

The stubborn snow



ETHAN SHAW
LAY OF THE LAND

Winter's encore appearance this spring gave what, back at the start of April, had looked like a dismal mountain snowpack the chance to play a little catchup. As we assess to what degree that springtime snowfall has improved the regional drought outlook, I'm also watching the ebbing snowpatches of foothill gullies and escarpment breaks from here in the Grande Ronde Valley. And I'm getting into gear for another field season hunting the more resilient snowfields of the nearby high country.

This is part of a project I've kicked off called the Wallowa-Blue Mountain Snowfield Project. (OK, it could be catchier — let's call it a working name.) Thus far my fieldwork's been mainly focused on the Wallowa Mountains, but I do intend to expand into the high ranges of the Blues down the line.

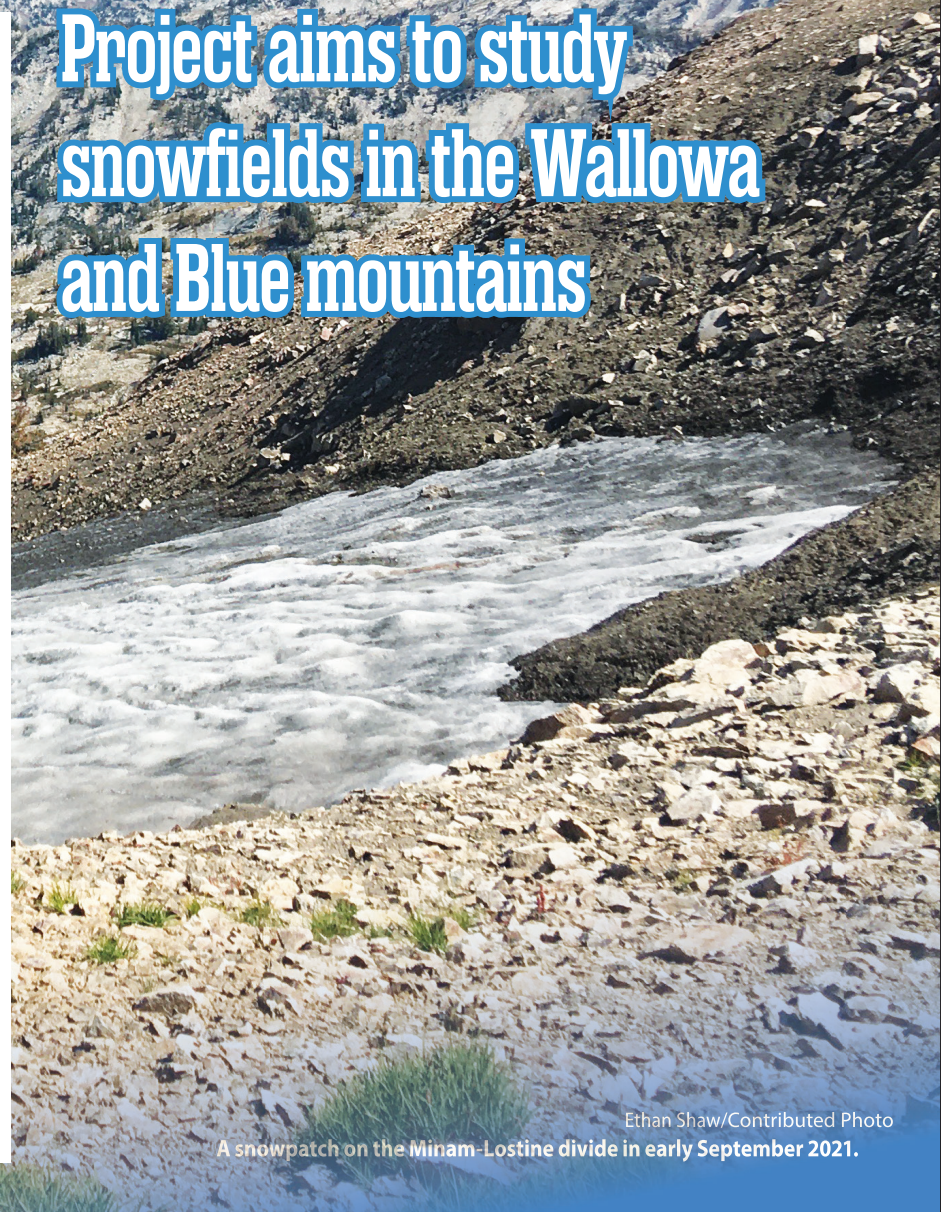
Snowfields? Snowpatches? What exactly are we talking about here, and why do they matter?

This project considers both those patches of snow surviving in the mountains after the snowpack itself has melted off — seasonal snowpatches — as well as those perennial snowfields that persist through to the first accumulating fall snows. In short, it's the longest-lying white stuff of summer and early fall I'm most keyed into: surveying its distribution and tracking its duration.

As to why these snow features are important — well, that's a multi-dimensional answer. They're important components of our hydrologic cycle, first and foremost, which I'll circle back around to. They've got their own localized geomorphic and ecological effects as well. And — recurring as they do year after year, in about the same locations and configurations — they're fixtures of our seasonal scenery, annual landmarks, primal time-of-year gauges. Part of the fingerprint of a certain place at a certain time.

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Project aims to study snowfields in the Wallowa and Blue mountains



Ethan Shaw/Contributed Photo
A snowpatch on the Minam-Lostine divide in early September 2021.

Streams, lakes stocked with trout in time for Free Fishing Weekend

No license or tags needed June 4 or 5

EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — June 4-5 is a Free Fishing Weekend in Oregon, and you don't need a license, tag or endorsement to fish, crab or clam in the state on those two days.

