

## RECREATION REPORT

### Steelhead season under way on several local rivers

The steelhead fishing season opened Sept. 1 on sections of several Northeastern Oregon rivers. The bag limit is one steelhead per day through Dec. 31. Open rivers include:

- Grande Ronde River upstream to Meadow Creek
- Imnaha River downstream of Big Sheep Creek
- Wallowa River from the mouth upstream to Trout Creek
- Big Sheep Creek downstream of Little Sheep Creek
- Wenaha River downstream of Crooked Creek
- Snake River from the state line to Hells Canyon Dam
- Catherine Creek upstream to Highway 203 bridge above Catherine Creek State Park.

A relatively small number of returning steelhead is responsible for the one-fish daily bag limit.

“As with last year, we have decided to limit the daily catch to one hatchery fish per day in order to protect the returning wild steelhead as well as to insure the hatchery has enough returning fish for broodstock,” said Winston Morton, acting assistant district fish biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in Enterprise.

The number of steelhead returning to the Columbia and Snake River systems are about 30% of the 10-year average so far. If numbers increase, ODFW will re-evaluate the one-fish daily bag limit.

### Free youth pheasant hunt Sept. 14-15 at Ladd Marsh

Hunters 17 and younger can hunt pheasants for free on Sept. 14 and 15 at Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area. Check-in both days is at 7 a.m. at 59116 Pierce Road, with hunting from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Each hunter must be accompanied by an adult 21 or older; adults are not allowed to hunt.

Each youth hunter must have a hunter education certificate or hunting license. Hunters 12 or older need an upland game bird validation. All participants, adults and youth, must wear a blaze orange hat and vest, as well as eye protection.

Registration deadline is Sept. 9. To register go to [odfw.huntfishoregon.com](http://odfw.huntfishoregon.com). More information is available by calling organizer Kyle Martin at 541-963-4954 or by email at [kyle.w.martin@state.or.us](mailto:kyle.w.martin@state.or.us)

## Pondering Mountain Passes



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group-2017

The view west from Polaris Pass takes in much of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The pass, the highest in the Wallowa Mountains crossed by an official trail, is on the divide between the West and East forks of the Wallowa River.

# Just passing by

Some of the more memorable climbs I've made in the mountains brought me to low ground rather than high.

Well, sort of.

The summits in these cases are low only by comparison to their surrounding topography.

By any other measure, though, they are quite elevated.

It is no coincidence that mountain passes, though by definition they occupy the place where a ridge, or in some cases an entire range, dips, are often described as “high passes.”

Humans have a particular fascination with superlatives, of course. This explains in part why mountain peaks, and especially those that dominate the terrain for dozens of miles around, hold us in such awe.

Passes, by contrast, which typically afford travelers a way to avoid rather than surmount a summit, are less likely to inspire poetic odes to the grandeur of nature.

It's why the Theodule Pass in the Swiss Alps is relatively obscure — so much so that the internet seems unable to agree on whether to include the final “e” — but the peak it skirts — the Matterhorn — is perhaps the most famous mountain in the world.

But even though passes tend to languish in the shadows of nearby summits, both literally and figuratively, some of these breaches in mountainous ramparts have yielded a cultural history at least as rich as those of neighboring peaks.

This is logical, given that passes serve the basic purpose of allowing us to get where we want to go as efficiently as possible.

Climbing inaccessible peaks, by contrast, has always struck some of the more sober-minded among us as folly — and worse still the



### ON THE TRAIL

JAYSON JACOBY

sort of folly than can leave a climber with toes blackened by frostbite or a skull dashed in by a tumbling chunk of granite or limestone.

To critics there is a strong and bitter flavor of selfishness to the enterprise, this risking of precious life for a dubious achievement that serves no greater good.

Discovering and then utilizing a mountain pass, by contrast, is the sort of endeavor that has a wider societal appeal — and, often, benefit.

Blazing trails and railroads and highways through wild country can also be dangerous, of course, what with the nature of mountain weather and the occasional avalanche or landslide or antagonistic grizzly.

But for some people the potential sacrifice can at least be justified if for instance the effort opens a new trade route, traditionally a common reason to devise a passage through the mountains.

I've long been intrigued by the history of passes, and in particular their progression from footpath to wagon train to, in many cases, modern highway.

When I started hiking regularly as a teenager my interest in passes expanded to include ones that, rather than becoming thoroughfares where 18-wheelers groan their way up 6% grades, remain rudimentary, with only a trail marking the passage.

When I was growing up in Stayton, on the eastern edge of the Willamette Valley, I was especially enamored of two passes through the Cascades — the Santiam and the McKenzie, each named for a nearby river and both crossed by a paved highway.



Jayson Jacoby / EO Media Group

Marble Creek Pass in the Elkhorn Mountains west of Baker City is also the terminus of the Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail.



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The view from Ivan Carper Pass, between the East and West forks of the Lostine River, includes Eagle Cap (at right), and Upper (the smaller lake) and Mirror lakes. Polaris Pass is the low spot between the two brownish-red peaks at the left.

We drove across the Santiam Pass whenever we visited Central Oregon and even today, after living for a few decades on the other end

of the state, the elevation of its summit — 4,817 feet — comes to mind as easily as my phone number.

We never called it anything

except just “the pass,” it being unnecessary to specify which one we meant.

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