

OREGON MAN TRAVELS ACROSS ANTARCTICA — ALONE



Colin O'Brady photo via The New York Times

Colin O'Brady pulls his gear behind him on Dec. 22, day 50 of his trip across Antarctica. O'Brady covered the final 77.5 miles of his 921-mile journey without sleeping and became the first person ever to traverse Antarctica from coast to coast solo, unsupported and unaided by wind.

An epic Antarctic trek

By Amanda Lee Myers
Associated Press

An Oregon man became the first person to traverse Antarctica alone without any assistance on Wednesday, trekking across the polar continent in an epic 54-day journey that was previously deemed impossible.

Colin O'Brady, of Portland, finished the bone-chilling, 930-mile journey as friends, family and fans tracked the endurance athlete's progress in real time online.

"I did it!" a tearful O'Brady said on a call to his family gathered in Portland for the holidays, according to his wife, Jenna Besaw.

"It was an emotional call," she said. "He seemed overwhelmed by love and gratitude, and he really wanted to say 'Thank you' to all of us."

O'Brady was sleeping near the finish line in Antarctica late Wednesday and could not immediately be reached for comment.

The 33-year-old O'Brady documented his nearly entirely uphill journey — which he called The Impossible First — on his Instagram page. He wrote Wednesday that he covered the last roughly 80 miles in one big, impromptu final push to the finish line that took well over an entire day.

"While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced," O'Brady posted.

The day before, he posted that he was "in the zone" and



Colin O'Brady photo via The New York Times

Colin O'Brady after completing his solo trek across Antarctica.

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— Colin O'Brady, after finishing his solo trek across Antarctica

thought he could make it to the end in one go.

"I'm listening to my body and taking care of the details to keep myself safe," he wrote. "I called home and talked to my mom, sister and wife — I promised them I will stop when I need to."

Though others have traversed Antarctica, they either had assistance with reinforced supplies or kites that helped propel them forward.

In 2016, British explorer Henry Worsley died attempting an unassisted solo trip

across Antarctica, collapsing from exhaustion toward the end of the trek. Worsley's friend and fellow English adventurer Louis Rudd is currently attempting an unaided solo in Worsley's honor and was competing against O'Brady to be the first to do it.

Besaw said O'Brady plans to stay on Antarctica until Rudd finishes his trek, hopefully in the next few days.

"It's a small club," she joked. "His intention is to wait for Louis and have kind of a celebratory moment with the only other person on the planet to have accomplished this same thing."

O'Brady described in detail the ups and downs along the way since he began the trek on Nov. 3. He had to haul 375 pounds of gear largely uphill and over sastrugi, wave-like ridges created by wind.

"Not only am I pulling my ... sled all day, but I'm pulling it up and over thousands of these sastrugi speed bumps

created by the violent wind," he wrote in an Instagram post on Nov. 12. "It's a frustrating process at times to say the least."

On Nov. 18, he wrote that he awoke to find his sled completely buried from an all-night blasting of wind and snow. That day he battled a 30 mph headwind for eight hours as he trudged along.

"There were several times I considered stopping, putting my tent back up and calling it a day," he wrote. "I wanted so badly to quit today as I was feeling exhausted and alone, but remembering all of the positivity that so many people have been sending, I took a deep breath and focused on maintaining forward progress one step at a time and managed to finish a full day."

On Day 37, or Dec. 9, O'Brady wrote about how much he's changed, along with a selfie in which he looks almost in pain, snow gathered around his furry hat.

"I'm no longer the same person I was when I left on the journey, can you see it in my face?" he wrote. "I've suffered, been deathly afraid, cold and alone. I've laughed and danced, cried tears of joy and been awestruck with love and inspiration."

Though O'Brady had initially thought he'd want a cheeseburger at the end of his nearly impossible journey, Besaw said her husband has been fantasizing about fresh fish and salad because he has mostly been eating freeze-dried foods.

TRACKS

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I had walked in almost exactly the opposite direction from what I believed I was traveling. Instead of hiking south and crossing Blue Canyon I had hiked north. Which meant the stream I had hopped over was not Blue Canyon but rather one of its diminutive tributaries.

This navigational blunder bothered me, naturally, but initially I was more bemused than anything.

At least my mistake led me not away from my destination but closer to it; I had only a 15-minute walk, most of it downhill, still to go.

But as I trudged along the situation nagged at my mind, the way a mishap will do

when it has no precedent but seems as though it could be the start of a pattern of ever-deteriorating performance.

I have, as the joke goes, been turned around a few times in the woods but I've never been what I could reasonably call lost. I've never had to make a panicked cell-phone call. I've never spent a night outdoors that I didn't intend to spend there.

I certainly wasn't lost, in the conventional sense, on Christmas Eve — I had my own tracks to guide me home, after all.

