

Santiam Lake

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A reminder that new this year, you need one of a limited number of permits purchased from Recreation.gov to camp overnight anywhere in the Jefferson, Three Sisters and Mount Washington wilderness areas. The overnight permits cost \$6 and are doled out in a quota system for each trailhead in the wilderness. The idea is to limit overcrowding by spreading out visits, and it certainly appears to be working, given it has become difficult to get a permit for the Jefferson on a Friday or the weekend, essentially pushing more people to go midweek.

My permit was for Wednesday to Thursday and fortunately, I have an employer who encourages getting outdoors, so drove up Highway 22 past Detroit and turned left toward Duffy Lake Trailhead.

I've written previously about how much of the Jefferson Wilderness has burned in wildfires since 2003 — there have been seven different fires. But Duffy Lake Trail is one of the places that hasn't seen the lick of flames recently and the first three miles of the hike traverse shady old-growth forest.

In 3.3 miles the trail reaches spectacular Duffy Lake, one of the more popular destinations in the Jeff, and I stopped for lunch and a quick swim. To the northeast, the trail enters the burn zone of the 2003 B&B Complex and a handful of interesting lakes including Mowich, Jorn and Blue lakes in the Eight Lakes Basin.

Instead, I headed south, linking up with the Santiam Lake Trail and staying in country that has not burned recently.

The Santiam Lake Trail is a steeper and more rugged pathway, and it would be impassable if not for the work of the Cascade Volunteers' Salamander Crew and the Backcountry Horsemen, two nonprofits that cleared the trail after last year's windstorm brought down a ton of trees. I was told by a different group that downed trees were a major problem on nearby pathways, including the Dixie Lakes Trail. So, to those who worked so we could hike, a hearty "thank you!"

It's about 2 miles from Duffy Lake to Santiam Lake, which you can't really see from the trail itself. The first sign I was near the lake was the shadow of Three Fingering Jack rising overhead, followed by a sign about not having campfires within 100 of the lake, followed by a pair of user trails that drop down through a wildflower meadow to the lake itself.

The scenery of Santiam Lake is something to behold — the meadow gives way to blue pool with the eroded shield volcano of Three Fingering Jack rising above. It's one of the prettiest lakes in the Jefferson, and probably second only to the lakes at the base of Mount Jefferson (which are closed this year due to Lionshead Fire damage).

There are a string of campsites and a well-established user trail around part of the lake, and I set up at the prettiest of the bunch, which had an ideal spot for my hammock as well. I would be the only person camping at Santiam Lake that night.

Upon arrival, there were a pair of fly-anglers working the shallow marsh grass on the lake's southeast edge. As I set up camp, I saw them land one fish and they mentioned when leaving they'd each caught two rainbow trout.

Using a fly rod is, I think, a pretty good route here and I found myself wishing I'd brought mine. Alas, I'd only grabbed a spinning rod and a handful of jigs. And so, after a quick swim and late afternoon snack, began walking around the edge of the lake and casting, trying a mix of lures, from a blue fox to spoons to smaller and larger jigs.

There is nothing that quite compares with the peace



Fly-anglers cast for trout at Santiam Lake. PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

of walking around a beautiful mountain lake in the late afternoon and early evening, just fishing.

At a moment when there are so many ways advertised to settle the brain, from meditation to breathing exercises to yoga on a stand-up paddleboard, fishing remains my favorite because it's the best at mixing fun into the experience — the moments of unexpected thrill within the tranquility.

For most of the evening, the fishing was the definition of tranquil, with barely a bite. But later in the evening, I came across a pocket of deep water in the lake's southeast corner and picked a deeper diving (and better casting) spoon. After a few casts, the rod came to life and a rainbow trout gave me a good fight. With a campfire ban in place and only one fish caught, I released the fish, which was about 10 to 12 inches and pretty fat. I don't take my iPhone fishing as a general rule anymore, both to avoid work-related stuff and because I've dropped it into the water too many times to count, so you'll just have to trust me. I don't feel like catching one fish is bragging. It's probably the opposite, actually.

