

Behold the might of the Black Pearl



TOM CLAYCOMB
BASE CAMP

It has been said that the two happiest times in your life are when you buy a boat and when you sell the boat. I've owned a few boats in my life so let's go over the trials and tribulations of owning a boat so I can help you skip some heartache.

Let's draw up a boating schedule for the average Oregonian or Idahoan. Unless you're floating the rivers up north steelhead fishing you probably fish April through August. That's 22 Saturdays. If you're lucky there's only one Saturday per month with bad weather such as rain or typhoon type winds. Now we're down to 18. Then let's say you have to work maybe eight Saturdays. Now we're down to 10. Then some animal lover will schedule a wedding or graduation in the middle of primo fishing season. Now we're down to only getting to fish eight Saturdays.

You can make adjustments to match your individual scenario but you get my drift — our days fishing are limited and precious. I say all of this to point out, buy a new(er) boat motor. You don't want to spend your few precious free days sitting at the boat dock working on a boat motor or getting hauled to jail because in a fit of rage you emptied your 30-06 into a dysfunctional boat motor while witnesses filmed you.

My third boat, Katy and I had just gotten married. We bought a decent-looking boat at a ranch auction. Our first free Saturday we went to the lake only to discover that the motor was froze up. After a trip to the boat house and \$2,500 later we were headed back out two weeks later.

Same scenario. Boat wouldn't start — Katy's grandpa and I blew across the bay.

Back to the boathouse, stern talk to the scal-awag mechanics and we were finally in the saddle. Not that I recommend

watching this movie but shortly thereafter Katy and I watched the show "The Money Pit." It was about a young couple that bought a house and all of the fiascos that they encountered while remodeling it. I think they drew up the plot around what we had encountered with our newly purchased boat, and we never received any royalties!

I learned then, with no more free time than I have, I'm not going to buy a boat with an old motor. In fact, I'm in the market for a new boat right now. Sure, I wouldn't mind buying a used one if I could find one 1 to 3 years old in pristine condition but other than that, I'm going to buy a new one. It's not worth the pain to get a good deal on a 400-pound paperweight called a boat motor.

Which brings us around to my old faithful, tried and true 12-foot Little Jon boat. We bought it the first year we got married 37 years ago. It is great for sandpits, small lakes and floating smooth rivers. We've caught boatloads of fish in it. Up until two years ago, all that we've ever had were electric motors. Then two years ago we got a 2.3-horsepower Honda motor which was a slice of heaven.

So according to me, it's been a great fishing/bowfishing boat. To winterize it, flip it on its side against the fence and that's it. It doesn't have to be stored inside. Snow means nothing to it. The sun can't hurt it. Sure, once the kids and I were floating the Boise River and went over a diversion dam and knocked a hole in the bottom and had to get that patched but that's the only maintenance required other than spray painting it every few years with two or three cans of \$1.50 spray paint.

In case the haters happen upon this article I guess that I'd better go ahead and mention a few wee downsides to the boat that we affectionately named the Black Pearl and hoist a pirate flag up her flag pole (well, dowel rod) when she is on the high seas.

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The humble pumpkinseed is a worthy quarry for anglers

Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

The humble pumpkinseed is one of the hardest-fighting panfish species.



LUKE OVGARD
CAUGHT OVGARD

After cottonseed is processed by a gin and bulk of the fibers removed to make the shirt on your back, shorter strands of residual fibers, called linters, remain attached to the seeds. It cannot be used to make cotton fabric, so for years, linters went unused and simply remained attached to tons and tons of cottonseed destined for the oil presses. Oil removed, the linters and husks of the seed were simply discarded. Until one day, they weren't.

With the invention of a device capable of removing the linters before oil extraction, not only could the linters be salvaged, but without the cotton fibers on the seeds, they immediately gained traction as fish and animal feed.

And those linters? Well, today, linters are utilized almost exclusively in the creation of high-quality cotton paper. The very cotton paper used by the

United States Treasury to print money is made of linters once viewed as worthless but now used as the basis for financial exchange the world over.

