

## RECREATION REPORT

### Free fishing in Oregon this weekend

You don't need a license to fish today or Sunday in Oregon.

The free fishing weekend in June usually features a variety of fishing derbies and other events around the state, but those have been canceled this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Many waterbodies have been stocked with rainbow trout in advance of free fishing weekend, but the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is not announcing its stocking schedule to reduce the chance of large crowds.

Although no fishing license is required, all other regulations, including limits on the size and number of fish kept, are in effect.

### Some state park campgrounds will reopen

Campgrounds at Wallowa Lake and Farewell Bend state parks are scheduled to reopen on June 9.

Several other state park campgrounds reopened on May 29 on a first-come, first-served basis. They include:

- Minam, between La Grande and Wallowa
- Hilgard Junction west of La Grande
- Catherine Creek near Union
- Clyde Holliday near John Day
- Cottonwood Canyon southeast of The Dalles

### Forest Service campgrounds near Baker City opening June 8

The U.S. Forest Service's Union Creek Campground, on the north shore of Phillips Reservoir about 17 miles southwest of Baker City, will open for the season on Monday, June 8.

The popular campground, rare among Forest Service campgrounds in offering campsites with full hookups for trailers, had been closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The campground has 74 sites, including 20 with electrical, water and septic hookups and 18 with electrical and water only. Union Creek also has several bathrooms with flush toilets, as well as paved trails, a fish-cleaning station and picnic sites.

Other Forest Service facilities at Phillips Reservoir, including the day-use and boat launch areas at Union Creek, and the Southwest Shore and Millers Lane campgrounds on the other side of the reservoir, will open the same day.

McCully Forks Campground near Sumpter will also open June 8.



Lisa Britton / For the EO Media Group

Daffodils blooming in front of a cabin at the Fremont Powerhouse near Granite.

# Detoured, but not deterred

■ Lingered snow from a late storm thwarted a planned hike in the Blue Mountains, but other options nearby rescue a Saturday from disappointment

I ought to have known better than to trust the Blue Mountains a month shy of the summer solstice. More particularly since our destination was 6,000 feet above sea level.

But sometimes the difference between optimism and naivete is so thin as to be immeasurable.

My idea, as ideas so often do, seemed perfectly reasonable when plotted on paper.

It was the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, the sun was shining, and after a spring of hiking mainly on roads I had a hankering to put in some miles on a real trail.

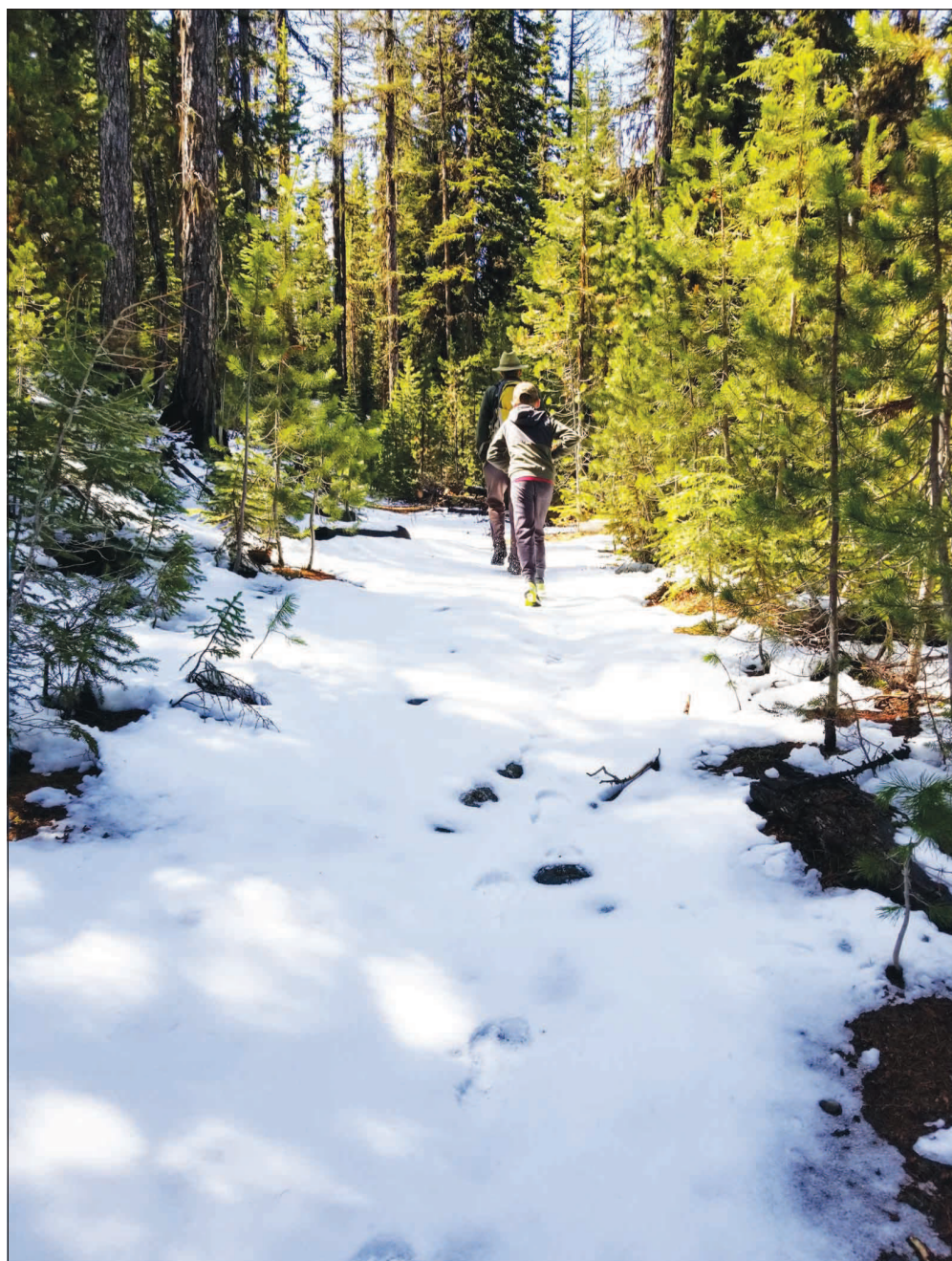
I suggested the Lost Creek trail on the Umatilla National Forest near Olive Lake, about 11 miles west of Granite.

