

Outdoors

A SUMMER TO REMEMBER



Bear grass along the Coffin Mountain trail MATT REEDER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Wildflower super bloom push Coffin Mountain into outdoor destination of the summer

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Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

“Absolutely amazing!” “Incredible.” “This hike literally brought me to tears.” These were some of the words used to describe the beargrass bloom on Coffin Mountain, south of Detroit Lake. As word of mouth spread of the wildflower super bloom on Coffin Mountain, crowds visited this previously obscure destination in droves. As the summer fades into fall and the wildflowers turn to seed, it’s time to look back on how a few photos on social media can transform a previously-obscure location into the outdoor destination of the summer.

The first time you see the green mountain side of Coffin Mountain, it takes your breath away. An entire mountainside of puffy white beargrass, cascading down the mountain like an avalanche. The slopes seem alive with numerous brilliant shades of blue, green and white. The mountains of central Oregon stretch out before you on the southeastern horizon. Coffin Mountain, located south of Detroit Lake in a range

of peaks known as the Old Cascades, features some of the most impressive scenery in this part of Oregon.

The first time I visited in the summer of 2014, I could scarcely believe my eyes. I happened to catch the mountain in an excellent year for *Xerophyllum tenax*, better known in the Pacific Northwest as bear grass. By the time I had climbed the steep trail 1.5 miles to the summit, my mouth had been open for almost the entire distance to the summit of the mountain. Even more remarkable was the lack of crowds on the trail on a warm, sunny weekend; although it was a hot day, I encountered no more than ten people on the trail.

All it took was a few photos on the internet to shake the trail out of its relative obscurity. I rarely heard of people going to visit Coffin Mountain in the time since I first visited in 2014 while researching my guidebook 101 Hikes in the Majestic Mount Jefferson Region. In the Old Cascades Region, the colorful slopes of Iron Mountain some 15 miles to the south steal much of this region’s notoriety. Located far enough from the Willamette Valley to remain relatively ob-



Wildflowers in bloom along the Coffin Mountain trail in the Old Cascades MATT REEDER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

scure, many of the hikes in the Old Cascades region feature glorious wildflower meadows in June and July. Visitors to the region are likely to find solitude on almost every trail not named Iron Mountain and Coffin Mountain, even at the height of wildflower season. Visit in the fall and you might not see anyone at all.

All it took was a dozen photos on the internet to push Coffin Mountain into the limelight in the summer of 2019. In June, a few hikers hiked the steep 1.5 mile trail to the summit and returned with spectacular photos of the mountain’s hanging meadows in full bear-

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Get your rifle properly sighted before hunting season



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Because of a quirk in the calendar, the annual Sight-in Service at Four Corners Rod & Gun Club will leak over into August this year.

“It’s happened before, but not very often,” Richard Noble, the club vice president, said about the change from the usual four-weekends-in-September schedule.

But with the Oregon general center-fire rifle deer hunting season opening on Sept. 28, the club had to add Saturday, Aug. 31, to get in the traditional four weekends for the service before the opener.

Because trust me on this one, the bulk of the Four Corners range-meisters will be in the woods and unavailable come that last weekend in September.

Even if you don’t hunt, the service is a great way to tune up your guns, and yourself, for those of us who are reasonably proficient, but rusty.

Or as one wag noted about my off-season corrosion: “Henry couldn’t hit a bull in the butt with a banjo.”

I digress.

The range east of Salem is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays from Aug. 31 through Sept. 22.



The Sighting In Service at the Four Corners Rod and Gun Club in Salem on Sunday, Sept. 6, 2015. The event continues every weekend in September. ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Participation tends to be thin the first two weekends because of the Labor Day holiday and the start of school, Noble said, so black-powder rifles, hunting handguns and .17 HMR (Hornady Magnum Rimfire) and .22 caliber rifles will be allowed then.

“It’s been an unwritten rule for a while,” he added about allowing rimfire guns the first two weekends. Now it’s official.

After that, though, the procrastinators’ rush picks up, and only center-fire long guns are allowed.

Here are some of the ground rules:

All firearms must be out of the cases, unloaded and with actions open when approaching or leaving the range.

Ear and eye protection are mandatory and will be available for sale on-site (some loaner shooting glasses will be available).

The cost is \$6 per firearm, and there is no limit to the number that you sight in.

For that, you get use of a shooting bench with rifle rest, assistance with sight/scope adjustment and tips about proper shooting techniques on the 100-yard range, which is equipped with shoot-through sound suppressors.

Qualified club members will be on hand to do safety inspections as well as basic gunsmithing such as bore-sighting and fitting scopes.

“Usually we have a couple of guys who can re-mount scopes,” Noble said. “And we check the bore and make sure no dead spiders are in there.”

Other options included in the sight-in fee include having a whang or two at the gong on the 200-yard range and taking on the famous “running buck,” a full-size deer target that rolls along a track.

Both of which, on a personal note, will disabuse you of any delusions of grandeur.

In conjunction with the service, Four Corners also will hold its annual fundraiser raffle with a maximum of 3,000 \$1 tickets sold. The top prize is a custom

M77 Ruger bolt-action rifle.

Food and beverages will be available at the adjacent cook shack.

And a final tip from one who knows: Sight-in your firearm with the same ammunition you plan to take into the field.

“Every box (of ammo) shoots differently,” Noble put it simply.

To get to Four Corners, take State Street to 74th Street and turn right (or as I like to say, drive until you’re sure you’ve passed the turn, then go another quarter-mile).

When 74th comes to a T, go left on Babcock Street and continue on through the gates and down the hill until you come to the range at the bottom.

Option 2: The Albany Rifle & Pistol Club also will be holding its pre-season Hunter Sight-in Days from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on three weekends from Sept. 3 through 18 at the Main Range.

The cost is \$5 a center-fire rifle.

Information is online at https://arpc.info/cgi/calendar.pl?month=9&view=Event&event_id=2531

For a map and turn-by-turn directions to the club, which is at 29999 Saddle Butte Road (off Boston Mill Road) go to <https://www.arpc.info/map/>

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