

FREE FISHING WEEKEND

Everyone can fish for free in Oregon today and Sunday. No fishing licenses or tags are required. All other regulations, including size and bag limits, still apply.

FALL CHINOOK SEASON STARTS AUG. 18 ON SNAKE RIVER

ENTERPRISE — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has closed the Snake River spring chinook salmon season, but the fall chinook season will start Aug. 18.

Fisheries biologists expect nearly 15,000 fall chinook, including about 9,500 hatchery fish, to cross Lower Granite Dam near Lewiston, Idaho. About half of those fish will be bound for the Clearwater River in Idaho with the other half bound for the Snake and Salmon Rivers.

Though the fishery will open Aug. 18, fall chinook will not likely be available to anglers until September when fish arrive in greater numbers.

Like last year, this year's bag limit includes one wild (unclipped) chinook per day, with a total daily limit of three chinook. Barbless hooks required. There is no limit on jack salmon (less than 24 inches).

The season will continue through Oct. 31. Fishing is allowed on the Snake River from the Washington border upstream to the deadline below Hells Canyon Dam. The reach from Cliff Mountain Rapids, 1.1 miles below Hells Canyon Dam, upstream to the deadline below the dam will be open through Nov. 20.

The Lure of The Logs

I blame Grizzly Adams. Also Laura Ingalls Wilder. This duo — the former a character in a feature film and subsequent TV series, the latter an actual person and beloved author — are largely responsible for my fascination with log cabins, an interest that dates back decades.

The pairing, I'll concede, is perhaps a trifle peculiar, even discounting that one is a fictional entity.

But there is, I submit, the matter of facial hair.

Grizzly — as I prefer to call him, as he never struck me as the sort to insist on a courtesy title — was portrayed on both the big and small screens by Dan Haggerty, the actor who boasted perhaps the most imposing beard in cinematic history.

Wilder, meanwhile, refers several times in her series of books about pioneer life to the luxurious beard that her pa, Charles Ingalls, wore. Should you be interested in examining this topic at your leisure, photographs suggest that Laura was not exaggerating.

But the commonality that for me forever links these two is the log cabin.

Even though Wilder actually lived in such a structure, while Grizzly only pretended to while the cameras were rolling.

I became acquainted with both while growing up during the 1970s.

I was an early fan of Wilder's books chronicling her family's experiences in the latter third of the 19th century.

Although I don't recall ever watching the 1974 film that introduced the hirsute character, "The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams," I was very nearly obsessed with the TV series of the same name that aired in 1977 and 1978.

(As an aside, more than 25 years later I made a slight acquaintance with Charles Sellier Jr., who wrote the novella that inspired the Grizzly



Lisa Britton / For the EO Media Group
Huckleberries are abundant along the North Catherine Creek trail.

Lisa Britton / For the EO Media Group
The Forest Service cabin at the eastern edge of Catherine Creek Meadow is open for public use. The cabin is a 5-mile hike from the North Catherine Creek trailhead.

ON THE TRAIL

JAYSON JACOBY

Adams franchise and also produced both the film and television series. Sellier — his last name is pronounced "sell-ee-AY" — lived in Baker City for several years in the 1990s and early 2000s, where he and his wife, Julie Magnuson, started Oregon Trail Bullet Co., which manufactured silver-alloy bullets. In addition to producing more than 30 feature films and 230 TV shows, he also wrote a book about UFOs, of which I have a signed copy. Sellier, who later moved to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, died in 2011 at the age of 67.)

Log cabins attracted me because they represented a life so different from my own, growing up in a ranch-style home on a pleasant but nondescript street in a pleasant but nondescript small town.

It was a fine and safe place to live but nothing terribly exciting was likely to ever happen there (and, indeed, did not).

I was not apt to step outside some morning and find a grizzly bear galumphing across the front lawn.

And although we had both a fireplace and a woodstove, these in no way approached the rustic ambience of the log cabins I read about in Wilder's books and watched Grizzly Adams inhabit on TV.

I thought the simple act of kindling a fire in a rock-lined hearth, of feeding twigs to the flickering flames, was im-

mensely appealing — the epitome of a wilderness experience that I knew, even as a child, was one that society had long since passed over for the forced-air furnace and the stud wall of smooth lumber and the pink fluff of insulation with a high R-value.

I have visited several log cabins in the mountains of Oregon's northeast corner. I even slept one night in the dilapidated cabin, nicknamed the Bigfoot Hilton, along the North Fork John Day River.

(I shudder at the memory of this, which happened before I had investigated the horrors of hantavirus.)

But one structure I had always wanted to see, but kept managing not to, is the one that stands in Catherine Creek Meadow in the Eagle Cap Wilderness east of Union.

My wife, Lisa, and I decided to rectify this last weekend.

