

IT'S SHARK WEEK

Shark fishing is not for the weak — or timid



LUKE OVGARD
CAUGHT OVGARD

Television's longest-running annual summer event turned 33 last week after completing another successful run. The Discovery Channel's Shark Week started three years before I was born and is still going strong. It is still well behind Coca-Cola, McDonald's and cigarettes in longevity but adds another point to the argument that humans love things that can kill them.

Our collective myths of sharks is rooted in our own animal nature, that trace of wildness in all of us. Maybe this is why I love shark fishing so much. Nothing else I catch can kill me if I slip up. Little else can overpower me with a swipe of its tail and leave me breathless and aching.

When I mentioned my fascination with sharks to my friend Dom Porcelli, he made note of it.

He and his wife, Tracy, were gracious hosts and allowed me to stay with them as I continued my #SpeciesQuest.

Dom has caught nearly 1,000 species of fish, placing him in the top five all time. As such, I gleaned everything I could from



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

This dude snapped Dom's rod. It was my fault for not loosening the drag more given that it was facing away from the fish. This was the most beautiful shark I've ever caught if that's any consolation.

him as I tallied some 28 new species on his boat. After a few productive days chasing tuna and tilefish, snapper and scud, grouper and grunts, mahi and more, we set our sights on sharks, the coldly magnetic kings of the sea.

Shark Bait

The "Shark Bait", Dom's boat, was up to the task. It earned the name when a reef shark came over the gunwale and took a bite out of Dom's foot. Serious reconstructive surgery later, he still bears a grisly scar and a healthy respect for the top of the food chain.

Dom stocked up on bait, and we left in the predawn dark on Sunday (the last day of Shark Week) with one goal: to catch my

biggest fish ever.

We anchored up near a reef, put out a chum bag, sent half a barracuda to the briny depths and waited. Soon, the shark rod started to bounce and then sing the most beautiful tune I'd ever heard.

Hooked

I grabbed the rod out of the holder and battled the beast in. I avoid conventional reels like the plague, it showed, but eventually, we got it boatside.

We would later identify the 7-footer as a sandbar shark. Using the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) shark size calculator, put it at 155 pounds. My biggest fish!

If we'd stopped there, I would've been

stoked, but we still had bait, so...

I caught a few live ballyhoo, a popular baitfish, and we threw one out live on a lighter rod. It also hooked a small shark that broke me off after about 10 minutes when it dove under the boat.

I hit pause on the self-loathing when the big shark rod started bouncing again.

Dom assumed nurse shark based on the lack of run, and having caught more nurses than any other shark, I agreed. It was absurdly heavy, and lifting it up 70 feet of water was exhausting even with the less-than-stellar fight.

When we saw it, and it clearly wasn't a nurse shark, we expected it to take off on a

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Campfires banned in state parks, forests

EO Media Group

SALEM — Citing extreme fire danger and limited firefighting resources across the West, Oregon officials have banned campfires in all state-managed parks and forests east of Interstate 5, including designated campgrounds.

The ban applies to charcoal fires, cooking fires, warming fires, charcoal briquettes, pellet grills, candles, tiki torches and other devices that emit flames or embers.

Portable cooking stoves or propane lanterns using liquefied or bottle fuels are allowed, though propane fire pits are not allowed.

The state prohibition follows similar decisions that affect other public land in Northeastern Oregon.

Campfires are banned on the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur national forests. The Umatilla is closed to all public entry.

"We are seeing record-low humidity in much of the state, and as forest fuels dry out there is tremendous potential for fire to establish and spread quickly," Oregon State Forester Nancy Hirsch said in a press release. "With months of fire season left, this measure will help us prevent one of the most common types of human-caused fires, which reduces the risk to our communities and natural resources."

"Every park visitor can do their part to protect the landscapes we all love," said Lisa Sumption, director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. "Help reduce fire risk by bringing meals that don't require heating or cooking."