All other regulations, including size and bag limits, remain in effect.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has been stocking catchable rainbow trout in many lakes, reservoirs, ponds and streams around Northeastern Oregon this spring, with more stocking planned.

Trout stocking for the week of May 30-June 3

Honeymoon Pond: 500 legals, 50 trophy
Wallowa Lake: 6,000 legals, 300 trophy
Weavers Pond: 1,000 legals, 50 trophy
Teepee Pond: 500 legals, 50 trophy
Victor Pond: 500 legals, 50 trophy
Morgan Lake: 1,250 legals
Taylor Green Pond: 200 legals
Balm Creek Reservoir: 2,000 legals
Stocking planned for June 20-24
Fish Lake (north of Halfway): 2,250 legals, 500 trophy
Twin Lakes (north of Halfway): 200 trophy
Wallowa Lake: 6,000

legals, 300 trophy
Salt Creek Summit Pond: 500 legals, 50 trophy
Grande Ronde Lane: 3,000 legals, 150 trophy
Anthony Lake: 1,500 trophy
Pine Creek (Halfway area): 500 legals
Kinney Lake: 2,500 legals, 200 trophy
McGraw Pond: 500 legals, 50 trophy

Grande Ronde River

Variable flows may make fishing difficult during spring runoff. As the water warms, bass fishing will become better in the lower Grande Ronde. Recently, anglers have had success fly-fishing for trout in the river between the Wallowa River and Troy. Anglers are reminded that bull trout and chinook salmon may be encountered in the Grande Ronde and must be released unharmed.

Imnaha River

Trout fishing may be good when water conditions allow. When the water temperature increases, bass fishing may be good in the lower portions of the river. Anglers are reminded that bull trout and chinook salmon may be encountered in the Imnaha and must be released unharmed.

Umatilla River

Summer steelhead fishing on the Umatilla is closed and will reopen Sept. 1.
The spring chinook season is open from the

Highway 730 bridge to Three Mile Falls Dam until June 10, and from TMFD to the Umatilla Indian Reservation Boundary until June 30. There is a predicated run of approximately 3,000 spring chinook returning to the Umatilla. A total of 3,482 spring chinook have been counted at TMFD so far this run year, with 392 over the past week. Fishing has been slow up to date due to high water this year.

The flows in the Umatilla came up significantly in the past week from all the rain over the weekend, but flows should start to drop and this is when anglers should really concentrate their efforts as the increase in flows tends to move fish into the system. Anglers should start to find success as the clarity of the river improves and the river starts to drop. Most anglers use egg set up with a slinky weight bounced off the bottom or a some have found success with spinners with water temperatures being relatively cold. Fish are being caught throughout the system, however due to clarity the fishing has been better near Pendleton.

Trout fishing on the Umatilla River, and its tributaries, will remain open until Oct. 31. Trout fishing can be good in the upper headwaters of the Umatilla, bull trout are not to be targeted and if caught released unharmed. Bass and other warmwater species remain open all year.

Wallowa Lake

Fishing has been good for rainbow trout near the south end of the lake. Anglers have had success using both flies and lures. Anglers can have good success wading out from shore and casting lures or flies near where fish are rising. Boat anglers will have better access to more of the lake and may find fish near areas where the depth drops off.

There are some nice kokanee available this year with some fish around 16 to 18 inches. Jigging and trolling for kokanee can both be productive ways of fishing for them. The docks were recently put in place for the season at the county boat ramp on the north end.

Wallowa River

Recently, when flows have not been too high, anglers have had success fishing for trout. Good hatches of stoneflies and mayflies have occurred. Anglers are reminded that bull trout and chinook salmon may be encountered in the Wallowa and must be released unharmed.

Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam

Steelhead fishing will reopen Sept. 1, 2022. Bass fishing for trout. Good hatches of stoneflies and mayflies have occurred. Anglers are reminded that bull trout and chinook salmon may be encountered in the Wallowa and must be released unharmed.

reminded that they must use barbless hooks to fish for sturgeon and sturgeon may not be retained in the Snake River. All sturgeon must be released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water.

Fishing for hatchery spring chinook is open on the Snake River from Dug Bar boat ramp (upstream of the Imnaha River) to the fishing deadline near Hells Canyon Dam. The daily bag limit is four hatchery chinook, only one of which may be an adult (adults are chinook salmon longer than 24 inches). Anglers must cease fishing once they have either retained one adult hatchery chinook, or a total of four fish. Barbless hooks are required.

Hells Canyon Reservoir

Bass anglers have had some success, but many of the fish have been small. Trout fishing has been slow, but there have been some good-sized trout encountered by anglers. Anglers have been catching catfish in the upper reaches of the reservoir below Oxbow

Dam by trolling crawdad-like lures. Fishing bait will also be an effective way of catching catfish throughout the warmer months.

Oxbow Reservoir

Anglers have been successful catching bass, and some have been catching nicer sized bass larger than 12 inches. However, when the weather is cooler, bass fishing can be slow. Angling for trout may be good especially when water temperatures are in the low 50s.

Brownlee Reservoir

Bass fishing has been very good, and fishing for perch has been good as well. Anglers have had good success with crankbaits for bass, and bait has produced good catches of perch. Crappie fishing has been sporadic, but some good fish have been caught with some fish as large as 16 inches. The water temperature of the main reservoir is about 65 degrees. As the temperature continues to warm, more crappie will likely be available as they move into shallow water to spawn. Some catfish have been caught recently.

Wolf Creek Reservoir

Reservoir is currently about half full. The reservoir may drop quickly throughout the year so the best fishing may be over the next couple months.

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