

Outdoor Recreation

Getting ready for fishing



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

We all, or at least most of us, have made some kind of New Year's resolutions. Mine included the promise to myself that I would get in more fishing, and catch more fish, which is a nice plus.

With so many places to throw a line and hook in around here, one can't really complain about the distance to travel in order to spend a day, or part of a day, using a skill that's been programmed into our DNA since the beginning of, well, us.

Sure, it's not as "glamorous" as hunting a buck or a bull, but it really doesn't require much investment to

get out and just do it, all things considered. The licenses and tags we buy seem like somewhat of a hit to the pocketbook when first purchased, and the costs are expected to increase in 2016, but considering we only have to buy hunting

and fishing licenses once per year, it's not that bad. Really.

Granted, the ever-expanding fishing, hunting and game bird regulations handbooks read like mystery crime novels, sometimes leaving one unclear about the details of the who, what, when, where, why and how, even after reading cover to cover, but deciphering the code is not an impossible task. I still think the reflection of the sun from the surface of the water could be more damaging to the eyes. Probably.

Admittedly, the only

"sweet spot" so far this year for me has been the Highway 203 Pond, conveniently located near, of course, Highway 203.

With my trusty Ugly Stick—one tough pole—and some worms, I managed to catch some decent trout. Not monsters, but decent.

One cast involved throwing half of my pole into the water, but all was fine, as there was not another soul around to make fun of me.

When I was younger, some members of my family and I traveled to Unity, fishing along the Burnt River on the way there and back.

We decided to check the action out on the east side of the highway across from the Unity Reservoir. I didn't have anything to hold worms in, so my dad made a container by cutting a Pepsi can in half, which I held in my shirt pocket.

At one point, I had to jump across a small ditch, and I forgot about the container of dirt and worms, which flew directly into my eyes as I landed on the other side. Again, if I recall

correctly, nobody saw that particular incident, which helped avoid creative criticism.

Fishing has always involved fun times, and funny times, too. Maybe some disappointments, but it's not only about attempting to limit out. Experiencing something new is always interesting, as I learned back when I tried fly fishing.

It's definitely something to get used to, and it takes a skilled hand to do it properly. I had visions of catching trout after trout, while appearing like Brad Pitt in the movie *A River Runs Through It*, but I probably could have accomplished more by spearing the fish with my 8-foot pole instead.

Fishing is a great way to bond, too, and pass on a skill to the newer generations. It doesn't require a charter boat with expensive gear in the ocean, it requires spending time teaching, and patience. It can be very relaxing, too. Well, if you don't throw half the pole into the water during your cast, that is.

Good luck with your adventures.

Free kids' fishing days

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has announced several free family fishing days. The events are designed to show families how easy and fun fishing can be, said Shahab Farzanegan, ODFW angler education coordinator. ODFW provides loaner rods and reels, tackle, instruction and freshly stocked fish – everything a family needs for a successful fishing trip.

Children under the age of 14 can fish for free, kids 14 to 17 and adults will need an Oregon fishing license in order to fish.

Local events.

April 18, Hermiston, McNary Channel Ponds, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. (youth only), family fishing begins at noon

May 16, Hermiston, McNary Channel Ponds, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. (youth only), family fishing begins at noon

June 6, Hepner, Cutsforth Pond, 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. (youth only), family fishing begins at noon

June 22, Pilot Rock, 5412 Pond on Umatilla National Forest, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

July 11, Tollgate, Jubilee Lake on Umatilla National Forest, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Positions open

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking qualified applicants to fill three positions on the Fish Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Program Board. Interested individuals must apply by March 27, 2015. The positions will represent sport fishing interests, troll fishing interests, and seafood processing interests on the R&E Board.

For more information and to obtain an application, go to the R&E Program website at or contact Kevin Herkamp at (503) 947-6232 or Kevin.Herkamp@state.or.us

—ODFW RECREATION REPORT—

Baker County Hunting

The warm and dry winter has left much more county snow free than usual. Green up has also begun to appear in the lower elevations. The mild weather may also have BEARS out and more active in the early part of the season.

Cougars can be found throughout Baker County but hunters should target areas with high concentrations of deer and elk. Setting up on a fresh kill or using distress calls can all be productive techniques. Hunters are required to check in the hide of any cougar taken, with skull and proof of sex attached. Remember to pick up a 2015 tag.

Coyote numbers are good throughout the district. Try calling in early morning and late afternoon. Remember to ask for permission before hunting on private properties.

Baker County Viewing

Bighorn sheep can be seen in the Burnt River Canyon west of Durkee or along the Snake River Road south of Richland. The best viewing is in the early morning and late in the evening.

Bald and golden eagles can be seen along the Snake River. Take the Snake River Road between Richland and Huntington.

Early in the morning and late in the afternoon are good times to view wildlife. Driving through the foothills of the Baker valley and through the Keating valley can turn up good numbers of deer.

Elkhorn Wildlife Area is known for the Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer herds that frequent the area during the winter. When snow covers the ground, ODFW staff feed elk and deer to encourage them to stay in the higher elevations and out of agricultural fields.

There are two good viewing sites. The Anthony Creek site is located about eight miles west of I-84 on North Powder River Lane. From I-84 take the North Powder Exit (Exit 285). Elk use at the feed site has been sporadic with the warm weather. From the overlook on Auburn Road, a few elk may be seen; again, the warm weather conditions have made elk viewing less dependable. It is on the south side of Old Auburn Road, which branches off Highway 7 about six miles south of Baker City.