But I could hardly pretend, had I made a similar error in less familiar terrain, that I would have so easily extricated myself without risking hypothermia or the loss of a digit or two to frostbite.

I was so vexed by what happened that I convinced my wife, Lisa, to return with me on Christmas to retrace my steps and try to figure out how I got off course so egregiously.

This effort gave me at best a partial answer.

It was clear that when I left the spur road I had walked in generally the right direction — south — until I got into the rumpled topography of the mine tailings. By following the path of least resistance, rather than climbing directly over several rockpiles, I had in effect let the terrain lead me, gradually but inexorably, to the wrong side of a minor knob that separates Blue Canyon from its tributary.

Superficially the ground

was what I expected it to be — a small stream followed by a relatively steep ridge.

But our re-creation of my hike didn't help me understand how I failed to recognize that the stream was far too small to be Blue Canyon, which is no raging torrent but is, or at least should be, conspicuous.

Nor do I know why it didn't occur to me that, because the stream's flow was to my right, that I had to be walking north. This is a certainty because Blue Canyon and its feeder streams all run, generally speaking, to the east.

I was sufficiently chagrined at my ineptitude that I plumbed one of my bookshelves for a volume I doubt I had touched in a decade and

a half.

It's "Be Expert with Map and Compass" by Bjorn Kellstrom, perhaps the definitive guide to orienteering in the pre-GPS era.

Rather than continue to fret about my gaffe I decided to use it as motivation to build up my obviously atrophied ability to negotiate rough country without the

aid of orbiting satellites.

This might seem a superfluous skill these days but I've had an epiphany.

I want that extra level of confidence that comes from being able to get around with nothing more sophisticated than a sheet of paper and a needle floating in mineral oil.

Neither of which requires batteries.

PREDATORY FISH EAT SALMON, STEELHEAD

Pikeminnow bounty program paid \$1.4 million

■ Top angler hooked 8,600 fish and collected about \$71,000 in bounties

SEATTLE (AP) — A program that pays anglers to catch a predator that eats young salmon and steelhead resulted in more than 180,000 northern pikeminnows being caught and killed in the Columbia and Snake rivers this year, federal officials say.

The anglers were paid \$1.4 million for catching northern pikeminnows from May 1 through Sept. 30, the Bonneville Power Administration announced.

The annual reward program is funded by the agency and is intended to remove the predatory pikeminnow that eats young salmon and steelhead headed for the ocean. Thirteen populations of salmon and steelhead in Washington, Oregon and Idaho are struggling and listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

"We've seen a substantial reduction in predation by these fish, which

mean young salmon and steelhead have a better chance of making it to the ocean and eventually returning to the basin as adults," said Eric McOmie, the program's manager at Bonneville Power Administration.

The agency said anglers removed 11.5 percent of the pikeminnow population measuring 9 inches or longer, meaning the program successfully met its goal of removing 10 to 20 percent of the predators. Larger fish are believed to eat the most salmon and steelhead.

Anglers who register and participate are paid \$5 to \$8 per fish. As an incentive, wildlife officials released more than 1,000 specially tagged northern pike minnows worth \$500 if caught by an angler.

The top angler this year earned about \$71,000 after catching 8,600 fish during the five-month season. The top 20 anglers earned an average of \$29,000 each.

Government shutdown affects Crater Lake, John Day Fossil Beds

SALEM (AP) — Access to Crater Lake and Mount Rainier national parks will be limited due to the government shutdown.

The Statesman Journal reports the lapse in federal funding prompted Crater Lake managers to close the visitor's center, cancel ranger-guided snowshoe trips and close the road to the lake's rim.

Mount Rainier closed its road to popular winter recreation destination Paradise.

Both places remain technically open but, as with most national parks and monuments, there will be almost no services, including search and rescue.

The federal government shutdown will impact the more than 400 national parks and monuments. In Oregon, that includes John Day Fossil Beds and Oregon Caves national monuments, in addition to Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

Whale count underway

PORTLAND (AP) — Migrating gray whales will once again be passing along the Oregon Coast this winter, where visitors and volunteers will gather for the annual Winter Whale Watch Week.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the five-day event is organized by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and will run from Dec. 27 to 31.

It coincides with the passing of some 20,000 gray whales headed south to their warm breeding grounds near Baja, Mexico.

The parks department will staff trained volunteers at 24 designated whale watching locations along the coast from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on each of the five days of the event.

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative is seeking a Member Services Representative in Burns, OR. The MSR will greet customers and receive payments, assist customers with inquiries via phone or in person, and other clerical functions such as filing and typing. Visit any OTEC office for an application or apply online at www.otecc.com/careers. OTEC is an equal opportunity employer. Rate of pay: 16.93/hr. Closes 12-28-18



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