

Thankful for public lands



BRAD TRUMBO
UPLAND PURSUITS

November is a special month. Not only because it's like an extension of October in the Walla Walla Valley, or that the late season big game hunts are open.

Rather, November offers a time of reflection as winter approaches and we gather with friends and family to give thanks. Given my love for fall, I spend many cool evenings reflecting on the outdoor opportunities I have been afforded over the years, and the magnificence of our nation's natural resources.

One extraordinary September evening a decade ago, 12 hours to the southeast of Waitsburg, I stood amid the roar of the Madison River in Yellowstone National Park. The sun had settled peacefully behind the western peaks while the cool humidity of fall sank into the river bottom. A soft, white haze began to form about 10 feet off the water as the cool air from above fought to smother the moderately warmer temperature and moisture rising from the river.

To my left was a house-sized granite boulder with a massive log jam against the upstream side. Twilight cast a dense glare across the river surface, but climbing up and standing atop the boulder, I could peer down and see a few very large mountain whitefish in the eddy on the downstream side. They darted swiftly in and out of the flow, nabbing a bedtime snack.

There was a glorious seam near a gravel bar across the current that was too tempting not to fish. A tiny Adams fly was destined to be picked up by a feisty rainbow or brown trout. Preparing to cast, I stripped out a fair piece of line and began loading the rod with short "false casts." Glancing



Brad Trumbo/Contributed Photo

Ali Fitzgerald watches a bison between casts on the Madison River in Yellowstone.

left, the sight of my little blonde bride, Ali, waist deep in the current, laying out a dry fly brought a smile.

I stood momentarily entranced in the scene, but my revelry began to fade with the faint sound of a cow elk mewing, and then another, and yet another. Spotting movement behind Ali, I gawked awestruck for minutes as the dark evergreens under the fading light began to writhe with elk. Big, tawny bulls with rich, molasses manes, raghorns, cows and calves

maneuvered among the trees on the opposite river bank. They slowly fed and drank directly opposite us as we remained stone still. I felt a fleeting sense belonging, as if welcomed into their world. We were just part of the woodwork.

Daylight vanished with my rod held at my side. I drank in every precious moment of that scene as the final shred of visibility faded around a couple fly fishermen, engulfed by the ambient tumbling river and the screams of rutting

bulls. We climbed from the chill of the river, stripped out of our waders, and fired up the heat in our rig as we returned to our West Yellowstone hotel. That trip was noteworthy for a number of reasons, all of which are owed their own story, but fishing that evening hatch with my wife on the Madison will remain one of my fondest memories of Yellowstone.

Recalling that moment on the Madison conjures another elk story, only this one occurred closer to home. It was modern

firearm deer season and I had packed into the Wenaha, spiked a camp, and hunted the high ridges with my buddy, Marvin, in hopes of spotting a good mule deer buck and making a move. It was frigid for October and spitting snow. The Eagle Caps appeared as two small, snow-covered hummocks to the southeast. The atmosphere lit up around the peaks, pink as cotton candy from the few straggling rays of sun clutching the

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Becoming a better shot with a pistol



TOM CLAYCOMB
BASE CAMP

I've owned a pistol since I was in the seventh grade. You'd think that I'd be a decent shot with one but ... I'm not.

Last week my wife Katy took a shooting class with Kerry LaFramboise, who owns Watchmen's Tactical Training, and now she's gone hog wild and has the shooting bug.

In the meantime, I was testing a Mantis X10 Elite Shooting Performance System. It is a great tool to help you learn how to shoot better. I don't have room to cover it in this article but you can read about it in an article at <https://gunpowder-magazine.com/product-review-the-mantis-x10-elite-shooting-performance-system/>.

We stopped by Stockpile Defense to talk to Tim, who knows quite a bit about the Mantis X10. In talking he asked me what method I used to shoot a pistol. I told him the push and pull method. He told me that worked but you have a tendency to pull your aim off toward your off hand, and that he uses the Crush method.