We hauled our pop up trailer to the North Fork Catherine Creek campground, which is only an hour's drive from Baker City, and closer still to La Grande.

The North Fork Catherine Creek trail starts at the end of the well-maintained gravel road, about 4.2 miles from Highway 203. If you're not camping you can park in a large lot a couple hundred yards before the end of the road.

The trail, as its name suggests, follows the North Fork of Catherine Creek. It is a most fetching stream. Our camp was near the creek and its water was both

crystalline and frigid. I waded for a few minutes and my feet still felt more like it was January than August after half an hour of basking in the sunshine.

My son, Max, who's 9, and his 13-year-old sister, Olivia, splashed in the stream without seeming even to notice the chill.

The trail starts on the west side of the creek, and after a mile and a half or so it crosses the stream on a sturdy and wide wooden bridge. A little farther along the trail enters the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

As with most paths in the Eagle Cap, this one is well-designed, with mainly gentle grades. It was also in good shape, with no down logs to navigate around.

But we were slowed considerably by something much more insidious than a wind-felled spruce.

Also more tasty. Huckleberries.

For more than two miles beyond the bridge, the trail cleaves patches of huckleberry bushes so profuse that in places the path reminded me of the bare ground that forms a tunnel between rows of corn.

And on the day of our hike, Aug. 8, those bushes bore a heavy load of fruit, much of it at the very peak of ripeness.

Our fingers were in short order stained various shades of purple.

In the last quarter mile or so before it enters Catherine Creek Meadow, the trail climbs a bit more steeply.

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Dad & daughter: the best backpacking

I know that I'm totally blessed and get to do a lot of cool stuff, but my most favorite trip every year is backpacking with my daughter, Kolby. It's the best daddy/daughter time in the world. No TV, no cellphones, no internet, no nada. Just me and her. We get to talk about everything under the sun with no interruptions. When I take time to hear her insights it amazes me as to how smart and perceptive she is. I'd never have a chance to see this side of her if we didn't withdraw from the busyness of the world.

I live a busy life. Right now, I'm 30,000 feet above the earth, headed home. I've been out of state for two weeks and have two or three in-state trips this week while home and then I fly out again for two more weeks. While going through TSA I got a call from an editor wanting me to fly down to Texas in a few weeks for a dove hunt. And working on a deal with Knives of Alaska to develop a professional boning knife for the outdoorsman. It will soon

BASE CAMP

TOM CLAYCOMB

be hitting the market. I've got to run down for a few days to bone out a steer, deer and a hog and do some filming on processing and do a couple of TV shows.

There is always something going on or being planned. So to get away, just me and my daughter by ourselves in the wilderness backpacking and fly-fishing, is precious. If you don't do this with your kids you really should. It's the highlight of my year.

After your initial setup cost it is a cheap outing. We covered backpacking gear a couple of weeks ago but I'd advise buying good gear. It will last for years to come and not too out on you while in the backcountry. We tested out an Alps Mountaineering Chaos 2 and an Alps Meramac 2 tent, their Crescent 20 sleeping bags and their Nimble air mats. All worked great.

I had a flurry of articles I had to submit so we got off



Tom Claycomb photo

Kolby with a nice backcountry cutthroat.

a little later than I wanted. I wanted to get to our camping spot, set up and fish for an hour or two before dark. As is, we got there in time to get set up before dark. We threw up the tents and while Kolby was pumping up the mats, I gathered enough firewood for the duration. I love the Nimble air mats. They're unique in that the storage bag acts as a pump of sorts. It connects to the valve on the mat. Fill the bag with air and then roll it up to force air into the mat. A lot of mats are only

1-inch thick, but the Nimble is nearly 4 inches so you only need one mat. This will save me from packing two.

We built a fire, ate some snacks and then stumbled to bed. The next morning, I got up early and hit my favorite hole. I caught one nice cutthroat, about 17-18 inches and then went back to camp to get Koko. We built a fire, drank some coffee and ate a quick breakfast. We then hit the river and fly-fished all day. I started out using Skull Head black woolly buggers

Something Fishy Going On



Photo and caption by Jim Ward

A great blue heron gulps down a rather large meal. The birds seem to unhinge their jaw and can swallow big prey. After the breeding season, they will lose their intricate feathering. Herons nest in large gatherings referred to as heronries, often with other birds such as egrets and cormorants. A large heronry exists in the Grande Ronde Valley just north of Wilkinson Lane, along Catherine Creek.

from flydealfies.com. I could not beg a bite. I put on one of their Olive Caddis flies on Koko's line and right fast she hung a nice native cutthroat. Wow, what a nice fish. We didn't catch a ton of

fish but got a couple of nice ones and had a great time and got sidetracked picking huckleberries, which isn't a bad thing at all.

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