Seeds

Linters are not the only part of the natural world that often gets overlooked and devalued for lack of apparent worth. In fact, cottonseed wasn't even the only underutilized little seed. Another is the pumpkinseed. No, not the delicious green seeds often sold as pepitas — the fish.

The pumpkinseed, *Lepomis gibbosus*, is a small sunfish closely resembling a bluegill originally native to the northeastern part of the United States and southeastern Canada. Despite not growing larger than your palm (and rarely larger than six inches) and having limited sport and food value due to their small size, they are one of the most widely introduced sunfish worldwide with documented populations in 44 U.S. states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico as well as almost every European nation.

What is it about this fish that almost nobody fishes for on purpose that has scattered it to the wind? The answer might surprise you.

Perspective

OK, it won't surprise you that much. Pumpkinseed are typically stocked for both their

popularity as an aquarium or pond fish and the fact that bass love to eat them; however, they have merit for anglers, too. Though small, pumpkinseed fight hard on an ultralight or light fly rod and are at least as easy to look at as some "Instagram models" I know. They (the fish, not the Instagram models) seem to have forgotten their diminutive size and when staging to spawn, pumpkinseed will hit almost anything.

For this reason, they make a great practice quarry for anglers trying to improve their bass or trout game. I've caught pumpkinseed on small Rapalas, spoons, spinners, jigs, worms, minnows, streamers, dry flies, nymphs and even micro gear.

This entitled attitude and general dissatisfaction with anything being close to them make pumpkinseed a fantastic target for young anglers learning the nuance of how to twitch a minnowbait, fish an indicator or bottom-bounce a jig.

It's probably sacrilege to the diehard fly guys for me to admit that pumpkinseed — not trout — taught me how to fly-cast. The fact that I used a hot pink San Juan Worm probably doesn't help my case, either, but it did make me a proficient flycaster. Not good, mind you. Proficient.

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Falling for an iconic Oregon attraction

Hike to the top of Multnomah Falls gives a fresh appreciation for Oregon's tallest waterfall



JAYSON JACOBY
ON THE TRAIL

I hiked to a cliché recently and the experience was more compelling than I expected it to be.

But then a 542-foot-high cliff isn't apt to be boring, no matter how many calendars its visage has graced.

I'm writing here of Multnomah Falls.

It is Oregon's highest waterfall and perennially among the places in the state that attract the most visitors.

Officially, Multnomah Falls is measured at 620 feet. That total includes the main plunge of 542 feet, the lower falls of 69 feet and a 9-foot drop between the two.

The falls is popular and iconic in part because of its location.

Multnomah Falls is just 20 miles or so east of Portland. And it's right beside Interstate 84, so it's much easier to get to than other Oregon scenic treasures such as Crater Lake or the Wallowas or Leslie Gulch.

This accessibility can be a curse as well as a blessing.

The parking lot at Multnomah Falls fills rapidly on nice days, and not infrequently the lot closes because there's no space left.

I've driven past the falls dozens of times but I've taken the exit on just a few occasions.

This is in part due to the crowds.

I'm accustomed to hiking on trails in Northeastern Oregon where, with rare exceptions, encountering another person is so uncommon as to be noteworthy — akin to seeing a rarely glimpsed animal such as a bear.

I generally avoid Multnomah Falls because I figure I'd end up dodging hordes of cavorting teenagers and the occasional small but ill-tempered dog, the latter meetings inevitably happening at a

narrow section of trail.

But I also have dismissed the falls as hardly worthy of my time.

It is, after all, just a waterfall, albeit a lengthy example by local standards.

That's what I meant by Multnomah Falls being a cliché. Many serious nature photographers eschew waterfalls as subjects simply because they are so common. How many doctor's offices or motel rooms have you been in that had at least one waterfall scene, whether a photograph or a painting? The setting is so ubiquitous you no longer notice it, the visible equivalent to the background hum of traffic that any city dweller quickly adjusts to.

Like all types of discrimination, my disdain for Multnomah Falls was misguided, the product of lazy thinking and the sloppy assumptions it yields.

I had occasion to not only stop at the falls, but to hike the trail to the top, while returning from the state tennis tournament with my wife, Lisa, and our daughter, Olivia.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

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The Benson Bridge crosses Multnomah Creek between the upper and lower falls.