

CAUGHT OVGARD

Upper Klamath Lake: the place to be for Memorial Day fishing

By LUKE OVGARD
For the East Oregonian

KLAMATH FALLS — My advisor and one of my favorite professors in college, Pat Schaeffer, used to say “If you haven’t (enter name here), you haven’t lived.”

Well, if you’ve haven’t fished Upper Klamath Lake in late May, you haven’t lived.

Don’t let the opening of the more popular Williamson River fool you — the most can’t-miss fishing of the year in the Klamath Basin is to be had from Memorial Day to the last day of school in Upper Klamath Lake.

I’m on a boat

Perhaps the most tragic reality of my existence is that I lived more than 25 shore-bound years before I got a boat.

My first trip out on a boat on the main lake took place in the spring of 2017 when I was paired with Mark Doolittle for an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife tagging event.

We hooked into 19 fish and landed 17 of them. Personally, I went 8-of-9, which outpaced my best day from shore (7-of-8 at the time) but did so with markedly less physical exertion and in about two less hours.

That day I realized that a boat, and not the love of a good woman, was what I’d been longing for all my life.

Since I first fished from a boat that fateful day in 2017, I kept track of my efforts. Some trips were most of the day, others just an hour or two after work, but trips averaged four hours or so.

Brace for math.

That first year (2017), I averaged eight fish from the boat every trip and 1.92 from shore.

In 2018, I averaged five from the boat and 0.94 from shore.

So far this year, I’m averaging six from the boat and 2.42 from shore, per trip.

As I’ve started exploring, veering away from what I know works, and taking more people fishing, my catch rates have dropped, but I’ve taken my game onto the water, and those with a boat should consider doing the same.

Strategies

There are four main strategies to employ in the lake during May from your boat. They are, in order of effectiveness: trolling, casting large lures to shore, flyfishing, bait fishing.

All four of these strategies work, but the latter two strategies are notably less effective.



Photos contributed by Luke Ovgard
ABOVE: Doubles are a reality when trolling Klamath Lake in May. My dad, Russ, and I doubled up on gorgeous redband trout using the tips outlined in this column. LEFT: The Stealth Products QR-1 Rod Holder is a phenomenal product. It’s easy to use, easy to install, reliable and affordable.

and tui chub and lamprey. (2) Conditions are everything. For the best days on the water, you want cloud cover, a slight wind, and recent rain or snow to have dropped the water temperature just a little. The cold water will inhibit algae growth, knock back parasite activity and, if the particular storm included high winds, push the baitfish closer to shore. Too much precipitation will destroy water clarity, though, so pray very specifically. Those “bluebird days,” while pleasant to fish, are not ideal unless they precede a significant storm.

Troll

These days, I find myself trolling a lot.

If you’re really proficient at steering and possess a two-rod angling license, you can cast one rod to shore while driving the boat and trolling another rod behind you. It

repels the boredom that can creep into a day of trolling, but this multi-tasking strategy can end badly.

Traditional trolling with rods in holders is less active, but nearly as effective and markedly less dangerous for your boat.

When I troll, I’m trolling two rods in the best rod holders on the market: Stealth Products QR-1 or QR-2 quick release rod holders. The simplicity and consistency of these rod holders trumps anything you grew up fishing with, yet they’re surprisingly affordable at \$40-60 depending on the mounts you pair with them.

They work on canoes and kayaks as well as boats, and there are few products I’m so completely sold on as Stealth Products rod holders (www.stealthrodholders.com).

In my rod holders are everyman’s spinning rods with 20-pound braid minimum (I prefer 30-pound) and I attach a fluorocarbon leader of comparable strength (I prefer 20-pound).

I’ve said this before, and I’ll say it again: color doesn’t really matter to our redband trout. To prove this point, I’ve used every color pattern made by Rapala and used it to catch a trophy fish.

It’s about shape, motion and size.

Anything from 2 to 6 inches in length that looks and moves like a blue chub is prime.

I typically troll 4-inch Rapalas or similar minnowbaits. I prefer the floating variety because if I have to stop the boat, I don’t want my lure sinking down and snagging a rock or log as I try to land a fish.

Release

As always, I advocate catch and release.

If you think redband trout taste good, you haven’t lived.

Instead, let me turn you on to salmon, halibut, sturgeon, thresher shark or striped bass. All of these species have meat with the dense texture of a trout but aren’t soft, wet and laced with off-putting flavors.

That said, should you decide to keep a fish, the limit is one fish at least 15 inches long. Also, keeping a fish means your fishing day is over. It is illegal to continue fishing after you’ve retained a fish — yet another reason to catch and release.

Get out and fish, so you can know what it’s like to truly live.

Read more at caughtovgard.com; Follow on Instagram and Fishbrain @lukeovgard; Contact luke.ovgard@gmail.com.



Photo contributed by Bruce Barnes
Columbia Cutleaf, *Hymenopappus filifolius*.

