

Mountain national parks prepare for winter

By **JEFFREY P. MAYOR**
The (Tacoma) News Tribune

TACOMA, Wash. — With snow covering higher elevations, staff at Mount Rainier and Olympic national parks are prepping for the start of the winter recreation season.

“Visitors can come have a great park experience during a time that offers incredible seasonal opportunities, if they plan ahead, prepare for changing conditions, and know their limitations,” Mount Rainier Superintendent Randy King said in a prepared statement.

“Thanksgiving weekend is our traditional kickoff for the snow season at Hurricane Ridge,” Olympic Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum said in a statement.

Here is a rundown on some of what’s happening this winter:

Mount Rainier

Longmire: The area is open seven days a week, unless major storm events require closure. The museum is open from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily, providing general park information, winter activity guidance, backcountry permits, and Discover Your Northwest books and maps for sale. The National Park Inn provides lodging, food, gifts, and snowshoe/ski rentals. For reservations, call 360-569-2275 or visit mtrainierguestservices.com.

Visitors can come have a great park experience during a time that offers incredible seasonal opportunities, said Mount Rainier Superintendent Randy King

Paradise: The Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center is open 10 a.m.-4:15 p.m. weekends only, as well as Dec. 23-Jan. 3.

The Paradise snowplay area is not yet open. Park managers want a snowpack of at least 60 inches before opening the area. The snow-play area did not open last winter.

Ranger-led snowshoe walks are scheduled to begin Dec. 23, and run through March 27. The walks will take place weekends and holiday periods when the visitor center is open. They begin at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., and last two hours. Sign-ups are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, and begin one hour in advance of each walk at the



In this photo taken in November, a man snowshoes on the Paradise Valley Road at Mount Rainier National Park, in Wash.

Jackson Visitor Center information desk.

Longmire-Paradise Road: The gate at Longmire is closed nightly to ensure visitor and staff safety, with uphill access closing at 4 p.m. Each morning, rangers and road crews will evaluate road, weather, and avalanche conditions to determine when it is safe to open the road above Longmire. The standard open hours of the road are from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Olympic

Hurricane Ridge Road: The road is scheduled to be open Fridays-Sundays and Monday holidays through March 27, weather permitting. The road is also scheduled to be open daily from Dec. 26-Jan. 3.

The road might close temporarily if the parking lot becomes full. Park staff urges Hurricane Ridge visitors to carpool and pay extra attention to making the best possible use of the

parking area.

Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center: It will be open Saturdays, Sundays and Monday holidays beginning Dec. 12 and daily Dec. 26- Jan. 3. Ranger-led snowshoe walks will be offered at 2 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and Monday holidays from Dec. 19-March 27, as well as Jan. 1. The walks last 90 minutes and are less than one mile in length. A \$7 participation fee is charged for adults, with a \$3 fee for youth from 6-15 years old. Admission is free for children 5 and younger. Sign up at the visitor center information desk beginning 30 minutes before the scheduled walk.

Ski and tubing area: Weather permitting, the Hurricane Ridge Ski, Snowboard and Tubing Area will operate from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and Monday holidays Dec. 6-March 27. The area is also scheduled to be open daily from Dec. 26-Jan. 3. More information is available at hurricaneidge.com.

Tubing and sliding are permitted free of charge for children 8 and younger at the small children’s snowplay area just west of the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center.

Olympic National Park Visitor Center: The center and Wilderness Information Center at the base of Hurricane Ridge Road is open daily from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. except for Christmas.

Stay informed

Mount Rainier: nps.gov/mora, twitter.com/MountRainierNPS, 360-569-2211.

Olympia: nps.gov/olym, twitter.com/HRWinterAccess, 360-565-3131.

Reminder: All vehicles, including those with four-wheel drive, must have chains when traveling in the mountains. That includes Hurricane Ridge Road above Heart O’ the Hills entrance station.



AP Photo/Louie Balukoff, File

Endangered fisher to be reintroduced into Cascades

SEATTLE (AP) — A weasel-like predator that disappeared from Washington state decades ago will soon be reintroduced to the Cascade Mountains.

State and federal wildlife officials are preparing to re-establish fishers into Mount Rainier and North Cascades national parks and surrounding areas as part of an effort to restore the state-listed endangered animals to their previous range.

The dark brown forest-dwelling mammals historically were found throughout much of the forested areas of the state. But they declined in numbers due to overtrapping in the 1800s and early 1900s, and the loss of forest habitats. Fishers are believed to have disappeared from the state in the mid-1900s.

A team of wildlife officials will take fishers captured from British Columbia and relocate them to the southwest Cascades, including Mount Rainier National Park and Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The plan is to reintroduce 40 fishers a year for two years.

If all goes well, officials will begin relocating additional fishers to the northwest Cascades, as early as fall 2017.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Park Service, Conservation Northwest and others are leading the effort.

Hunting, fishing licenses go on sale

2016 regulations also available

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

Oregon hunting and fishing licenses are on sale now for 2016, along with the new sport fishing and big game hunting regulation booklets.

Prices for adult tags and licenses increased for the first time since 2010, with an annual resident hunting license up to \$32 from \$29.50 and fishing license up to \$38 from \$33. The Columbia River Basin Endorsement — approved by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2013 — adds another \$9.75 for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon anglers on the Umatilla, Grande Ronde and John Day rivers.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife says hikes in recreational fees were needed to keep up with rising costs and inflation. The Columbia River Basin Endorsement, meanwhile, sets money aside to move non-tribal commercial gill nets out of the main stem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, thereby increasing the number of salmon and steelhead for upstream anglers.

To encourage hunter and angler participation, ODFW has created a new youth license for kids that allows hunting, fishing and shellfishing all year for \$10. A Columbia River Basin Endorsement is included in the license. The youth combined angling tag is just \$5 more.