After a few hours of fishing, I headed back to camp for a dinner of Mountain House beef stroganoff — the best freeze-dried meal money can buy, in my opinion — and watched the clouds drift over Three Fingering Jack, which turned orange, then purple, then dark.

The next morning I packed up camp and, per tradition, took a quick swim before hiking the five miles (or so) back down to my car and driving the 80 minutes back home. All told, the trip was barely longer than a



A hike or backpacking trip to Santiam Lake in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness features old-growth forest, wildflower meadows and mountain lakes.

24-hour vacation, but when you're a full-time parent, you steal whatever time you have and are thankful for it before diving back into the breach of everyday life.

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Miller

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"pubic speaking."

Mea culpa.

Or as spell-check suggested, "Mesa culpable."

On that note, I'll close.

It's time to go fishing.

Maybe at Golf Lake, which is open to the pubic, but is restricted to fry fishing only.

Reminder to anglers

Offshore fishing for both fin-clipped and non-clipped coho "silver" salmon opens Sept. 10 between Cape Falcon near Manzanita and Humbug Mountain near Brookings on Fridays through Sundays through Sept. 30 or 14,000 non-clipped fish are landed, whichever comes first.

With 63,158 adipose fin-clipped coho landed out of the total allowed catch of 120,000 (52.6 percent) when fishing closed after Aug. 28, charter operators are hoping for the hatchery coho season to be extended.

Any changes will be announced on the Ocean Salmon Management Program action-notices web page at ODFW Ocean Salmon Action Notices/Updates (state.or.us).

My bad, so sad

In the Aug. 28 column about the release of 100,000 fall-run Chinook salmon smolts from Rhoades Pond, I typed in and then forgot to cut-and-paste the online contact information for the Nestucca Anglers.

The all-volunteer non-profit groups operates the pond in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Salmon Trout Enhancement Program and the department's Cedar Creek Hatchery just downstream on Three Rivers from Rhoades.

If you would like to learn more about Nestucca Anglers, its projects or volunteer opportunities: Website: Nestucca Anglers - Stream Enhancement, Education, Angling Opportunity Blog: Our Blog Stories - Nestucca Anglers Face-



Coho salmon anglers like this batch at South Beach on Yaquina Bay at Newport will be heading out on Sept. 10 for hatchery-fin-clipped and unclipped silvers. HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

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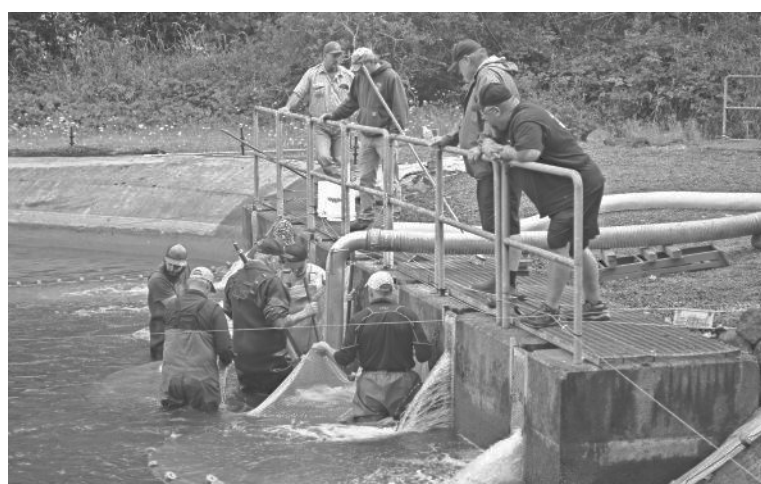
Old joke

First angler: Great fishing trip.

Second angler: Best ever! I even marked an X in the bottom of the boat when we found that hot spot.

First angler: You knucklehead (wait for it). What if we rent a different boat?

Contact Henry via email at [Henry MillerSJ@gmail.com](mailto:HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com)



Learn about events and volunteer opportunities with the Nestucca Anglers online at the nonprofit group's web pages.