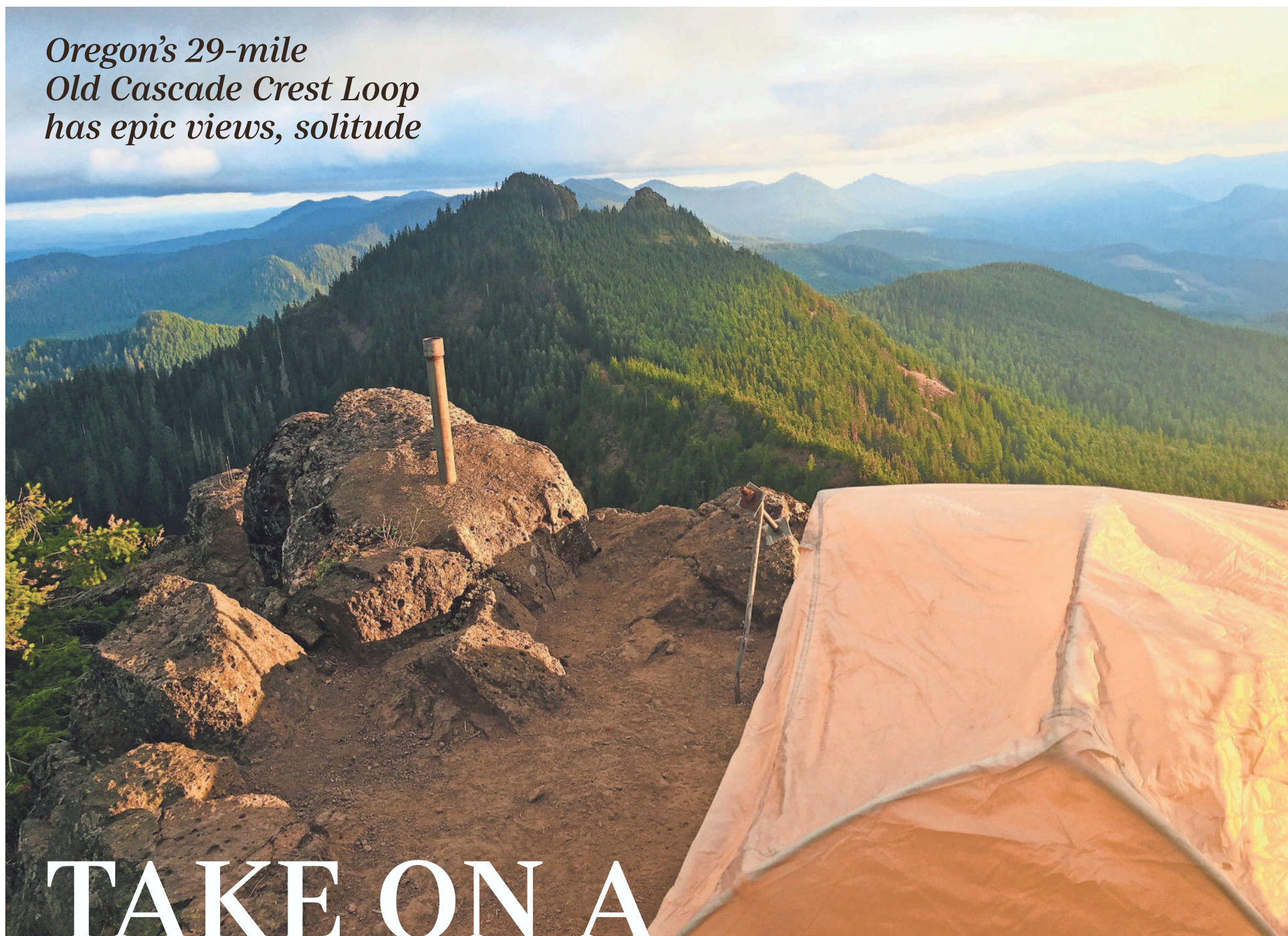


OUTDOORS

Oregon's 29-mile Old Cascade Crest Loop has epic views, solitude



TAKE ON A *challenging route*

Paul Lask Special to Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

The Old Cascade Crest Loop is a 29-mile system of trails nestled in the Old Cascades, mountains west of Santiam Pass that are millions of years older than iconic High Cascade peaks like Mount Hood and Mount Jefferson. ● Dubbed the “Pyramid Epic Loop” by the mountain bike and trail running communities, the lightly-trafficked loop winds and climbs through lush valleys of mature forest, open meadows and outlooks that offer sweeping views of High Cascade pinnacles. ● Starting on a Friday evening in late August, I headed out to backpack this rugged loop. The journey brought me past a quiet lake with a fabled Douglas Fir, a beautiful sunset atop Middle Pyramid and a long climb out of a rainforest into the dry high country of Scar Mountain. ● The route is a major challenge, requiring 7,600 feet of climb across the 29 miles, following a collection of trails strung together that cross Forest Service roads a few times. I did it in two days and one night, but it could be spread out for an easier journey. **See ROUTE, Page 2B**



Above: Sunset from Middle Pyramid on the Old Cascades Loop. Top: Paul Lask's camp on Middle Pyramid during his route on the Old Cascades Loop. PHOTOS BY PAUL LASK/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Free youth pheasant hunts, halibut anglers to be allowed two a day



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Registrations are filling fast for the annual free youth pheasant hunts that allow kids 17 and younger a jump on the adult fee pheasant hunts at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis.

The 70th anniversary editions of the hunts are scheduled from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sept. 25 and 26, and youth hunters must be accompanied one-on-one by a non-hunting adult 21 or older.

“Saturday’s almost filled to capacity, 75,” said Shawn Woods, the area manager. “So what we do is we let the kids that haven’t hunted on Sunday get the first hour and a half, and then kids get to return for a second day from Saturday at 10:30.

“I expect capacity on both days ... but we still have room for anyone who wants to hunt Sunday.”

It’s the second year that the youth hunts will be held under state-mandated COVID protocols.

“You know, last year with the virus

problem, we had one of the best attendances we’ve had in a decade,” Woods said. “They’re looking for an outdoor event that they can come out and enjoy ... people are hungry for that.”

