

# OUTDOORS

## ‘Campsite Jeopardy’



Bonnie and Robert O’Daniel relax at their campsite at Detroit Lake State Park campground in Detroit. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

## Oregonians see demand for outdoor spots skyrocket

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

In the morning darkness of winter and early spring, Carol Gilbert wakes up with her two young children, makes tea and prepares for battle. • While getting her 7-year-old ready for school and feeding her 2-year-old, Gilbert makes sure her computer is on, her profile logged in and her screen on the right page so the instant the clock strikes 7 a.m. she can click faster than everyone else attempting to score a precious Oregon campsite on a weekend six months in the future. • “I actually set three alarms on my phone so that I don’t forget,” said Gilbert, who lives in Bend. “It’s all about who has the fastest fingers. If you’re even a minute late, you won’t get it.

“It’s crazy, frustrating and it sucks when you don’t get anything, but we love camping. It’s such a great family vacation that’s still a lot cheaper than getting a hotel or something.”

Her story is far from unique.

Each morning, numerous Oregonians play “campground Jeopardy” in hopes of scoring reservations on websites Recreation.gov and ReserveAmerica.com.

As Oregon’s population grows and the pandemic-fueled rush to the outdoors continues, demand for campsites has skyrocketed at

the same the time supply has been flat or declined.

Oregon’s state parks have opened just three new campgrounds since 1972, while many campgrounds on federal land have been closed by wildfires.

And opening new campgrounds isn’t easy. Oregon had plans for three large campgrounds shot down since 2008 by local opposition. The U.S. Forest Service has mostly focused on maintaining ex-

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Lucy and Rollie Urness roast hot dogs at House Rock Campground east of Sweet Home. ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL



Some sites at Sherwood Campground are right along the East Fork of the Hood River.

## Stories of starfish, crabs and giant sturgeon



Fishing  
Henry Miller  
Guest columnist

A mishmash of outdoor-themed items is at hand, the first two with a nautical theme.

### Item 1: Star gazing is in; star hazing is out.

At its March 18 virtual meeting, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission approved a rule that prohibits the taking of starfish.

It’s an effort to help recovery efforts after a massive and extensive 2013 die-off of the colorful critters caused by a condition known as Sea Star Wasting.

Prior to the ban, the daily limit had been 10 sea stars.

“It’s not real popular, but some people want to take some home as a souve-

nir.” said Mitch Vance, the Shellfish Project leader for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

And the result is frequently a waste, he added, because coastal tourists often ended up dumping their bucket of sea stars after they had been, ahem, fermenting in the trunk of the car for a couple of hours on a hot summer day.

Paging Jimmy Hoffa.

In the interests of full disclosure, while growing up in Southern California, I used to take home a few starfish. They were a bi-catch from prying mussels off of pier pilings and rocks to use as bait for perch.

I can attest to the attraction.

Virtually every tract house in SoCal during the mid-to-late-’60s had a decorative fish net on a living room or den wall with assorted dried starfish and smallish shore crabs, along with hunks of driftwood and abalone and sea shells.

And I also can vouch for the nose-searing stench as they dried on a sheet

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Go for the mussels, but leave the sea stars. These photos were taken at Lincoln City before the widespread surge of Sea Star Wasting. HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL