

RECREATION
REPORT

**ANGLERS
CAUGHT MORE
THAN 146,000
PIKEMINNOW
FROM COLUMBIA,
SNAKE RIVERS**

PORTLAND — Anglers earned nearly \$1,162,000 in 2019 in the annual Northern Pikeminnow Sport Reward Program. In all, they removed more than 146,000 northern pikeminnow from the Columbia and Snake rivers, which means fewer big fish preying on juvenile endangered salmon, according to the Bonneville Power Administration.

Each year millions of juvenile salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake rivers make their way downstream toward the Pacific Ocean. These young fish face numerous predators along the way, including the northern pikeminnow. The native fish is responsible for depleting the numbers of out-migrating juveniles.

For nearly 30 years the Bonneville Power Administration has funded the Northern Pikeminnow Sport Reward Program, paying fishing enthusiasts to remove pikeminnow from the river, reducing the number of predators that prey on juvenile endangered salmon. Registered anglers who removed pikeminnow more than 9 inches long earned \$5 to \$8 per fish. Specially tagged northern pikeminnow were each worth \$500.

The 2019 season ended Sept. 30. Numbers include:

- 146,225 pikeminnow removed
- 2,700 registered anglers
- 7.2 fish per day average per angler
- Top angler earned \$53,107 and removed 6,482 fish

The program's goal is not to eliminate northern pikeminnow, but rather to reduce the average size and number of larger, predatory fish.

The Sport Reward Program has removed more than 5 million northern pikeminnow from the Columbia and Snake rivers since 1990, reducing predation on young salmon and steelhead by up to 40%, according to the BPA.

**STATE PARK
PARKING PERMIT
DISCOUNTS**

An annual day-use parking permit for Oregon State Parks costs \$25 during December, a discount of \$5 from the regular price. Passes are for sale online at store.oregonstateparks.org, at some Oregon Parks and Recreation Department offices, and at some businesses. Permits can be moved among vehicles.

HUNTING FOR A CHRISTMAS TREE

Pursuit of perfection

A Christmas tree is an enchanting sight both when it's standing in a snowy glen in the deep woods and later, when its aromatic and ornament-laden branches enrich your living room.

In between, though, it's a most hateful object.

One as obstinate as an inanimate thing can be.

A grand fir that's not much taller than I am — this in deference to the modest height of our ceiling — does not wish to be dragged from its stump to the road.

In particular the tree does not wish to be tumbled down a slope steep enough that it ought to have a black diamond sign, wrestled across an ice-fringed stream and manhandled up the bank on the other side.

My wife, Lisa, and I drove up above Sumpter on Sunday on a quest for the fir that will grace our home for the next few weeks.

(I suppose it was not inevitable that we would return with a fir strapped to the top of the rig, as opposed to some other species, but I was all but certain, based on more than two decades of collecting Christmas trees, that fir needles would be the sort littering the floormats. Our other options include the Engelmann spruce, which can be attractive but is betrayed by its prickly needles, and lodgepole and ponderosa pines, neither of which tends to be especially shapely. As for tamaracks, the deciduous conifer, it's ideal only if you're trying to replicate the forlorn tree Charlie Brown rescued from the lot.)

We strapped on snowshoes, scrambled up the berm lining the Sumpter-Granite Highway, and headed toward Buck Gulch.

Over about 25 years of going after my own Christmas tree in the Blue Mountains I've concluded that the most fruitful sites are what you might call Goldilocks spots — where the tree density is neither heavy nor sparse.

When trees grow in clumps, as grand fir often do, especially on cooler, damper north- or east-facing slopes, it's rare to find a specimen that doesn't have at least one side with puny branches due to interference from its multiple neighbors.

South slopes, by contrast, often are dominated by mature trees that wouldn't fit in my front yard, much less in my living room.



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Crossing a mountain stream in snowshoes can be a challenge even when you're not dragging a 7-foot-tall grand fir.



ON THE TRAIL

JAYSON JACOBY



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Almost there — hauling the tree up the final slope to the road.

