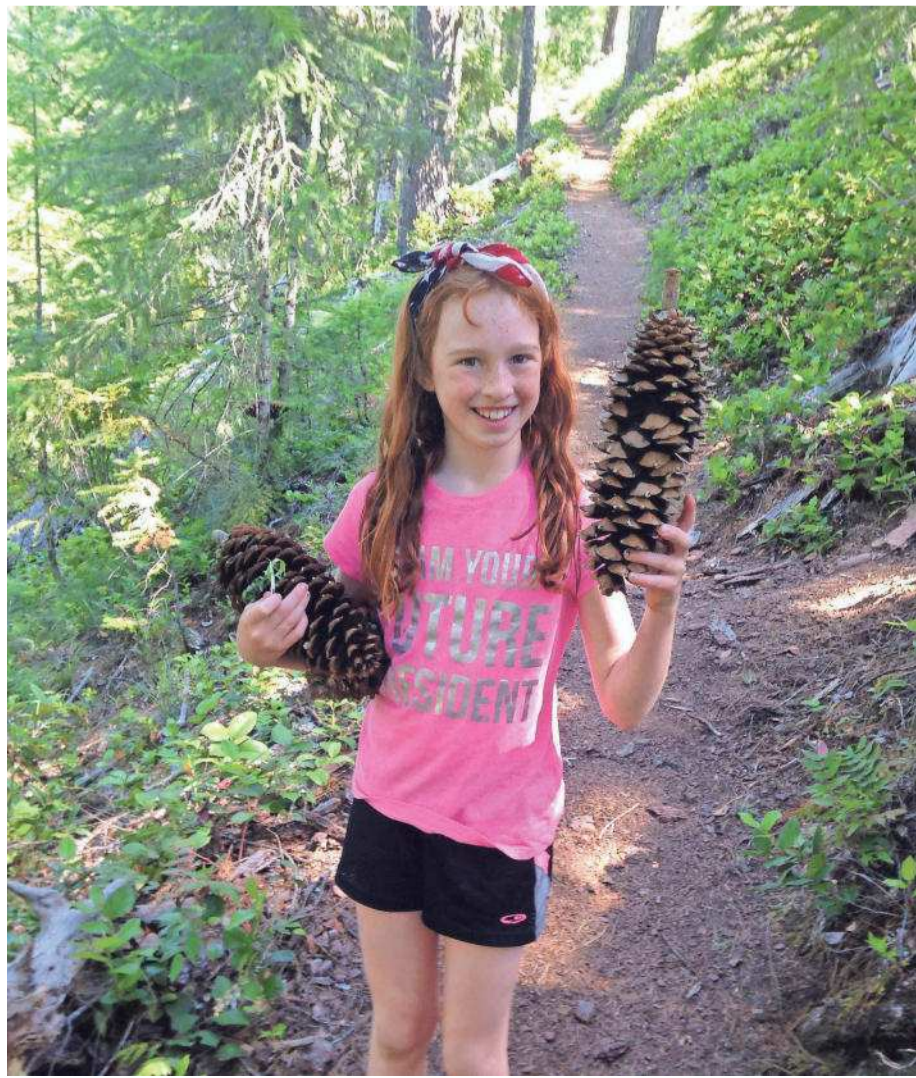
What's with the name? The point was named for Fred Stahlman, the first U.S. Forest Service ranger at Detroit.

Directions: From Salem, drive east on Highway 22 to Detroit. Follow Highway 22 another 3 miles north and turn right on Blowout Road 10. Follow the winding paved road 3.7 miles, and turn left at a sign into a small parking area and trailhead.

Trailhead coordinates: N44 42.416 W122 09.673

vides a rare dry adventure at Detroit Lake, but ultimately, this area always draws you back to the water.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for nine years. He is the author of the book "Hiking Southern Oregon" and can be reached at zurness@statesmanjournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors



Kelsie Lechleiter holds up a sugar pine cone.