NE Oregon Fishing

BULL PRAIRIE RESERVOIR: rainbow and brook trout. Remains open to fishing all year. The reservoir is frozen but proceed with caution as the ice may be too thin to support

anglers. Approximately 200 trophy rainbow trout were stocked last fall and should provide fishing all winter. Brook trout are also available.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER: steelhead. Steelhead anglers on the Grande Ronde continue to be successful with a variety of gear types. A healthy proportion of two salt fish has resulted in a large average size this year. So, expect a few larger fish and some screaming drags! Remember, only adipose-fin clipped rainbow trout may be retained and all bull trout must be released unharmed.

HOLIDAY PARK POND: rainbow trout. Remains open all year. The pond is now free of ice. Carryover trout are being caught and should provide fair angling until stocking occurs in April.

IMNAHA RIVER: steelhead. The Imnaha is in great shape to catch fish. With the current weather it's a great time to catch a steelhead while getting sunburned. Fishing will continue to produce into the season ender on April 15. Don't forget to try Big Sheep Creek too while fish move toward the hatchery facility. Flow data for the Imnaha can be found on the Idaho Power website. River flow levels are just right and steelhead are biting on jigs, flies and bait. Most of the steelhead

being caught are wild and have been holding between Service Creek and the town of John Day and in the North Fork up to Monument. Water temperatures are cold so steelhead are holding in slack water along the current edge. A few bass have been caught below Kimberly during the warmest days. ODFW encourages all anglers to keep any ad-clipped steelhead taken in this fishery. All wild (adipose intact) steelhead must be released unharmed.

LONG CREEK POND, CAVENDER POND: trout. Remains open all year. Both ponds are now free of ice. Several trout stocked last year survived the winter and will provide good fishing until both ponds are re-stocked again in April.

MAGONE LAKE: rainbow and brook trout. Remains open all year. Portions of the upper lake are ice free so proceed with caution if attempting to ice fish. The ice may be too thin to support anglers.

MARR POND: surplus steelhead. Marr pond has been stocked with 100 surplus steelhead that returned to Wallowa Hatchery. Once these fish are placed in still water fisheries they are considered "trout" and do not need to be recorded on a harvest card. This is a great opportunity to get young anglers into some big fish. Try catching these fish by floating bait under a bobber mid water column. Brightly colored lures and spinners may also be productive.

PEACH POND (Ladd Marsh): rainbow trout. The pond was stocked with trophy-sized rainbow trout in late September. The pond has no ice cover.

ROULET POND: rainbow trout. The pond was stocked with trophy-sized rainbow trout in late September. The pond has no ice cover.

ROWE CREEK RESERVOIR: rainbow trout. Remains open all year. The pond is now free of ice. Fishing is fair for carryover trout but the water level is very low.

UMATILLA FOREST PONDS: trout. The forest ponds remain open to angling year



Photo courtesy of ODFW.

NE Oregon Steelhead.

around and can provide a good opportunity for ice fishing during the winter months.

UMATILLA RIVER: steelhead. Steelhead continue to enter the system in record numbers, anglers should be able to find fish scattered throughout the river. Steelhead fishing was good last weekend with upper river anglers averaging 3.6 hours per steelhead caught. During the three days creel last week, 78 anglers caught 43 native and 2 hatchery steelhead.

Water conditions in the Pendleton area dropping quickly back into shape, flows are about 500cfs and water temperatures are in the low 40s. Steelhead are distributed though out the system. Anglers are finding best success using bobbers and jigs and drift fishing for steelhead. Anglers should consult the synopsis for detailed regulations.

WALLOWA LAKE: rainbow trout, kokanee, lake trout

As spring approaches anglers will start to find some stocked trout that held over from last season's stocking. These fish often range 15 to 20 inches and can be caught in multiples. These fish are normally more common later in the spring; however with the warm weather and early spring anglers should start seeing these fish soon.

Some experienced fishermen are picking up large lake trout trolling at depth with downriggers. While lake trout aren't abundant in Wallowa Lake it's not uncommon to find fish over 25 pounds.

In 2014 the lake was stocked with tagged rainbow trout in an effort by ODFW to better understand the utilization of this fishery. Tagged fish have been caught at very high rates and over \$2,700 in rewards have been paid. Some of these fish have likely held over from last year and are available to anglers. If you catch one of these tagged fish, please report the number, location, date, where in the lake the fish was caught and the size to the ODFW office in Enterprise or online.

WALLOWA RIVER: steelhead, mountain whitefish. The steelhead season is in full swing on the Wallowa River. Fishing is good and there really is no good excuse to not be out there. Anglers are finding fish in good numbers and the ratio of two-salt fish to one-salt fish is high. This means there are a lot of larger fish available so, oil your reels and make sure that drag is working well.

Remember the Wallowa River is a whitefish factory. Whitefish can be a great way to keep kids interested while steelhead fishing and can be great table fair. Simply tie in a small beadhead nymph dropper while fishing under a bobber rig and let the fun begin. Also, steelhead will often take a bead head nymph hanging under a jig.

WILLOW CREEK RESERVOIR: trout. Anglers are reporting good catches of rainbow trout from 12 to 20-inches. Best catches are falling for PowerBait and night crawlers fished on the bottom.

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