

# OUTDOORS

## 7 best hikes in Oregon's overlooked Old Cascades



Zach Urness hikes along Gate Creek Trail on Browder Ridge in the Old Cascades near Santiam Junction. ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

**Zach Urness**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A unique region known as the "Old Cascades" features some of Oregon's most spectacular but overlooked mountain hikes.

This region, composed of ancient volcanoes far older than the "young" Cascades such as Hood and Jefferson, features old-growth forest, wildflower meadows and epic mountaintop views.

While the term Old or Western Cascades can be applied to a large area, the region we're talking about is located near Tombstone Pass and Santiam Junction, east of Salem and Albany.

Peaks such as Iron Mountain and Crescent Mountain, Browder Ridge and Coffin Mountain, are extinct volcanoes about 7 to 14 million years old. Their age gives them a more biodiverse and inter-

esting flora and fauna, but they're also not quite so old that they've been eroded to the ground, with most standing 5,000 to 6,000 feet high.

It's a nice combination that allows for the best of both worlds: climbing high while appreciating a more intricate forest.

The Old Cascade mountains are best hiked in July, when wildflower blooms reach their peak. But they're good anytime a person wants shady forest mixed with alpine meadows and knockout views of the state's tallest peaks.

We'll count them down based on my favorites.

**Honorable mention: Echo Basin**

This isn't really a mountaintop hike, which is why we've relegated it to hon-

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Bear grass is seen along the Coffin Mountain trail.

MATT REEDER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

## Getting hooked on bass lures

**Fishing**  
Henry Miller  
Guest columnist

There is an old truism that fishing tackle in general, and lures in particular, are not designed to catch fish; they're designed to catch anglers.

As the weather heats up, along with the local waters, my thoughts and ambitions turn to pursuing bass and other warm-water fish.

And in my experience, there is no fraternity that is more in the thrall of the latest fishing fads than bass anglers.

Having covered my share of bass tournaments, I can say from experience that if competitors get even a whiff of a second-hand rumor about what the first-day leader used, every sporting goods and tackle store will be sold out within 50 miles of the lake an hour after weigh-in.

Bass anglers are second only in my experience to avid wild-turkey hunters in the fantasies of sporting goods mar-

keters. When it comes to those who pursue bass, the best illustration about viral consumerism is what we used to call "rubber worms," which are actually made of soft plastic.

When I was a kid, a neighbor named Jack, a fanatical fisherman, advised me that to catch the largemouths in the local ponds, the secret was "black rubber worms."

For those who don't fish, largemouth refers to a species of freshwater bass, not a loudmouth such as Jack.

Those black worms were de rigueur for bass fishing.

A couple of years later, anglers were accompanying the licorice-toned staple with, believe it or not, purple worms.

As a personal aside, in between, there was an effort by an apparently overstocked tackle supplier who had misordered a large shipment.

The canny salesperson spread a rumor that the hot ticket for bass was going to be something that we nicknamed "banana worms."

Those were bright yellow, about 6 inches long, occasionally with thin,

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Yep, I caught it on a rubber worm. Even outdoor writers get lucky sometimes. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE