

OUTDOORS

A lonely panorama atop Mount Ireland

William Sullivan Special to Eugene Register-Guard
USA TODAY NETWORK

Who hasn't dreamed of staffing a fire lookout for a summer, escaping the pressure of city life, having time to do all the things you've been putting off? In the freedom of your panoramic mountaintop cabin, you could read edgy novels, study Italian or learn to draw birds.

If that sounds enticing, I suggest you visit the staffer on Mount Ireland first. In fact, I'm going to suggest that you climb this 8,321-foot peak in Eastern Oregon's Blue Mountains anyway, partly because it's a great hike and partly because I suspect the staffer there could use some company.

Last summer, I visited Mount Ireland while updating my hiking guide for Eastern Oregon. It had been seven years since I'd been there, and things change, even in the wilderness.

The trail to the top climbs 2,320 feet in 3.3 miles among white granite boulders festooned with cushions of phlox, yellow sulfur flower and purple penstemon. At the summit, a 13-foot-square metal lookout building teeters on the edge of the North Fork John Day Wilderness, with mountain goats on snowy cliffs to either side and Baldy Lake half a mile almost straight down, a giant sapphire in a green forest ring.

See PANORAMA, Page 2B



Where to catch crabs from the shore



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Feeling crabby?

It's an intriguing question that comes to mind when you check out a meaty (sorry) section of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's online crabbing information pages at ODFW Recreational Crab Fishing, Crab ID (state.or.us)

When you click on the link to "Crabbing reports," a chart comes up that lists catch statistics for boat and "land" (meaning from docks, jetties, shore, etc.) at eight bays in Oregon.

It provides a rough analysis based on success rates for the most productive times to go coastal.

Winchester Bay on the south coast, as an example, is literally off the chart in mid-June for limits of Dungeness crabs, hopefully pre-molt, which will be ex-

plained below.

For the boat-less among us, and a lot closer to home, the peak for land crabbers on Yaquina Bay at Newport is mid-August at eight a person.

The information, according to the web page, is based on catch surveys done by the department, although there are gaps in statistics for most of the bays during the course of the year.

It's not all crab boils and cocktail sauce, though.

As the explainer for the tables says, male Dungeness crabs -- males above a certain size are the only ones legal to keep -- shed their shells, or molt, in June.

So while there are more legal-size males, the new, larger shells don't fill out with meat until the late summer and into fall.

During the interim, a lot of the crabs are like a really skinny guy in a water-filled empathy suit; all filler, little meat. Ergo, the Winchester Bay comment earlier.

Squeeze a leg other than the claw. If it's squishy, not firm, throw it back to let it bulk up.

Now back up a click and check out the other links on the opening page.

A lot of it is fascinating stuff, such as the "Crab identification" page.

There are some great pictures and descriptions of the crabs found in Oregon, including some bizarre varieties such as the spiny lithode (yes, it's a thing) and butterfly.

There's even a section about non-native exotic and invasive varieties. Good stuff.

Pass the cocktail sauce.

Bunch of problems

A recent conversation with a friend reminded me that a lot of anglers believe bananas are bad luck aboard a fishing boat.

So much so that I once saw a skipper roundly chastise an ignorant angler for packing a banana in his lunch cooler before unceremoniously tossing the offending fruit over the gunwale.

The lore and legend of the fruity

See MILLER, Page 2B



The columnist wades right in on Alsea Bay to get a Dungeness crab. KAY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL