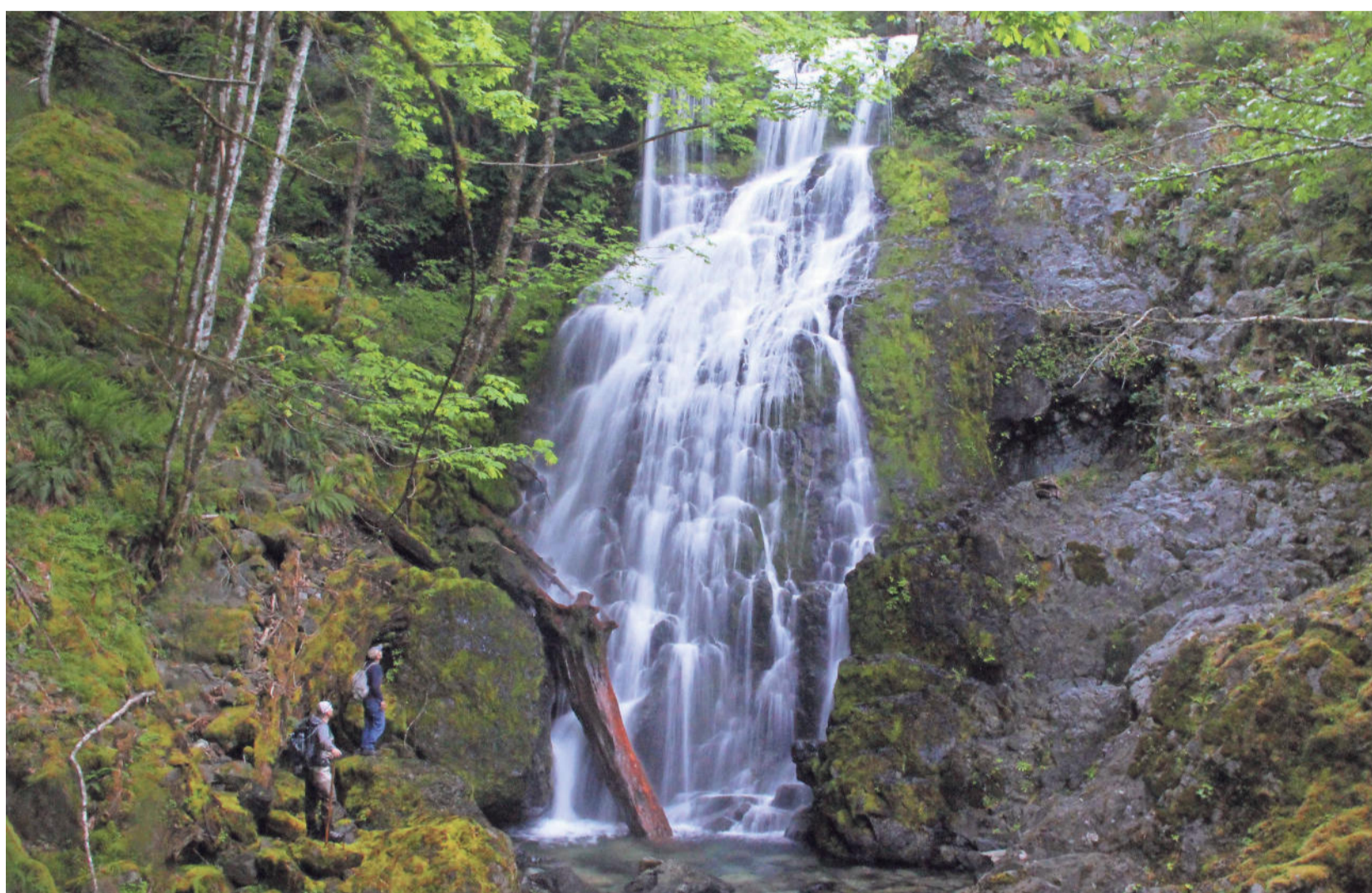


Outdoors

BIG SECRET



Jerry Falls is the tallest among the seven “Family Falls” first documented by Salem’s Maynard Drawson.

ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Opal Creek Wilderness hides giant ‘family’ of waterfalls

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Editors note: Oregon’s outdoors is slowly re-opening from COVID-19 restrictions, but many sites remain limited or closed. Until that changes, the Statesman Journal is featuring “greatest hits” from outdoors writer Zach Urness each week in a nod to armchair adventure and for future trip planning purposes.

This story was originally published June 11, 2016.

There is no trail to Family Falls, and it can’t be found on official maps.

Clues about the location are whispered between friends, a secret known only to those willing to bushwhack into a canyon of high cliffs and thick forest deep in the Opal Creek Wilderness.

The journey is not easy.

