



Contributed photo by Marc Forsythe

Erika Forsythe with her 11-pound trophy trout taken in Haystack Reservoir in April 2017.

Trophy trout set for release

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife is greatly expanding a popular program to release extra large rainbow trout in lakes, ponds and reservoirs across the state.

More than 65,000 "trophy" trout will be stocked for anglers to catch this summer, which is 55,000 more than last year.

ODFW has been releasing large trout into lakes for years, but in 2015 state Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner) worked with the agency to launch an official trophy trout pilot program, focused on promoting economic development in communities that rely on hunting and fishing dollars.

Initially, the program was limited to just five locations — Phillips Reservoir in Baker County, Willow Creek Reservoir in Morrow County, Timothy Lake in Clackamas County, Trojan Pond in Columbia County and Garrison Lake in Curry County. This year, the list is much larger due to positive feedback.

"So far the angler response has been excellent," said Bill Duke, district fish biologist for ODFW in Pendleton. "Anglers seem to be putting in considerably more angling effort than I was expecting. They are very positive about the larger-sized trout."

Trophy trout are defined as 15 inches or larger. Jake Rice, manager of ODFW's Roaring River trout hatchery

in Scio, said the fish are generally 2 years old, and the extra year of rearing gives them time to pack on the body weight.

However, that additional time in the hatchery means staff do need to be especially watchful for diseases that may develop. All the fish are inspected monthly by a pathologist, Rice said, and feed programs are updated daily to account for size, density, water flow, water temperature and release date.

"We really stress the importance of healthy fish, and this takes a little more effort and time over the additional year of rearing," Rice said.

It does cost more to rear trophy trout, but these fish do bring in the biggest compliments from anglers, Rice added.

Trophy trout make up just a small amount of the 2 million catchable trout that ODFW releases in more than 300 locations statewide. By emphasizing the trophy trout program, the agency hopes to increase interest and participation in trout fishing.

Across northeast Oregon, trophy trout will be released in 35 different locations, including:

- Willow Creek Reservoir 2,250 fish
- Phillips Reservoir 4,000 fish
- Wallowa Lake 1,600 fish
- Anthony Lake 3,450 fish
- Jubilee Lake 1,000 fish

For more information, visit www.dfw.state.or.us.

BRIEFLY

Bend nature center sets up swan cam to livestream nest

BEND (AP) — A nature center in central Oregon has set up its first wildlife camera near a swan's nest with two eggs that may hatch before Fourth of July.

The *Bend Bulletin* reports the Sunriver Nature Center will be livestreaming the nest on its Facebook page for nature lovers interested in watching the trumpeter swan couple, Chuck and Gracie, and their expected chicks.

According to the report, trumpeter swans nearly became extinct in the early 1900s. Last year, two out of four of the swans' eggs hatched.

The nature center bought its first wildlife camera for \$7,000 with donations and funding from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Manager Jennifer Curtis says the center may also use the camera to capture live shots of beavers, birds of prey and other projects.

Brown signs bill protecting salmon from river mining

Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill Wednesday that protects thousands of miles of critical salmon habitat across much of western Oregon from suction dredge mining.

The governor's signature is the final action in a years-long push to ban or place tougher restrictions on suction dredge mining, which environmental

groups have long argued is damaging to habitat for salmon and Pacific lampreys.

About five years ago, the number of miners in primarily Southwest Oregon ballooned to more than 2,000, prompting lawmakers to pass a temporary moratorium in 2013.

The bill signed into law by Brown raises permitting costs to \$250 a year for the river miners, capped the total number of permits statewide to 200, and restricts the hours when permitted miners can search for metals.

Oregon's state bird likely to stay the meadowlark

The Western meadowlark's status as Oregon's state bird appears secure, as House lawmakers are not expected to vote on a bill that would supplant the robin-sized songbird from its perch in favor of the osprey.

State senators voted April 6 to designate the osprey as the state bird, but it has yet to come up before the House Committee on Rules.

With two weeks left in the legislative session and high-stakes issues like a statewide transportation bill still uncertain, less critical issues like the bird bill are unlikely to move forward.

"I don't think it's at the top of the priority list for the committee, which is tackling many really important bills," Scott Moore, communications director for the House Democrats, said in an email this month.

Blazing a new mountain bike trail

Magone Lake multi-use system opens, grows

By RYLAN BOGGS
EO Media Group

Roughly a dozen volunteers broke ground on a new section of trail in the Magone Lake area in nearby Grant County.

The few hundred feet of trail built in late May is the beginning of a multi-use trail system in the area and the culmination of years of collaboration between the Eastern Oregon Trail Alliance and the Forest Service.

"This is purpose built for mountain biking, but we're not precluding other users such as hikers, runners and equestrian users," EOTA board member Wade Tait said.

Tait has over a decade of experience building trails and began working with the trail alliance and Forest Service on this trail system in 2014.

"It's hard to get excited about it when it's just in theory and on paper," Tait said. "But when people can come out and see a new trail that looks like it's going to be fun, people will take some ownership over it, and that's what we need."

When choosing routes for trails, Tait said he and others from the trail alliance tried to incorporate what he calls positive control points, such as views and trailheads for ease of access. They aim to avoid negative control points like sensitive species' nesting areas, weed patches and some stream crossings. They plot these on a topographical map and then walk the area to pick the exact route of the trail, marking it with flags.

When choosing the exact line, Tait said he looks for a slope grade of under 10 percent, natural rise and fall in the landscape and interesting natural features, such as views, water crossings or rock gardens.

