

RECREATION REPORT

The second Rocky Mountain elk hunting season starts Saturday, Nov. 2, and continues through Nov. 10. As a reminder to hunters in the Lookout Mountain Unit in Baker County, the Forsea Ranch Access Area will not be available for big game hunting this fall. The property owners have withdrawn from the Access & Habitat Program.

WILDLIFE VIEWING

BAKER COUNTY

• Bighorn sheep can be seen in the Burnt River Canyon west of Durkee or along the Snake River Road south of Richland. The best viewing is in the early morning and late in the evening.

• Bald and golden eagles can be seen along the Snake River. Take the Snake River Road between Richland and Huntington.

UNION COUNTY

Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area (note: all visitors must have in their possession a free daily permit to access the wildlife area. Permits are available at several self-check-in stations at entry points and parking lots. All visitors also need a parking permit to park on the wildlife area.)

Hundreds of waterfowl are using the area. Species present include Canada goose, mallard, northern pintail and American green-winged teal. During the day they are most often loafing on open water areas. American white pelicans and a small number of tundra swans have also been present. Binoculars or a scope from the Foothill Road viewpoint will offer views of waterfowl in the refuge below.

Raptors are numerous around the area and include red-tailed hawk, northern harrier and both sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks. A few ferruginous hawks have been reported in the area in recent weeks. Rough-legged hawks have not arrived yet. Watch for them when cold temperatures and snow hit areas to the north.

WALLOWA COUNTY

A good place to observe mule deer is along the Wallowa Lake Highway between Joseph and the south end of Wallowa Lake. Drive slowly and watch along the moraine on the east side of the lake around dawn and dusk. Be careful to use the turnouts when stopping to watch.

FAREL BAXTER, WHO LIVES IN BAKER CITY AND GREW UP IN UNION, RECOUNTS MEMORIES OF THE EAGLE CAP WILDERNESS

Wilderness Wonders

■ His father's decision to take a job with the Forest Service in 1951 led Farel Baxter, then 8, to a love for the Eagle Cap that has never abated

By Jayson Jacoby
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Farel Baxter's dad died almost a quarter century ago but even now there are moments, when he's deep in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, that Farel feels his father as not merely a pleasant memory but as an almost physical presence.

And once again, however briefly, father and son are together in the place they both loved best.

The place where the man taught and the boy learned.

Where they shared trails and tents and fresh flaky trout cooked in the coals of a campfire as night draped its black cloak over the alpine forest.

"I think sometimes he's there, laughing at me," Baxter, who's 76, said of his father, Reynolds, who died in 1996 at age 84. "I don't think he's very far away. I have those feelings."

These interludes, when the intervening years dissipate much as ground fog clears from a mountain meadow on a fine summer morning, are invariably prompted by an actual event.

Baxter, a retired Baker High School teacher who has lived in Baker City since 1978, will be hiking, say, the trail along Eagle Creek, north of Boulder Park, and the sight of plump purple huckleberries spangling the trailside bushes will remind him of one afternoon with his dad.

They were hiking that trail, and sampling the juicy berries from the same reliable



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald

One room in Farel Baxter's Baker City home is chock full of photographs, elk antlers and other mementoes from his dozens of trips into the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

"I think sometimes he's there, laughing at me. I don't think he's very far away. I have those feelings."

— Farel Baxter, talking about his late father, Reynolds

patch, when his dad spotted a sow bear with two cubs trundling toward them.

Father and son watched the trio of bears splash across Eagle Creek and when they emerged from the sparkling stream Reynolds told his son, who was still young enough to be pranked, that he had never seen this species of bear.

The joke, Baxter says now with a smile, is that the bears were black except for their bellies, where the fur was brown.

The brown was from muddy water clinging to the bruins' fur after they forded the creek.

But Baxter, who grew up in



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald

Farel Baxter smiles frequently when reminiscing about his experiences in the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Union, needn't rely solely on memories to rekindle his relationship with his late father.

When he hikes into the Eagle Cap Wilderness Baxter frequently sees, and indeed touches, tangible evidence of his father.

Reynolds Baxter worked for the Forest Service from 1951 to 1972. And for much of his career he was responsible for trails, bridges and signs in the southwestern part of the Wallowa Mountains that would, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law on Sept. 3, 1964, become part of

the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Today it's Oregon's biggest federal wilderness, covering about 365,000 acres.

"I'm so grateful it was preserved as wilderness," Baxter said.

Reynolds Baxter built 12 bridges in the Eagle Cap. His son knows something about all of them, and it's always a special experience for him when he steps on a wooden plank that his father fashioned, or puts his hand on a rail, its surface smoothed by time and weather, that his father's own palms rested on as it was nailed into place.

Photo courtesy of Farel Baxter
Reynolds Baxter stands on a bridge over Eagle Creek that he built in 1968.

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Cutting to the chase: Sharpening your skills

Since we're in the middle of hunting season I thought that this would be a timely topic. All outdoorsmen use a knife and yet I'll bet not 5% can sharpen one. I know this is a true statement — why else would shows have me conduct knife-sharpening seminars from Texas to Vegas and on up to Alaska?

In the old days all our dad used to sharpen knives was an Arkansas stone, but nowadays, most knives are constructed of metal so hard that you can't sharpen them on an Arkansas stone so I recommend using a diamond stone. With a diamond stone you'll be able to obtain an edge within literally 2-3 minutes. Even a hard knife like a Diamond Blade or Buck knife. I've had good luck with Smith's



BASE CAMP
TOM CLAYCOMB

Consumer Products fine diamond stones. Smith's has the best stones.

Let's get started. You see people grinding their knife in a circular motion, others cutting into the stone and yet others cutting away. Which way is the correct method? It doesn't matter, as long as you use the same angle all the way down the edge and do the same number of strokes on each side. If you don't do the same number of strokes on each side then the edge will be lopsided.



Submitted photo

If you bowhunt for long you'll miss an occasional shot, and learning to sharpen your broadheads can save you money.

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