A trip requires scrambling up and down steep ridges, crossing a creek multiple times and crawling head-first through a cave.

But the reward arrives with the discovery of one beautiful waterfall after the next, the family of seven waterfalls living together in a setting so primeval you’d swear you were the first person to lay eyes upon it.

But, of course, you’d be wrong.



Maynard Drawson, known for big-tree hunting, discovered the “Family Falls” waterfalls some 50 years ago. PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM KLOSTER

Almost five decades ago this spring, a Salem barber named Maynard Drawson became the first person to document these waterfalls on upper Henline Creek in the Little North Santiam canyon east of Salem.

A World War II veteran, author, father of seven children and lifelong Salem resident, Drawson was best-known for exploring places overlooked by the masses. He wrote about his experiences in a series of books, “Treasures of the

Oregon Country.”

“His name is Maynard Drawson and his hobby is Oregon — literally,” reads a story published in the Medford Mail Tribune on Dec. 26, 1977. “Oregon’s hills and valleys and histories and old towns and forest and places names intrigue him, and he delights in sharing his findings with others.”

Drawson’s discovery of the waterfalls set in motion a small-scale drama over the question of who gets to name special landmarks.

Since Drawson was the first person to document the series of falls — it had been overlooked by surveyors and didn’t appear on any map — he decided to take a page from the explorers of old. He named each waterfall for one of his children, plus his friend Jerry.

He dubbed the entire area “Family Falls,” and his discovery made the front page of the Capital Journal on June 6, 1970.

But getting a name affixed to a special place had become more complex, and after years of wrangling and waffling, the Oregon Geographic Names Board rejected Drawson’s names by 1973.

“My contention of discovery has been ignored and my name suggestions officially refused,” Drawson wrote.

Without an official designation on the map, the fanfare around Family Falls was mostly forgotten, the waterfalls becoming a blank space on the map once again.

See **SECRET**, Page 2B

Wading into DIY outdoor gear repair



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

This week we feature Henry’s first-ever at-home outdoors quarantine clinic: How to patch your chest waders.

It was inspired by a burning desire to actually go clamming and fishing in the near future.

An annoying leak in my lightweight, stocking-foot necessities meant a serious soaking of the lower left leg, sometimes up to almost the knees.

Refreshing but annoying during the summer; turning to hypothermic and life-threatening come February.

One school of thought about repairing the problem is to inflate and hold the suspect leg under water and watch for bubbles.

I was assured that it is easy-peasy if you have a pool, hot tub or even a kiddie pool, none of which is available.

I can see the emails already: Why not use the bathtub?

Which leads to the second complication: Trying to keep the leg inflated while you are wrestling it under the water.

It’s like trying to drown an air bed with an open release valve in a full bathtub in a long, thin shower cabinet with a sliding-glass door.

I’d invite you over with a mop and bucket if you’ve got an hour or so and we weren’t trying to stay 6 feet apart.

Option 2 is to use a spray bottle to spritz water with dish soap over the inflated leg as you squeeze on it to force out the air, forming bubbles at the leak site.

This is a perfect technique when looking for low-pressure air or gas leaks on pipes or inflatables such as pool toys or rafts.

Waders? Not so much.

Trying to keep the leg inflated while simultaneously squeezing and spritzing is like wrestling with a soap-slickened, Brobdingnagian bagpipe, minus the noise.

So no soap, pun intended.

Let me save you the mess and frustration of the previous two fails with the solution I finally came up with.

Turn the damnable super soakers inside-out, because you want the patch, for shabby chic fashion’s sake, on the inside.

Using the suspenders, hang the waders from a limb of a tree in the back yard,

preferably over a spot that could use some watering. Pick a limb that’s high enough that the wader booties stay off the ground.

Charge up the garden hose and fill the waders to a level above the suspected leak. The elastic in the suspenders as you fill them almost makes it look as if they’re dancing, which potentially could lead to ...

If the tree has fully leafed-out, the sight of a pair of bobbing legs dangling down looks as though you dispensed rough justice on a fishing poacher.

Potentially making you a YouTube or TikTok celebrity as well as the subject of several neighborhood watch 911 calls.

I digress.

Standing at the ready with the trusty Sharpie to mark the spot, the first dribbles started from what appeared to be a pinhole leak.

Success!

Then the next appeared, then five or six more.

The apparently defective weld on the seam between the neoprene booty on the left leg and the waterproof (ha!) upper was totally shot.

The new waders are coming via UPS in about a week.

OUTDOOR JOURNALIST THOUGHT



To find leaks in your waders, hang them from a tree and fill with water.

PHOTOS BY HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

FOR THE WEEK: “He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches,” - George Bernard Shaw. To which I would add: “And those who cannot do or teach end up writing about it.”

Contact Henry Miller via email at HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com