



Shoeless Snow Action

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Looking southwest across Phillips Reservoir from the shoreline trail on Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022.

Appreciating the utility of snowshoes — by not wearing them



JAYSON JACOBY
ON THE TRAIL

The best way to appreciate snowshoes is to leave them in the car.

Best, of course, is not always synonymous with smartest.

In this particular episode, in fact, the words were much closer to antonyms.

The second Sunday of 2022 — the 9th day of the year, to be more precise — came on sunny and cold. This was the pleasant part of the month, before the temperature inversion, a not uncommon phenomenon hereabouts in January, left some of our region's valleys to marinate in a dank miasma.

My wife Lisa and I, with our kids, Olivia and Max, drove the 17 miles or so up the Powder River along Highway 7 to Phillips Reservoir.

Olivia, who's 14, indulges Lisa's and my affinity for hiking in all seasons with various degrees of acceptance.

But she's unequivocal in describing her favorite sort of route.

Flat. The word is inevitable in every pre-trip conversation, most often in the form of a question: "Is it flat?"

Our part of the globe, of course, is quite often decidedly not flat.

But among the nearby options, the shoreline trails at Phillips come nearest to satisfying Olivia's chief criterion.

Fortunately the short road leading from Highway 7 to the boat ramp on the north side of the reservoir, near Mason Dam, is plowed, affording access for people hoping to pull some rainbow trout or yellow perch through a hole in the ice.

Or, in our case, people interested in floundering through the snow.

That wasn't my goal, of course.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Frozen Phillips Reservoir, about 17 miles southwest of Baker City, on Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022.

Our four pairs of snowshoes were scattered helter-skelter in their customary place, the back of our Toyota FJ Cruiser. They spend most of the winter there, dripping meltwater onto the thick rubber floormat.

As we parked, Olivia asked whether we were going to put on the snowshoes.

Although her disdain for strapping on a couple square feet of plastic to her boots isn't as palpable as her feelings about steep trails or roads, suffice it to say that her ideal hike does not involve snowshoes.

I noticed, as I looked at the slope where the shoreline trail winds between the ponderosa pines, that there was sufficient snow for snowshoes.

But neither was it especially deep.

I was in that fateful moment rendered insensible by a combination of two powerful forces — naive optimism and the desire to grant the wishes of a teenager.

Individually, either of these can potentially lead to blunders.

Combine them and it's certain.

I agreed that we could have a go without snowshoes.

I convinced myself that, after several days of dry weather, the snow that fell the first week of the new year likely would have solidified somewhat. I mustered quite an internal argument in favor of this proposition, based on the idea that

because the trail mainly follows south-facing slopes, the snow would have melted a bit each afternoon in the weak winter sunshine, and then refrozen each night, facilitating the firming process that would render snowshoes, if not superfluous then at least not mandatory.

As we strode away to the west, toward Union Creek Campground, this concept didn't seem wholly fantastical.

The snow was indeed compacted in places, so much so that my boots barely breached the icy surface.

But snow is treacherous. It can't be trusted.

We hadn't hiked more than a couple tenths of a mile before we started occasionally to plunge into snow up to mid-calf (or nearer the knee in Max's case; at 10, he's both the youngest and shortest member of our quartet).

But this wallowing didn't even have the dubious advantage of being consistent, and thus predictable.

The vagaries of terrain and trees and exposure to sunlight had conspired to create a sort of minefield effect. Sometimes we would take a dozen steps without sinking in. Then we would hit a patch of softer snow and slog for several paces. More often, though, there was no regularity, no rhythm. One boot would stay on top while the other thrust through clear to the frozen

See, *Shoeless*/Page B2



Oregon State Marine Board/Contributed Photo

Quagga mussels, an invasive species, on a boat motor propeller.

Program speeds boat inspections

EO Media Group

A new program is designed to speed the transport of watercraft into Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana, while also reducing the risk of bringing in boats contaminated with invasive species.

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission started the "Call Before You Haul" program to prevent delays during the transport of watercraft to the four states. Boat transporters can call a toll-free phone number prior to hauling watercraft from outside the region to one of the four states. The program is currently being piloted in 10 states and is intended to be expanded to all states in 2022.

By calling the toll-free number, 1-844-311-4873, prior to hauling, and providing some basic information about the watercraft being transported, a representative from the destination state will reach out to the haulers to expedite the watercraft inspection and, if needed, decontamination. This is intended to prevent delays at inspection stations. The four states are working together, so boat haulers who set up an inspection with one state can also continue into any of the others.

All Pacific Northwest states have made it illegal to transport aquatic invasive species (dead or alive) within their respective

states, including penalties up to, and including, a no bond felony. Much of the ongoing spread of aquatic invasive species to inland waters throughout North America can be attributed to the hauling of watercraft between states.

Invasive species such as quagga or zebra mussels can be carried in bilge water, live wells and bait buckets, as well as on boats, motors and trailers. Every time a boat is transported overland after use in an infested waterway, there is the possibility that it will transfer aquatic invasive species to uninfested waterways.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife manages border inspection stations, including one along Interstate 84 at Ontario, where all boats being transported are required to stop. Inspections generally take only 10 minutes and go a long way to help protect Oregon's waterways. Fees from waterway access permits, out-of-state aquatic invasive species prevention permits and motorboat registrations through the Oregon State Marine Board help pay for inspection stations and other prevention efforts.

For more information on aquatic invasive species in the West, see: www.western-oidfw.org.

Visit myODFW.com for more information about inspection stations in Oregon and required permits.

Reviewing 2021 with 'finfographics'

A different way to lay out a year's worth of fishing



LUKE OVGARD
CAUGHT OVGARD

Fishing is such a visual pastime that it's hard to imagine it through any other lens. The sound of a fish pulling drag off of a spinning reel, the smell of cutbait, the taste of salt spray in your face when crossing the bar into the wider ocean or that feel of a wet fly line passing through cold hands all contribute to its mythos, but fishing relies on visuals more

than any other sense.

Though I'm sure there are niche corners of the Internet that offer unique tactile alternatives, pictures of our catch remain the currency in most fishing circles. Just as the digital revolution made cataloging and sharing these pictures more viable, the Internet also made it tougher and tougher for anglers to stand out. Posting half a dozen of your favorite pictures to Instagram at the end of each year might seem unique and creative, but what started out as a novel idea has since been cheapened by the masses.

So instead of posting a few highlight photos and a caption long enough to bore legislators with all of the results of my year's fishing shenanigans, I decided to shake it up a bit a few years back.

See, *Ovgard*/Page B2