Pampered, not primitive



TOM CLAYCOMB
BASE CAMP

OK, the last two columns I've written about how to camp on a budget, but I know there's a percentage of you out there that won't even camp, much less on a budget! So this week I'll cater to you. After wrapping up the Professional Outdoor Media Association Convention in Tennessee I flew home, grabbed Katy and ran over to the Silvies Valley Ranch near Seneca.

If you like golf, you'll love Silvies. They do something unique in that they use pack goats as caddies. I'm not a golfer so my description of their courses would not do them justice. I'm told that it's in the top 20 golf courses in America. But if you want to golf and the rest of the family has no desire to golf don't despair. They offer other activities. Here's some of the activities that we did.

I took a two-hour tour of the ranch by four-wheeler. It's always fun to four-wheeler but especially when someone is telling you the history of Silvies Valley from the days of the French trappers on up until present times.

On the ranch there are still four log cabins from early homesteaders. We got to explore one. It was interesting to see how they had stuck cloth into the cracks between the logs, covered it with mud and then tacked on slats to hold the chink in.

GUN RANGES

I was pleasantly surprised by how nice the ranges were. They have pistol, rifle and black powder ranges. They have air guns at the pistol and rifle ranges. Air guns have basically no recoil or report so they're great for starting out new shooters.

At the pistol range one fun



Tom Claycomb/Contributed Photo

After sleeping in this cabin I may never get Katy into a tent again.

option was a .50 caliber, which kicked like the proverbial mule. They also had a lot of .22's which Katy enjoyed shooting.

We then dropped down to the black powder range. I've hunted a lot with black powders but had never shot a flintlock. The igniting system is where they differ. When you pull the trigger, the hammer drops striking and igniting the powder on the flashpan. There is a slight delay between when you pull the trigger and the powder ignites the charge in the chamber. Even though I knew this and our instructor Tygh repeatedly warned me, I still couldn't help moving before it shot.

I took some Powerbelt bullets which are made right in little ole Nampa, Idaho, and are the finest black powder bullets on the market. I wish that we'd had a couple of hours to shoot and compare their accuracy to the really to the balls we shot. To really compare you'd need two rifles because a round ball requires a different twist in the rifling as compared to a Powerbelt.

But out of all of the shooting that we did, the highlight was getting to shoot an original

.45-70 black powder 1886 Winchester and a rolling block .45-70 black powder. Both shot actual blackpowder in brass. This is where our modern .45-70 got its name. It was a .45 caliber and used 70 grains of black powder. One other fun gun was a Hatsun Blitz which is a CO2 airgun which can shoot full auto.

After the Louisiana Purchase the French trapped 200,000 beavers out of the valley, which caused some ecological problems. The spring melt blew out the dams which in turn dried up the creeks for much of the year. Silvies has made some dams to mimic the beaver dams. Now the creeks flow year-round and willows are growing along the creeks, which provides browse for the deer and elk. It's hard to believe but what 15 years ago was dried up sage country is now lush drainages. The natural grasses have come back and by mid-June are halfway up to your thigh. I found this interesting.

Which brings up fishing. They have also have two stocked ponds, but I mainly hit the creeks. I only had a couple of hours one afternoon to fish. It started raining right when I threw my first fly so it was

impossible to read the river or fish effectively. As we left the ranch and headed north, I saw more creeks so I've got to go back and hit it again sometime (or they offer ice fishing on their lakes).

They serve breakfast, lunch and a six-course dinner but I've got to skip the description of the meals and talk about the bread. They served sourdough bread at every meal which was awesome so I took their sourdough class. It was awesome. I was the only one in class so I bombarded the instructor Jeff Campbell with questions. He taught me the mechanics or maybe I should say the chemistry of sourdough. We enjoyed one of his one-pound cinnamon rolls and had a good time. I could write an article on the sourdough class.

Well, time doesn't permit me to cover how nice it was to have our own hot tub right outside of our bedroom or the spa and massages which they offer. They also have mountain bikes and horseback riding but it wasn't offered when we were there.

So, if your version of camping is in a Holiday Inn, why not elevate it to a new level and hit Silvies Resort and Retreats?