Columbia Cutleaf part of sunflower family

By BRUCE BARNES
For the East Oregonian

Name: Columbia Cutleaf
Scientific Name: *Hymenopappus filifolius*

There are eight species of the *Hymenopappus* genus in the western U.S., and this plant is the only one in northeastern Oregon. It grows in Alberta and Saskatchewan to Washington, and from California to Texas. I have seen it only at the north end of the Baker City valley, and it is reported to prefer dry places at lower elevations in the mountains. The plant was collected by David Douglas along the Columbia River in the 1820s.

The genus name *Hymenopappus* comes from the Greek word *hymen* for membrane, and *pappus* for tiny scales on the top of the seeds. The species name *filifolius* comes from *filiformis* for threadlike, and *folius*, which refers to the leaves, as in foliage. There are three varieties of this plant; the only variety we have in the Blues is *filifolius*.

The Columbia Cutleaf is in the sunflower family, so it has flowering heads with a central disk cluster of tiny yellow flowers. However, it does not have the large ray petals often seen around the rims of the heads of sunflowers. The plant stands 1-3 feet high when blooming, with a few flowering heads in a loose irregular arrangement at the top.

The leaves are unusual, and look a little like a bottle brush that has been somewhat flattened from two sides. They are compound leaves, each leaf cleft all the way to the midrib so that the only parts of the leaf blade left are more like twigs or needles.

Some Indians in the southwest U.S. use the root for a poultice for swellings, and prepare medicine from it for an emetic. They also use the root for chewing gum.

Where to find: The bright yellow heads and the unusual leaves at the base make this plant easy to spot, but it is not very common around here. Look for it in open dry areas at low to middle elevations.

Raptors take flight at Bend museum

East Oregonian

The High Desert Museum in Bend is soaring again as its signature outdoor avian flight program resumes through Labor Day.

“Raptors of the Desert Sky” features hawks, owls, falcons and turkey vultures, who soar from perches directly over the crowd. Visitors will get close to nature as they are seated in a natural amphitheater nestled in the museum’s pine forest. A museum expert provides narration and shares about the hunting strategies and natural behaviors of the spectacular birds of prey.

The seasonal program opens Saturday, May 25, and continues with daily shows through Monday, Sept. 2. “Raptors of the Desert Sky” is presented daily at 11:30 a.m., except for July 4. Weather conditions may result in a time change or cancellation.

“The outdoor flight program is a highlight of the High Desert Museum experience in the summertime,” said executive director Dana Whitelaw. “It’s an event we take great pride in sharing with visitors, learning about the raptors, their ecology and flight dynamics, is nothing short of a thrilling experience.”

General museum admis-



Contributed photo by Lee Schaeffer

Visitors can get up-close and personal with birds of prey during “Raptors of the Desert Sky” at the High Desert Museum in Bend. The special program opens May 25 and is available daily at 11:30 a.m. through Sept. 2.

sion is \$17, \$14 for seniors and college students, and \$10 for ages 3-12. Tickets for “Raptors of the Desert Sky,” which must be purchased by 11 a.m., are \$5 or \$3 for seniors and youths.

It’s a 15-minute walk from the museum admissions area to the trail entrance. The trail to the flight area may be difficult for strollers and wheelchairs. To protect the birds, there is no late entry and the gate closes at 11:25 a.m.

The High Desert

MORE DETAILS

For more information, visit www.highdesertmuseum.org/raptors-of-the-desert-sky. For questions, contact Heidi Hagemeyer at 541-382-4754 or hhagemeyer@highdesertmuseum.org.

Museum, which opened in 1982, highlights regional wildlife, culture, art and natural resources. Its mis-

sion is to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of North America’s High Desert country. Featuring both indoor and outdoor exhibit space, the museum showcases wildlife in natural habitats and offers living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate the High Desert environment. High Desert Museum was a 2018 finalist for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

Campfire safety tips for summer camping trips

East Oregonian

Memorial Day is nearly here, and for many Oregonians, the holiday weekend is the start of the camping season in Oregon’s natural places. However, dry conditions are already present in many areas and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department reminds visitors to enjoy their campfires responsibly.

“Regularly reviewing campfire safety practices, even if you’re a seasoned camper, is a good habit to get into,” said Chris Havel,

OPRD associate director. “It’s especially important if you’re camping with children or folks that are learning about responsible outdoor recreation.”

Follow these tips for a safe and enjoyable campfire:

- Know before you go: research conditions for the area surrounding your campground. Fire restrictions may be in place at the park, county or state level.
- Maintain campfire flames at knee height, or roughly 2-feet high. This helps prevent ash

or embers from becoming airborne, especially during the dry summer months. If you see wind stirring up embers from your fire, play it safe and extinguish it.

- Only build campfires in the existing fire ring in your campsite. Fire ring locations are carefully picked and park rangers clear vegetation around rings to create a safe buffer zone.
- Always keep plenty of water nearby to extinguish your campfire. To put out your fire, drown

the flames with water and stir the embers to make sure everything is wet. The stirring step is important: ash and wood debris often maintain heat and embers unless they are drowned out.

For propane fire rings, follow the same safety precautions you would with a log-based campfire. Propane fire rings should be placed in, on or directly next to installed park fire rings.

To reserve a spot at an Oregon state park, head to oregonstateparks.org.