Youth pheasant hunts in 2020 faced the double whammy of COVID restrictions and the spate of wildfires blazing throughout Oregon.

“They actually had to cancel some of the locations up at Sauvie (Island Wildlife Area near Portland) because of the smoke,” Woods said. “Ours was just late enough that we took some of the spillover for the youth that were shut out. So we actually extended our capacity and had over 100 kids.”

Volunteer handlers with trained hunting dogs usually are available on a limited basis to assist the young guns.

Information about each of the youth pheasant hunts is online at myodfw.com.

The E.E. Wilson youth pheasant hunts are sort of an early bird special — pardon the pun — ahead of the annual put-and-take adult fee pheasant hunts that run from Sept. 27, the day after the youth hunts, through Oct. 31 on the wildlife area.

During the seasons, rooster (male) pheasants purchased from Powder Riv-



Thanks to generous sponsors, there will be more rooster (male) pheasants available for youth and, later, adult hunters at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area near Corvallis. HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

er Pheasants, a game-bird farm near Baker, are released on sections of the 1,600-plus-acre wildlife area that are open to hunting.

This year, Wilson will be getting more birds, Woods said.

“We had some great sponsors really step up this year, so we’re going to have even more birds than we had in previous

years,” he said.

Here are the basics for the youth hunts, which will observe state-mandated COVID protocols:

- Participants have to have a Hunter Education Certificate, and the adult must have a \$10 daily or \$30 annual wildlife area parking permit (which licensed hunters receive free).

- Youths ages 12 and to 17 need to have a current hunting license (\$10 annually and includes hunting and fishing license, shellfish permit and Columbia Basin endorsement). They also need a youth upland game bird validation (\$4).

- Licenses and permits must be purchased in advance. There are no on-site sales at the event site. The online licensing page for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is at huntfishoregon.com.

- There is a mandatory safety briefing before each day’s hunt, and participants, including accompanying adults, are required to wear a blaze orange hat and vest and shooting glasses or other eye protection in the field.

- As with all hunts on state wildlife areas, federally approved non-toxic shot is mandatory.

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