

OUTDOORS



AVOIDING CALAMITY

Rafting into Oregon's desert wilderness with kids

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

The John Day River features desert scenery, great campgrounds and plenty of adventure in the 30 mile rafting trip between Clarno and Thirtymile boat launches in the Oregon desert northeast of Madras. ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

At the top of the largest rapids on the John Day River, in the gateway to a vast desert wilderness, my 4-year-old daughter Rollie decided suddenly she could not live without her pink sandals and began tossing aside everything in the raft to find them.

One of the things she tossed was our boat's oar.

It slipped smoothly from its oarlock into the water and floated downstream, just beyond the frantic reach of my friend Hannah before disappearing around a bend in the river.

It's difficult to overstate what a calamity this might have been.

We were miles from any road with two young children, surrounded by a landscape marked by jackknife canyons and rattlesnakes, about to float into Class III-IV rapids with a picket fence of rock that often punishes even seasoned oarsmen, to say nothing of anyone fool enough to navigate with a single oar.

"Hey dad, we lost an oar," my 6-year-old daughter Lucy informed me as I returned to the boat.

The incident had occurred while I'd hiked downstream to scout Clarno Rapids after parking on the side of the river.

"I tried to get it," Hannah said sadly.

"Umm ...," I said.

I had prepared for this.

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Hot temps mean restrictions for anglers



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Hot enough for ya?
Ditto for the fish.

Because of high temperatures and drought-induced low, warming water, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has imposed restrictions for anglers that went into effect on July 1 in an effort to protect fish.

The full list of rule changes and affected waters is online in this week's recreation report at myodfw.com.

Those include "hoot owl" prohibitions on fishing after 2 p.m. on some waters because of hotter temperatures and increased stress on fish.

Salmon, steelhead and trout will get an aquatic equivalent of cooling shelters with fishing prohibited on some rivers and streams within 200 feet of the mouths of tributaries where water volume increases and temperatures decrease.

Also on the list of changes, in the drought-slammed Southwest Zone – Douglas, Coos, Coquille, Jackson, Josephine and Curry counties – limits will be lifted on some lakes and ponds as rising temperatures and dropping water levels make conditions untenable for fish.

Those changes are posted online in the section for that zone at myodfw.com.

Along with the rule changes, officials have released a list of precautionary recommendations for those who want to wet a line. Those include heading for cooler, higher-elevation lakes, and rethinking your destination if water and weather conditions are stressful or life-threatening for the fish.



Heat got you down? A charter fishing trip off the Oregon coast is a cool option.

HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Another personal favorite of yours truly is to target fish that not only survive but thrive in the heat such as bass, panfish and catfish or bullhead.

Fish and Wildlife has several valuable online references for warmwater fishing.

For information about opportunities in and around Salem north to the Portland area, see the section on

warmwater fishing in the north Willamette area at myodfw.com.

For the stretch from Albany to just south of Eugene, go to warmwater fishing in the south Willamette area at myodfw.com.

One of the pluses of fishing for thermophilic (heat-loving) species is that the gear can be simple and inexpensive – hook, weight, rod, reel, and, oh yea, line – I call this no-frills method the "Wonder Worm" approach.

Put a worm on a hook, cast it out, then wait and wonder what you'll catch.

That can be anything from a bass, bluegill or catfish or some exotic critter such as a crawdad or carp. I even caught a native cutthroat trout once in a slough at Minto Brown Island Park.

Option 2 is to head west.

Surf fishing can be productive for perch, and for the more adventurous, charter boats out of ports from Garibaldi to Newport are a great way to fill the cooler and beat the heat.

History lesson

Hoot owl is a term that originated in the timber industry to describe elevated fire danger.

It still is used by federal and state agencies when restrictions are imposed on commercial and recreational wood-cutting and other activities such as travel by motorized vehicles.

Hoot owl restrictions have expanded to include activities such as camping, hunting and fishing during times of high or extreme temperatures and lack of moisture.

Way off-topic

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