The trail system will be built to International Mountain Bicycling Association standards and use the same trail designations as skiing. Beginner runs



The Eagle/Ryland Boggs

Mytchell Mead tests out a new trail near Magone Lake May 29.

will be green circles, blue squares will be intermediate and black diamonds will be difficult. The more difficult trails could have technical features like jumps, rollers, wall rides and rock gardens where the area allows. The easiest trails will be built on closed roads.

The trail alliance is not involved in closing roads and only utilizes roads already closed by the Forest Service, Tait said.

The trails will be largely funded by grants, which accept volunteer hours as a match. Volunteers are covered under the Forest Service's volunteer liability program.

Mytchell Mead, a trail alliance board member, is optimistic about having as much as 15 miles of trail rideable by the end of summer, and a total of 26 miles of trail eventually. Mead envisions creating a trail system that will attract bikers from across the country.

"Biking is the fastest growing recreational activity in America right now," he said.

Mead has been working on making the John Day area more appealing to cyclists with projects such as this trail

If you go:

Head south on Highway 395 to Long Creek, then head east on Highway 18 to Forest Road 3620, turn west and drive approximately one mile to Forest Road 3618. The route is well-signed and easy to find.

system and a bike park at the Seventh Street Complex. The 11-acre park would include two pump tracks, several boardwalk-style features and two miles of trails. Mead aims to have a portion of the park open before the eclipse in August.

"Mountain bikers are oftentimes called high-return, low-impact tourists," Mead said, explaining they have a positive impact on the local economy and a small impact on the environment.

Efforts to promote mountain biking in the area have been met with resistance, but Mead said he is beginning to see a shift in attitudes toward it.

"We're embracing a broader range of forest activities," he said.

BLOOMIN' BLUES

This buttercup will build you up

By BRUCE BARNES
For The East Oregonian

Common Name: Mountain Buttercup
Scientific Name: *Ranunculus populago*

This little buttercup is known to grow from Southeast Washington to California, to Montana. It is usually found on wet mud or in very shallow water of streams or ditches, and in subalpine meadows. There are 26 species of the genus *Ranunculus* in northeast Oregon, and about 300 worldwide, mostly in the northern hemisphere in temperate to arctic areas.

The name *Ranunculus* comes from the Greek word rana for frog, referring to the aquatic habitat of many of the species.

The ending of the name may come from uncus, which means hooked, referring perhaps to a persistent point on each seed which is sometimes hooked.

The common name



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Mountain Buttercup, *Ranunculus populago*

buttercup may be assumed to refer to the bright yellow petals, which are often slightly cupped with the edges curving upward. However, there is an earlier source for that name. Buttercup plants were considered good to have in pastures, as they were believed to provide the golden yellow color of rich butter. Farmers would rub the flowers on the cow's

udder, and hang the plants over the barn door. In spite of that myth, the plants are somewhat acrid and are fortunately avoided by grazing animals, as the plants can poison them and cause milk to taste bad.

Mountain Buttercup is usually a few inches high and tends to sprawl along the ground. The five-petaled flowers are about a half inch

across, and the leaves about one to two inches long. The shape of the leaves varies widely, from circular to oval or narrowly oblong, with smooth edges, smooth surfaces, and rounded to pointed tips. The fruit is a small tight ball of green, tiny, pointed seeds with tiny points.

In England and in North America, buttercup plants have been used widely for medicinal purposes, by Indian tribes as well as immigrants. The English used them mainly for skin ailments, and Indian tribes developed numerous medicinal uses, though no uses are identified for the Mountain Buttercup.

Where to find: The only place I've seen this buttercup is in the nearby vicinity of the intersection of Highway 204, the Weston-Elgin highway, and USFS Road 31, Ruckel Road, east of Tollgate. It may still be blooming in the ditch on the south side of Road 31 about 100 feet from Highway 204.

Wallowa rancher shoots wolf as it attacks cattle

By STEVE TOOL
EO Media Group

A Wallowa County cattle rancher shot and presumably seriously wounded or killed a wolf June 25 in the act of chasing livestock. It is the first incident of its kind in Wallowa County and the second in Oregon.

The rancher and his wife, who chose to remain anonymous, said they had suffered numerous instances of wolves harassing their cattle. The couple saw a wolf chasing a herd of cows on June 25 on a public land allotment in the Wallowa Mountains.

The rancher called county commissioner Todd Nash, who is chairman of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association Wolf Committee, for advice. Nash told the rancher he could legally shoot the wolf. The man did and the animal limped away.

Nash and Wallowa County Sheriff's Office chief deputy Fred Steen, who later contacted Oregon State Police, responded to the

scene. The team did not find the wolf and further investigation indicated the rancher acted within his legal rights.

The rancher's identity was not released.

"This is just to show you can do this and have anonymity," Steen said. "It's absolutely legal to do such and we've always believed it's the rancher's right to protect his livestock as private property. People need to know this is an option."

In a separate incident the ODFW investigated a June 21 reported suspected wolf depredation in the Chesnimnus Creek Drainage. A citizen found a dead bull on an active U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment and notified authorities. The department contacted the rancher who leased the allotment and investigated. The ODFW found the bull died of causes other than wolf depredation, noting the lack of wolves in the area and no evidence of premortem injuries, although some postmortem scavenging had occurred.



Submitted photo

Beaut from the Deschutes

Patrick Bailey of Pendleton landed nice large steelhead on the Deschutes River last September. He said he didn't measure or weigh it, unfortunately. Have a photo you'd be willing to share? Contact outdoors page editor Tim Trainor at 541-966-0835 or email him at ttrainor@eastoregonian.com.