

The Massive & The Minuscule

Trees and mosquitoes

FISHING FORECAST

GRANDE RONDE AND ANTHONY LAKES

The lakes are accessible and should provide good fishing for stocked rainbow trout complemented by an occasional brook trout.

BALM CREEK RESERVOIR

Reservoir is providing some good fishing for rainbows 12 to 16 inches. Anglers are doing well casting flies, trolling gear, or soaking bait from the bank. A reminder to boaters that the reservoir is restricted to electric motors only.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER

Flows will continue to drop over the next few weeks. As flows drop look for good fly fishing in the section between the mouth of the Wallowa and Troy. Golden stoneflies are currently hatching and trout will be keyed in on these large meals. Dry fly-fishing can be fantastic. As flows continue to drop and water temperatures warm, bass fishing below Troy can be good with great public access.

PHILLIPS RESERVOIR

Fishing has been good for rainbow trout 12 to 18 inches and for yellow perch. Expect trout fishing to slow with warmer summer temperatures. All campgrounds and boat launches are currently open. Reservoir level is at 55 percent and dropping.

PILCHER CREEK RESERVOIR

Fishing should be good for rainbow trout 12 to 16 inches. The campground and boat launch are currently open. The area around the boat launch is currently flooded due to high reservoir storage level.

FISH LAKE

Lake north of Halfway in Baker County is accessible and should provide good fishing through the summer for stocked rainbows and naturally produced brook trout. The campground at the lake fills quickly on weekends so campers are encouraged to get there early or be prepared to camp at other undeveloped camping sites in the area.

WALLOWA COUNTY PONDS

These ponds were recently stocked, and fishing should be good: Honey-moon Pond, Kinney Lake, Marr Pond, McGraw Pond, Salt Creek Summit Pond, Teepee Pond, Victor Pond, Weaver Pond.



ON THE TRAIL

JAYSON JACOBY

I own a device which will, with an immensely satisfying and sizzling crack, reduce a mosquito to its constituent atoms. This weapon bears the rather boastful name “The Executioner Pro.” This suggests you might need training, and possibly a government-issued license, to deploy the thing. In fact all that is required is a couple of AA batteries. The Executioner Pro looks like nothing so much as a crudely fashioned badminton racket, which is perhaps the most innocuous of objects that is meant to be swung. Although it is strung not with nylon strings but with metal strips that carry an electric charge, The Executioner Pro is lethal only to creatures which have an exoskeleton. And even some of those can shrug off its shock and buzz away without any apparent ill effect. Yellow jackets, for instance, occasionally seem to just bounce right off, apparently no worse off for the collision. Wispy bugs, though, disintegrate almost immediately when they touch one of the mildly energized metal bars.

And mosquitoes, which are little more than a pair of wings and a proboscis, have all the rigidity of a dandelion seed. The problem with The Executioner Pro is that it lacks range. It will not, for instance, kill the mosquitoes that are swarming on your wife’s ballcap when the tool is 50 miles away. Which is where it sat — on the shelf above our kitchen pantry, to be precise — at the moment I noticed that my wife’s hat looked a trifle fuzzy in the morning sunshine. We were hiking along Clear Creek, a major tributary of the North Fork John Day River that flows through the wilderness named for that river. It was a fine late June morning. Cottony cumulus rode the blue sky and the temperature was in the low 60s, ideal for a moderately arduous walk on the old road that gently ascends Clear Creek’s valley into the Greenhorns, a prominent subrange of the Blue Mountains. The otherwise idyllic scene was marred only by the mosquitoes. We didn’t notice any of the blood-suckers for the first half mile or so. I began to feel optimistic even though I knew this was the season, not long after the last snowdrift has melted, when the bugs enjoy their brief but intensely annoying reign.



Max and Olivia Jacoby rub shoulders with an old growth tamarack — western larch — tree along Clear Creek in the North Fork John Day Wilderness area in Grant County.

Then we reached a spot where the road crosses a seep that sends a sluggish trickle of water down the tread. I happened to turn around, looking east, and the shafts of sunlight revealed a veritable swarm around Lisa and our kids, Olivia and Max. Mosquitoes, among their other traits, seem to me to fly with a sense of purpose that most of their insectile cousins lack. The average housefly, for instance, swoops about in an apparently random way, and when one lands on your arm it seems to be wholly by accident.

But mosquitoes — or at least the females, which need blood to nourish their eggs — arrow in with the precision of a laser-guided missile. As I watched the mosquitoes I noticed that they basically hovered above their intended victims before darting in, displaying none of the aimless flitting around which distinguishes most other flying insects. The mosquitoes interfered with our 6-mile round-trip hike to Ben Camp, which I presume is named for Ben Harrison.

See Massive / Page 2B



The meadow near Ben Camp, in the North Fork John Day Wilderness Area’s Greenhorn Mountains unit.

If You Go...

From Granite, drive west on Forest Road 10 (Grant County Road 24), following a sign to the Fremont Powerhouse and Olive Lake. After about 3.5 miles the road forks. Turn left onto Forest Road 13 (the other fork, which continues west, heads uphill toward the Fremont Powerhouse and Olive Lake). Road 13 crosses Clear Creek on a bridge just beyond the junction. Continue south on Road 13 for 2.5 miles and turn right onto Forest Road 1310. This road soon passes the site of the ghost town of Alamo, which had a U.S. post office from 1900 to 1906. Road 1310 is graveled for the first quarter mile or so but is rough thereafter, and not suited to regular passenger cars. Follow Road 1310 for about 2.8 miles. Not long after a bridge across Lightning Creek, a tributary of Clear Creek, turn right onto Road 1315. This road crosses Clear Creek on a bridge, and just beyond the bridge the road is blocked by a gate that also marks the boundary of the North Fork John Day Wilderness. There is a hunters camp near the bridge that has more room to park. Road 1315 is closed to motor vehicles and bicycles in the wilderness, but is open to hikers and horseback riders. It’s about 2.8 miles to Ben Camp, a longtime campsite beside a meadow at the base of Vinegar Hill, tallest peak in the Greenhorn Mountains at 8,131 feet. The road continues west and connects to the Lost Creek Trail.