This would be our third trip in a month through the stomach-churning curves of the highway between Sumpter and Granite, but I laid out my bargaining chips.

I proposed lunch at the Sumpter Nugget, as my daughter,



ON THE TRAIL  
JAYSON JACOBY



Lisa Britton / For the EO Media Group

Snow from a late spring storm lingered on the Lost Creek trail, near Olive Lake in the Umatilla National Forest west of Granite, on May 23.

Olivia, is partial to the hearty breakfast burritos.

(As I am — offering lunch at the Nugget was not precisely a selfless gesture on my part.)

For my son, Max, there was the promise of a couple of geocaches to investigate.

It had not escaped my attention that just a few days before, a storm had doused our region with rain.

Nor that it was no ordinary rainstorm. This belated blast from the North Pacific, where winter storms are born, pushed the snow level down to elevations more typical of March than May.

Naive or no, I could scarcely fail to notice, once the clouds broke, that the Elkhorns were starkly white about halfway down to the valley.

But I convinced myself that even though the storm was unusually potent for one so late in the season, its effects would largely be erased after a few days of more reasonable temperatures.

We hadn't even made it to Blue Springs Summit, between Sumpter and Granite, when I realized I was almost certainly wrong.

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## If You Go...

### FREMONT POWERHOUSE

From Granite drive west on Forest Road 10 (Grant County Road 24), following a sign to the Fremont Powerhouse and Olive Lake. The road is paved for the first 4 miles and well-graded gravel thereafter. The powerhouse is on the right side of the road about 1 mile from where the pavement ends.

### LOST CREEK TRAIL

From the Fremont Powerhouse, continue west on Road 10 for about 6 miles. The trailhead is a pullout on the north side of the road (the trail starts on the south side).

### BEAVER MEADOWS

Where Road 10 changes from pavement to gravel, instead of continuing up the hill west on Road 10, turn left on gravel Road 13, following Clear Creek. Drive south on Road 13 for about 2 1/4 miles, then turn left on Road 19. This road follows Beaver Creek for several miles of sprawling meadows. Road 19 continues to Highway 7 at Whitney.

# Crazy about crappie fishing

I was about to panic. I love spring crappie fishing in Oregon. And I was stuck over in South Dakota for 6½ weeks doing a job that was supposed to take two weeks and then came down with COVID-19.

I'm probably exaggerating a little but it was cold and somewhat snowy up until I flew back home. I got back home and everything was green. I felt like I'd lost 1½ months of my life. One day it was still somewhat winter and then suddenly I woke up at home and we were on the tail end of spring. If I missed crappie fishing, I'd die! Katy and I had gone crappie fishing in March before I'd left but it had been about two weeks too early so we'd only caught a few.

I was afraid the crappie had already spawned and moved out but I had to try. My daughter, Kolby, had just healed up from COVID-19



BASE CAMP  
TOM CLAYCOMB

so she said she wanted to go with me. I had a few hours of writing to take care of and since it was Memorial Day I told her we'd leave at noon and hopefully the crowds would have thinned out a little by then and we'd fish until dark. Turned out to be a good call.

Due to minor complications we didn't arrive at the lake until 3:30 p.m. Things started off a little slow. We were catching enough to be happy and at this rate would end up with a decent mess of fish but we had to get things sped up so we jumped and tried one of my old reliable hot spots.

We pulled up to my hot spot but no Bueno. I always slaughtered the crappie there but something had happened. OK, I had other spots, we'll go hit them.



Submitted photo

Oregon not known for crappie fishing? It should be.

I have a little Jon boat with a trolling motor, and since we weren't moving fast we kept fishing as we moved to our new location. There is a flat spot that I never fish because it's no good but for some reason we hit it. We got a decent one. In all my articles I tell everyone if they catch one to stop and jig because crappie are school-

ing fish. Where you get one there's more. So I decided to follow my own advice even though it looked like a dead spot.

We caught a couple of more. Then it got hot. I don't know if we had found a spot packed with crappie or they had moved in as the sun went down, but it was crazy. The last hour we literally

had a hit every cast.

Usually when we start fishing, I'll switch to different colored jigs and then we'll go with whichever color they're hitting best. The last few years we've been doing good on black/white or red/white tube jigs so that's what I put on Kolby's line.

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