A hunting license used to cost \$14.50 for juveniles, and \$18.50 for a youth fishing license with Columbia River Basin endorsement. ODFW says it wants to charge lower prices for youth to keep

hunting and fishing affordable for families.

New license types also include premium hunts, which are two- or three-month, any-weapon hunts for deer, elk and pronghorn. Premium hunts are similar to auction and raffle tags that can draw thousands of dollars, but cost the same as a regular tag and provide an additional hunting opportunity. Most wildlife management units have one deer and one elk tag available for premium hunts, and 29 areas also have a pronghorn tag, according to ODFW.

The daily angling and shellfish license is also new this year, ideal for visitors to the coast. The cost is \$27.50 for both residents and non-residents.

Pioneer license holders — age 65 and older, or a 50-year resident of Oregon — will now pay \$6 for a combination license, which was previously free. ODFW says the change allows the agency to recoup an average of \$20 per paid license holder in federal grants, provided to states based on the number of paid license holders, which help fund fish and wildlife management projects.

Finally, the new 2016 Sport Fishing and Big Game Regulations are available in stores, which will have a new look and overall simplified rules.

“We’ve heard from sportsmen that the regulations can be confusing,” said Rick Hargrave, ODFW Information and Education Administrator. “We’ve made an effort to simplify them and hope they are easier to understand.”

All 2016 licenses and tags can be purchased online, at ODFW offices and licensed sales agents. For a complete list of costs, visit www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/licenses_regs.

Give cross-country skiing a try

By **JERRY PAINTER**
(Idaho Falls) Post Register

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — The first time I ever went cross-country skiing, I wondered if I would ever get the hang of it. Then 15 minutes later, I found my groove — that kick and glide motion that scoots you along.

I still wasn’t any good at it, but at least I was having fun, and I could see a bright future in the activity.

If you’d like something more than hanging out at indoor gyms this winter (or worse yet, couching up with TV or YouTube cat videos), make a vow to give the recreation a try.

The next winter storm or two will drop enough snow to start heading to the trails to give the recreation a go.

Here are a few tips to aid success in adopting this recreation:

- Go with some patient friends who are veteran Nordic skiers.
- Rent skis (rather than buy them) and try out different styles, sizes and brands during a couple of different outings before you buy. Different models have different strengths and weaknesses.

As a general rule, narrow and long skis are faster but less agile and work fine on groomed tracks. Wider and shorter skis are slightly slower but more versatile and stable, working a little better on ungroomed areas. Stores such as Idaho Mountain Trading in Idaho Falls,



Jerry Painter/The Idaho Post-Register via AP

In this 2009 photo, Sam Painter, left, and Julie Painter cross-country ski along the Moose Creek Road east of Victor, Idaho, during a winter outing.

the Outdoor Recreation Center at Brigham Young University-Idaho (Rexburg) or Peaked Sports and Yostmark Mountain Equipment in Driggs, are good places to rent gear. Some shops allow you to apply your rental fees toward the purchase of a new set of skis.

Some advice:

- Start out on mostly flat trails.

- Learn how to dress. The classic beginner mistake is to overdress or to wear a heavy winter coat. After half a mile of this aerobic activity, you will want to shed the heavy coat. Instead, wear layers of thin but warm items that allow you to fine tune your temperature depending on the conditions.
- To best accommodate layers of clothing and food and water, wear a small

BRIEFLY

Jackson County against Crater Lake proposal

MEDFORD (AP) — The Jackson County Board of Commissioners is opposing a Crater Lake wilderness proposal.

The Mail Tribune reports that commissioners voted Wednesday to proclaim their opposition to the proposed Crater Lake Wilderness Area, which would include Crater Lake National Park and surrounding federal lands in the Umpqua and Rogue River national forests.

Commissioners cited a list of concerns in their proclamation, including increased wildfire risks and a wilderness area ban on the use of

motorized vehicles.

A group that supports the proposal, Oregon Wild, says the wilderness area designation would not affect access roads used by the public, only backcountry routes.

A communications associate with the group also says wildfire activity has been growing for decades.

The group has collected 31,000 signatures in support of the wilderness designation.

Bagged deer in Cody was infected with deadly wasting disease

CODY, Wyo. (AP) — A Cody hunter who shot a deer infected with

a deadly disease is concerned he did not know the animal was afflicted until after his family ate some of its meat.

The Cody Enterprise reports that Billy Brewer says the whitetail deer he shot while hunting Nov. 1 was sent to a lab and tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease. The neurological disease affects deer, moose and elk.

The deer was the first confirmed case of the disease in the Cody area.

Wildlife officials say the disease has been in Wyoming for decades and it’s likely that a great number of infected animals have been consumed.

Hunters are warned they might not receive testing results from a deer for three weeks. Brewer says he wishes the process was faster.

SKI REPORT

- Spout Springs Tollgate, Ore. CLOSED**
Now hiring for season, about 12” of snow
- Anthony Lakes North Powder, Ore. Dec. 5 is opening day. New snow: 2” Base depth: 20” Conditions: Early season, most runs open**
- Ski Bluewood Dayton, Wash. CLOSED**
Base depth: 4”
- Ski Fergi Joseph, Ore. Dec. 5 is opening day. New snow: none Base depth: 17” Conditions: All runs open, but tree skiing not recommended**
- Mt. Hood Meadows Government Camp, Ore. Part of the hill open for Dec. 4-6 including the high-speed quad and two other lifts, discounted tickets. New snow: 3” Base depth: 15”**

backpack. A simple book pack or daypack works best.

- Expect to experience some of the most beautiful backcountry scenery of your life.

“Especially when a light snow is falling and all the trees are touched with white,” my wife Julie says. “It’s just magical.”