

OUTDOORS

WILDFLOWERS



The meadows of Crescent Mountain feature stunning wildflower displays.

Crescent Mountain hike features spectacular wildflower meadow

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USA TODAY NETWORK

The ancient volcanoes of the Old Cascades put on quite a show in July.

The cluster of peaks near Tombstone Pass and Santiam Junction light up with wildflowers this time of year, with high alpine meadows turning purple, red and gold while showcasing views of every major mountain in northwest Oregon.

The best-known wildflower showcases in the Old Cascades is Iron Mountain, but there are a few others just as good right next door.

That's where Crescent Mountain comes in.

Located just north of Lava Lake Sno-Park, Crescent Mountain lives up to its name: it's shaped like a perfect letter C. And it features one of the best, if not the best, of these hikes in July.

The journey begins in old-growth forest and climbs to one of the most beautiful alpine meadows in Oregon, before climbing again to a 5,750-foot summit with views from Mount Hood to Diamond Peak.

The hike is challenging at 9 miles round-trip with 2,200 feet of climb. It's fairly accessible off Highway 20, with a drive of about an hour and a half from Salem and Albany.

In the COVID-19 age, it's a good one

for social distancing. You'll find a handful of cars at the trailhead on a perfect weekend in July, but everyone spreads out pretty quickly on the long trail, and there's no problem stepping aside 6 feet or more for passing hikers.

It makes a nice alternative to Iron Mountain, which gets slammed with boots this time of year.

The Old Cascades geologic region

The Old Cascades, also known as the Western Cascades, are a fascinating region geologically.

As the name suggests, they're an older range of volcanoes and lava vents nestled between the Willamette Valley and today's modern or "high" Cascades such as Hood, Jefferson and the Sisters. We often think of them as the Cascade Foothills.

Here's how geologists think our current mountains came together.

Over the millennia, volcanic activity has shifted eastward in Oregon. There are a few theories as to why, but it likely has to do with the rotation of tectonic plates or angle of subduction.

The oldest parts of the Western Cascades, near the Willamette Valley, are more eroded and 35 to 40 million years old. They've been so eroded over the

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Striking views of Mount Jefferson greet visitors on the summit of Crescent Mountain. PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Crescent Mountain

In a nutshell: Steep and challenging hike through meadows to the summit of a former lookout tower.

Length: 9 miles round-trip

Climb: 2,200 feet

Difficulty: Strenuous

Best time to hike: Mid-July for wildflowers, although it's a stunning hike any time of year, even when wildflowers aren't blooming.

Directions: From Salem, head east on Highway 22, past Detroit Lake, to Santiam Junction. Merge onto Highway 20 west toward Albany and keep an eye out for Lava Lake Sno-Park. Turn right into the parking area and stay right onto Forest Road 2067. After a mile, veer left onto gravel Forest Road 508 (you'll see a sign pointing left with a hiker). In another 0.8 miles, you'll come to a large and obvious parking area where the trail begins.

How to save money and spend time



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

"Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion."

- British historian C. Northcote Parkinson.

And then some.

The maxim known as "Parkinson's Law" readily applies to any and all DIY projects at our house.

And those provide an umbrella explanation about how to cope with the self-imposed exile during the current pandemic.

Case in point: Reel repair.

Pre-pandemic, a handle worked loose on a Quantum Optix 80 saltwater spinning reel during an outing to Newport, with a critical part falling through a space between the slats on the dock and into the bay.

Which provided (actually still is providing) a wealth of time-sucking tinkering during the shutdown.

At first blush, the problem looked easy peasy.

The part in question is known as a "dust cover," a cap with a short length of screw in the middle that goes into the reel handle to hold it in place.

It's an ingenious little bit of plastic and steel that when unscrewed allows you to take the reel handle off of one side, put it in the other side, then screw the cap back down.

Et voila!

Your lefty reel is now a right-handed model, or vice versa.

At this point in what is turning out to be a Ted Type-experience, a famous quote from the late journalist and curmudgeon H.L. Mencken serves as a perfect corollary to Parkinson's Law: "For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong."

The dust cover is actually a two-part problem.

Part A is the threaded-screw part.

Part B is the plastic cap, which as the name "dust cover" loosely implies, keeps water, sand etc. out of the reel interior.

"Dust" in the "dust-cover" descrip-

tion being a polite way of saying "slime" and "gunk."

In the interests of full disclosure, I should say that, yes, you can buy a new reel online for \$34.99 with free shipping.

The appeal of this approach is you can always cannibalize the reel with the missing part to fix the new reel.

The reality is that the only part that you're ever going to need is that "dust cap." I've got a drawer full of "spare-part" reels to prove it. Call it Henry's addendum to Mencken's corollary to Parkinson's Law.

Or you can go the online-parts route. The dust cover, plus reel handle, is \$16.95 with free shipping on eBay.

There are two parts to my at-home repair decision.

First and foremost, the reel has some sentimental value.

I bought two of the Optix 80s at Dockside Charters in Depoe Bay when the late owner, Jim Tate, was downsizing prior to selling the business for health reasons to Loren Goddard, one of my favorite charter skippers.

And before you ask, yes, the second reel is intact, and the dust cap is secure-



For the want of a nail ... a duplicate of this dust cover off of the functioning reel is at the bottom of Yaquina Bay.

HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

ly fastened, thank you very much. But I use the two reels and rods in tandem when throwing fishing-rod crab traps, so I wanted both in working order.

I digress.

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