Let's see if I can adequately explain this method of shooting. You grasp the pistol with both hands just like normal but instead of locking in your elbows you squeeze the pistol and push upward with your elbows, thereby causing a squeezing effect on your grip which is where the term Crush comes from.

We then went out on the prairie and practiced shooting. Any time you try a new method or skill, your proficiency will drop at first but if it is indeed a better method then you will



Tom Claycomb/Contributed Photo

Katy Claycomb has become a pistol shooting aficionado.

soon rise to a higher level than you had before.

I learned this truth years ago. I used to play a lot of volleyball (I never was any good but I played a lot). I could take a course at a local junior college for \$18. We played for two hours and then had instruction for one hour.

It was a great deal. I took the class probably three times. In fact, the college finally told me that I had to declare a major since all I'd taken was volleyball. I told them to cork it, I'd already done the college deal, I just wanted to learn how to play volleyball.

One night the instructor came in all excited. He had been to a camp and learned a new method to spike called the Hammer Spike. He told us that we had probably become

proficient at how we currently spiked but if we'd learn how to do the Hammer Spike that we'd rise to a new level. At first our proficiency would drop but eventually we'd rise to a new level. I've found this bit of advice to apply when learning any new skill.

So, while Katy and I were shooting I started practicing the Crush hold. I'm going to switch over and stick with this method.

Sometimes it's fun to just go out and blast plastic bottles filled with water and have a good time. But I think when you shoot you actually ought to always practice and try to improve your skills. I don't want to sound like some drill sergeant but we can't ever think that we've reached the pinnacle.

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Free fishing for the two days after Thanksgiving

EO Media Group

If you'd like to supplement your Thanksgiving leftovers with some fresh trout, bass or crappie, you won't need to buy a fishing license for the first two days after the holiday. Fishing is free in Oregon on Friday, Nov. 26 and Saturday, Nov. 27.

So are clamming and crabbing, if you happen to be at the coast.

Oregon residents and nonresidents don't need a license or tag (including a combined angling tag or Columbia River Basin endorsement or two-rod validation) on either of those two days.

All other regulations do apply, including daily bag limits and size restrictions.

For the past several years, Oregon has made the two days after Thanksgiving one of the annual Free Fishing Weekends, as part of the #OptOutside movement, which encourages people to get outdoors. Oregon State Parks also waive parking fees for day-use entry on "Green Friday," Nov. 26.

To look for good fishing spots, check the weekly Recreation Report at <https://myodfw.com/recreation-report>.

Local options include trout fishing on the Willowa River, with fish up to 18 inches, and angling for steelhead on the Snake River just below Hells Canyon Dam.

Other options:

- The water level in Malheur Reservoir, south of Baker City, is very low, but fishing for rainbow trout has been excellent recently, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

- Willowa Lake has continued to produce trout, and fishing pressure is very light, according to the most recent Recreation Report. Trout will have switched to more natural food and anglers should consider using natural baits or



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald, File

Terry Foersterling, right, with a yellow perch at Phillips Reservoir on Tuesday morning, Aug. 17, 2021. Terry and his brother, Fred, also of Baker City, are frequent anglers at the reservoir about 17 miles southwest of Baker City.

artificial lures that closely mimic what the fish are feeding on.

- With cooling water, fishing for trout, steelhead and coho salmon has slowed significantly on the Grande Ronde River. Look for fish in slow tailouts where they can conserve energy. When the flows bump, the best fishing can be found after the peak as flows recede.

The regulations for the coho harvest on the Grande Ronde are: Open through Nov. 30, or until further notice, from the Oregon-Washington border upstream to the Wildcat Bridge, approximately seven miles upstream from Troy. The bag limit for adult coho salmon (longer than 20 inches) will be two. For jack coho salmon (20 inches or shorter) the bag limit will be five, with two daily limits in possession.

With a diverse makeup of fish species that anglers may encounter this year, anglers are encouraged to brush up on their fish identification skills and to release any fish that they are unsure of the species.