

Bloom

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grass bloom. Soon the images spread like wildfire across the internet, and by the end of June, seemingly the entirety of the Pacific Northwest's outdoor community had heard of the bloom at Coffin Mountain. I visited at the end of June this year early on a Friday and encountered some 30 people, with many more on the way. Hardly a day passes that I do not see at least a half-dozen photos of Coffin Mountain on my various social media feeds. This hike has been "discovered," as they say on the internet. Through various friends in the outdoor community I also heard stories of hikers having "snowball fights" with bear grass blooms, of huge crowds of tourists, and of long lines to park at the trailhead's small parking lot.

With no permits required to visit Coffin Mountain, gauging the rise in popularity is a difficult task. When I asked around my outdoor circles, many agreed that the hike did not seem crowded in comparison with more famous hikes in the Cascades and Co-



Xerophyllum tenax, better known in the Pacific Northwest as bear grass MATT REEDER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

lumbia River Gorge. While there were days in which hundreds of hikers roamed the green slopes here, this is a reality on every summer day at Oregon's most famous backcountry destinations. Many of the hikers I asked did not find the hike to be all that crowded, even at the height of its notoriety in late June through mid-July. With that said, it was clear that the popularity of Coffin Mountain exploded in the summer of 2019. What this means going forward is anybody's guess.

Hikers visiting the mountain slopes in the next few years may be surprised to discover that bear grass is not an annual wildflower. Beargrass

blooms on an irregular cycle every four to six years; as far as I can tell, the last super bloom on Coffin Mountain before this year was during the summer of 2014, the first time I hiked the trail. While there will usually be some bear grass to be found on the slopes of the mountain, it is unlikely we will see a super bloom again here for several years.

Hikers visiting next year are likely to be disappointed in the lack of beargrass. Even without the super bloom, this is still a fabulous wildflower hike. I counted over 60 different species of wildflowers on my first visit, and wildflower enthusiasts should have plenty to



Left (top and bottom): Wildflowers in bloom along the Coffin Mountain trail. Right: Xerophyllum tenax, better known in the Pacific Northwest as bear grass. Above: Bear grass along the Coffin Mountain trail. PHOTOS BY MATT REEDER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

see with or without the copious displays of beargrass.

What the precipitous rise in popularity demonstrates more than anything is the influence social media has on the way hikers recreate these days. Many use sites such as Instagram and Facebook to find new destinations to hike; even a handful of photos can create exponential rises in popularity to beautiful sites that are not too diffi-

cult to access. While many hikers are discovering previously obscure locations and sharing their discoveries, the rising popularity of many outdoor destinations are also driving some hikers to no longer post photos on social media.

Only time will tell if next summer will mark even larger crowds at Coffin Mountain, or if the "Super Bloom" phenomenon will be limited to 2019. It was a summer to

remember, and the beauty of Coffin Mountain's beargrass meadows will linger long in the memories of many Oregon hikers.

Matt Reeder is the author of three hiking guidebooks: PDX Hiking 365, Off the Beaten Trail and 101 Hikes in the Majestic Mount Jefferson Region. You can follow his adventures at www.offthebeatentrailpdx.com

RESTAURANT INSPECTIONS

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with a mixing valve or combination faucet, specifically: Maximum water temperature 82°F inside the women's restroom and 91°F at the kitchen hand sink. **Point deduction: 3.**

July 24: No priority violations

Taco Bell

Location: 450 Wallace Road NW, Salem
Date: July 31
Score: 100
No priority violations

Tiga Sushi Bar & Asian Bistro

Location: 260 Liberty St. SE, Salem
Date: July 29
Score: 92

Priority violations

Raw or ready-to-eat food is not properly protected from cross contamination, specifically: Container of raw chicken stored above a container of seafood in the walk-in refrigerator. **Point deduction: 5.**

Food-contact surfaces are not clean, specifically: Meat cleaver stored on the magnetic knife rack is soiled. **Point deduction: 3.**

Top Dog Sports Grill

Location: 1798 12th St. SE, Salem
Date: July 25 (reinspected July 30)
Score: 90

July 25: Priority violations

Potentially hazardous food is not maintained at proper hot or cold holding temperatures, specifically: Foods in the prep line refrigerator are 50-51F (chicken 51F, beef 50F, olives 51F, hard boiled eggs 51F). No thermometer in prep line. Foods in the walk-in refrigerator are 46-47F (grated cheese 46F, hamburger patties 47F, jalapenos 46F). Ambient air thermometer reads 45F. **Point deduction: 5.**

Chemical sanitizers are not approved, specifically: Sanitizer for wipe cloths is greater than 200 PPM chlorine. Turns the test strip black. **Point deduction: 5.**

July 30: No priority violations

violations

Vitality

Location: 1475 Mt. Hood Ave., Woodburn
Date: July 31
Score: 90

Priority violations

Refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food has not been consumed within the required time period or is not properly date-marked, specifically: Tomato basil soup date marked July 22 inside the grab and go box; facility using the best-by date on packaging as the disposal date. **Point deduction: 5.**

The chlorine sanitizer concentration, pH, or temperature is not adequate, specifically: No chlorine residual measured at the dish washer,

air observed in the dispensing tube. **Point deduction: 5.**

Whole Latte Love

Location: 725 Summer St. NE, Salem (mobile unit)
Date: July 26

Score: N/A

Priority violations

A test kit is not provided or is not accurate enough to measure the concentration of sanitizing solutions, specifically: No test strips provided for sanitizer bucket.

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