The ridge just south of Buck Gulch is rather steeper than I prefer, since trees that get a foothold in precipitous places tend to have trunks that are out of plumb.

But we hadn't climbed more than a couple hundred vertical feet when Lisa spotted a likely candidate down in a shallow defile. It was a fine grand fir, with the rich green needles typical of the species, and it was approximately the right height.

Although I'm prone to the compulsion to keep looking, under the dubious belief that a much better tree is just over the brow of the next ridge, we decided this fir was a keeper.

I pulled out my folding saw and hunkered down — which for me, when clad in snowshoes, would better be described as a barely controlled fall.

The trunk was just a few inches across but sawing through it required much more effort than it should have owing to my failure to ever sharpen the saw's teeth.

Eventually, with Lisa pushing from the uphill side, we toppled the fir.

The slope below was steep enough, and the snow relatively firm after a week of settling following the Thanksgiving weekend storms, that I figured the tree would pretty much find its own way, at least until the grade eased.



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Tramping toward Buck Gulch.

It turned out that the tree was no more inclined to tumble along than is a freshly butchered elk front quarter.

As I wrestled with the fir, trying to avoid smearing pitch on my down jacket, I was recalling an episode a little more than a year ago when I helped haul out the bull elk that Lisa's nephew, Tyler, killed near the Snake River.

There was a similarity to the sense of drudgery in both cases. The elk was heavier, of

course, but the fir compensated for its modest mass with sheer friction. Also I couldn't hoist it on my shoulder, as with the chunk of elk.

But even as I felt the sweat beading on my back and my brow, I would get an occasional whiff of the fir. And I would imagine how pleasant it was going to be, in the days leading to Christmas, to come home in the cold dark, walk past the window and see its lights glittering against the snow.

OREGON STATE PARKS

New Year's Day guided hikes scheduled

By Katy Nesbitt

For the EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Four state parks in Eastern Oregon are encouraging people to spend their New Year's Day in the great outdoors by hosting events in conjunction with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's First Day Hikes.

In its ninth year, park rangers will lead 37 First Day Hikes at 31 parks statewide.

The First Day Hike at Emigrant Springs State Heritage Area in Meacham will likely be over snow, so Park Manager Mark Miller said to bring snowshoes. He said he'll have about 20 pairs to loan hikers without snowshoes.

"Last year, we had 30 people and 3

feet of snow," Miller said.

The guided snowshoe hike is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on New Year's Day and Miller said the route varies based on conditions.

Emigrant Springs is an Oregon Trail site nestled among public lands managed by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the U.S. Forest Service.

Emigrant Springs is at 65068 Old Oregon Trail in Meacham and is accessible from Interstate 84 at Exit 284.

Wallowa Lake State Park is joining in with a very different type of hike — one that involves walking behind flying plastic discs. A disc golf course installed in the park last June is attracting a lot of attention, according to

Park Manager Mac Freeborn.

"It's wildly popular here at the park," he said. "It's almost a daily thing to see people playing — even in the snow."

Winter has landed in Wallowa County, so disc golfers are encouraged to bring their own discs and snowshoes, though the park will have a few sets of snowshoes and discs to lend.

The disc golf First Day Hike event starts at 10 a.m. To get to Wallowa Lake State Park take the Exit 261 from Interstate 84 and follow Highway 82 70 miles to Joseph. Continue south for 6 miles along Wallowa Lake to get to the park.

America's State Parks, a nonprofit based in Raleigh, North Carolina,

started the First Day Hikes program to promote and advance America's state park systems. On New Year's Day state parks in each of the 50 states offers free, guided hikes. Last year, nearly 55,000 people celebrated the New Year with a First Day Hike, covering 133,000 miles.

In Oregon, all hikes are free and day-use parking fees will be waived at all participating parks Jan. 1 only. Hikers can register for specific hikes online at the Oregon State Parks store — bit.ly/ParkStoreEvents. While online registration isn't required for participation, visitors are encouraged to register to help park staff plan the hike and provides them with participant contact information should hike details change.