

RECREATION REPORT

PIKEMINNOW FISHING BOUNTY BEGINS

The annual reward system for anglers who catch northern pikeminnow in the Columbia and Snake rivers started Wednesday.

The program pays registered anglers \$5 to \$8 for each pikeminnow that is at least 9 inches long. The more fish an angler catches, the more each pikeminnow is worth. And some fish have an even bigger payout. State fish and wildlife biologists have released up to 1,000 specially tagged northern pikeminnow into the Columbia and Snake rivers, each worth \$500. Last year the top fisherman in the program earned more than \$71,000 in just five months of fishing.

Northern pikeminnow are voracious eaters, consuming millions of young salmon and steelhead each year. Since 1990, anglers paid through the program have removed nearly 5 million pikeminnow from the Columbia and Snake rivers. The program has reduced predation from pikeminnow on young salmon and steelhead by approximately 40% since it began.

The pikeminnow reward program is scheduled to continue through Sept. 30. The fishery website, www.pikeminnow.org, has details on how to register for the program and applicable state fishing regulations. Anglers will also find resources on the site to help boost their fishing game, including maps, how-to videos and free fishing clinics. The program is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration and administered by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission in cooperation with the Washington and Oregon departments of fish and wildlife.

FISHING FORECAST

HAINES POND

Has been stocked with 900 trophy-size rainbow trout

HIGHWAY 203 POND

The pond has been stocked with 2,250 legal-size and 825 trophy-size rainbow trout.

MORGAN LAKE

Open to fishing and has been stocked with 500 trophy-size rainbow trout.

PHILLIPS RESERVOIR

Approximately 4,700 legal-size rainbow trout have been recently stocked.

April 21, 2019



April 21, 2018



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

This pair of photos, taken exactly one year apart at the snow-measuring station at Eilertson Meadow in the Elkhorn Mountains west of Haines, shows the dramatic difference in snowpack.

The same photo ... but different

I blame the sun.

For an object 93 million miles away — a rather considerable distance by our terrestrial standards — the sun can be as annoying as a mosquito orbiting your head at an altitude of less than half an inch.

I know the sun makes life possible on Earth and so I ought to be grateful for its essential rays.

But the big ball of gas can also make a heck of a nuisance of itself.

It can, for instance, render all but invisible the screen of a smartphone right when you're looking at a photograph that you hope to replicate.

That was my predicament on a nearly cloudless Easter Sunday. And no matter how I tilted the screen or twisted my hand to shade it, I couldn't quite get a clear look as I prepared to document the difference in snowpack between this year and last at Eilertson Meadow in the Elkhorns.

This was my third attempt at the intriguing concept of repeat photography at the site along Rock Creek.

The idea is elegant in its simplicity, and compelling in its possibilities — you have an existing photo which you try to duplicate as precisely as possible.

The concept is often employed to show the significant ways a landscape changes over many decades or even a century.

But depending on the purpose, repeat photography can also yield interesting results in successive years — a somewhat more sluggish version of the familiar time-lapse photography that shows, for instance, snow piling up to prodigious depths in less than a day during a blizzard.

I was drawn to Rock Creek by happenstance that turned into habit.

When I hiked the snowbound road to Eilertson Meadow on April 21, 2018, I remembered, albeit vaguely, that I had made the same trip at about the same time the previous



ON THE TRAIL

JAYSON JACOBY

year.

It turned out to be the same April Saturday — the 21st in 2018, the 22nd in 2017.

Although I didn't have a photo to consult last year, having swapped phones, but not all my pictures, in the meantime, I managed a pretty fair replica of the 2017 scene.

Not that it required much precision in camera placement to dramatically illustrate the difference — in 2018 the ground was almost bare, while in 2017 it was snow-covered.

Having assembled that admittedly meager portfolio I decided, some weeks back, that I would if possible visit Eilertson Meadow for a third straight April.

My wife, Lisa, and I hiked up there and, it being a Sunday, as I mentioned, rather than a Saturday, the date was once again April 21.

The biggest difference we encountered was one we also expected — we couldn't drive as far up the road as I had in either of the previous two years.

In this case, however, the culprit was not a surplus of sun but rather of snow.

The subject of my repeat photos at Eilertson Meadow happens to be an automated snow-measuring station called, cleverly if ungrammatically, a Snotel. I had been tracking its data — available online at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/snow/> — and I knew the water content in the snow was more than twice what it had been in 2017.

The abundance of snow added about a mile to the round trip, making it roughly 6 miles all told.

Fortunately we were able to get along without having to strap on snowshoes. I rather suspected this



Lisa Britton / For WesCom News Service

A bear track in the snow along Rock Creek Road, in the Elkhorn Mountains west of Haines.

would be the case. Spring snow tends to be pretty firm anyway, what with the cycles of daytime slush (thanks again to the sun) and nighttime frost transforming midwinter's sugary powder into something with a consistency closer to partially cured concrete.

But the greater credit goes to

the snowmobiles and other tracked machines that plied the road this past winter. Their treads compacted the snow, making it nearly as firm as bare ground.

(Except wetter. And more slippery.)

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Ladd Marsh Bird Festival set for May 17-19

With a diverse bird population, Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area near La Grande is hosting the 14th-annual Ladd Marsh Bird Festival May 17-19. The festival offers an uncrowded, family friendly birding opportunity for expert and novice birders.

The festival occurs at peak spring migration and nesting season, and only on bird festival weekend do visitors have the opportunity to explore areas of the wildlife area typically closed to the public.

The event is free but registration

is required. Optional field trips and workshops run from \$20 to \$40 and require pre-payment. Before joining the festival, visitors must purchase a parking permit at any outlet where hunting licenses are sold.

Festivities start Friday evening, May 17, with Rob Taylor, former Midway Atoll restoration ecologist who became acquainted with Wisdom, the oldest known living wild bird. Rob will discuss how the atoll, a military base, was transformed into a refuge for birds and other wildlife. This event

begins at 6 p.m. at the Union County Senior Center, 1504 Albany St. in La Grande.

Saturday activities begin at 6 a.m. with local birding experts available until noon to help visitors find and identify birds at six stations located around the wildlife area. At 1 p.m., Blue Mountain Wildlife will bring live birds of prey and discuss life history of hawks, falcons and owls. Services for the deaf are available; call Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area at 541-963-4954. Children's Saturday activities from

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. include birdhouse building, coloring a canvas tote, and the Junior Birder program. Youngsters completing the Junior Birder program earn a patch and a field guide. These activities are centered at the Tule Lake registration area on Peach Road.

Festival sponsors include the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Friends of Ladd Marsh, Eastern Oregon University, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and several others.