

CAUGHT OVGARD

Running takes second place to green sunfish

By LUKE OVGARD
For the East Oregonian

SHADY COVE — As the Class of 2019 prepares to graduate, I’m reminded of one of my favorite high school memories: cross-country camp.

Though I switched to football when we got a team my senior year, cross-country camp was one of the highlights of high school, and it lives on in my mind.

Every day, we woke up and went on a run.

We’d come back, grab breakfast, do some sort of running game, take a break, and run again.

Lunch would come around, we’d have a short reprieve for the afternoon, then we’d go on an evening run, eat dinner, and play a running game at night.

At the time, I didn’t know how allergic I was to dairy and eggs, so the combination of muggy heat, running miles and miles every day, and fueling myself with a diet containing a lot of both did horrible things to my stomach, about which I won’t go into in detail.

Anyhow, our coach did a fantastic job of melding these incredibly fun games with running.

Whether the game was a timed obstacle course (this was my best game), Extreme Spoons (not my best game), scavenger hunts, or the Mileage Guess (where we’d run along a road and try to stop at exactly 1 mile), we got in shape while having a blast.

There was one game, however, that I lived for.

It was, as best as I can describe, what cross-country should be. We would be dropped off in a team of two or three at one location, given a map, then tasked with returning as fast as we could.

Just one caveat: We had to fill a gallon bag with ripe blackberries for the evening’s cobbler.

I lived for this. Outside of fishing, I’m honestly not very competitive. For whatever reason, this mattered to me, though. I had to win.

This time, I read the map and convinced my group to take a shortcut through the woods. It shaved off half of a mile and took us right along the lake shore.

I needed to pee, so I detoured from the group briefly as I drained the lizard. As I contemplated life, I noticed a handful of small fish bathing in the summer sun, maybe 5 feet from my excess hydration.

My drive to win was put on momentary



Photos contributed by Luke Ovgard

TOP: The photo of that first green sunfish was taken with a disposable camera, and it shows in the aged photo. The author ate the fish after cooking it on the campfire. **BOTTOM:** The Triad High School Cross Country Camp of 2015 is a highlight for the author, who can be seen on the far right in a red shirt at the peak of his decade-long awkward phase.

hold, as those fish held my attention.

“You done yet?” came the cry that snapped me out of my daze. I closed up

shop and returned to the group, but my heart wasn’t wholly in the competition anymore.

Aftermath

We won the race, but I was ambivalent. Sure, victory tasted almost as sweet as the cobbler I’d eat later that night, but those fish that clearly weren’t bass were on my mind.

Sleeping on the hard ground with dozens of teenagers giggling and freestyle rapping badly (yes, we did) all around you is difficult enough without the added distraction of a potential new fish species.

I wasn’t a species hunter then, but I was still intrigued by a new sunfish. At the time, I’d caught just 13 species of fish in my 16 years, and I craved new experiences.

Sleep

I dozed off at some point after the neighboring campsite stopped banging the loud doors of their cooler an impossible number of times. I awoke, powered through the morning run and breakfast, then ran back to the water.

This was years before I was a good fisherman, but I still had the passion. God’s mercy alone got a single feisty fish to hit my brown Rooster Tail spinner (gross, right?) and sent my heart racing.

It fought much better than the tiny bass I expected, and I knew I’d hooked one of the mystery fish I’d seen the day before.

I didn’t exactly know what it was, but that’s OK because my heart stopped racing and calmed the at the sight of something new.

I snapped some pictures with my disposable camera (kids, be glad you have cell phones) and hoped at least one would turn out.

Identification

We returned to school, and after a week’s worth of reading and searching the still dial-up-enabled internet of the day, I learned it was a green sunfish. To-date, it’s still one of my favorite fish, despite how relatively common they are in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and California.

I don’t fish for greenies as much anymore, but they still make a hot summer day a little more enjoyable, and they can make yours, too.

Green sunfish are darn-near everywhere, so head to a local lake and fish the weed margins with a jig or small piece of worm and see why these feisty little fish stayed on my high school highlight reel.

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



Photo contributed by Carol Laurich

Portland’s Hoyt Arboretum features more than 2,000 species of trees and shrubs from six continents. Open daily, guided tours are available on weekends for \$3 per person.

Hoyt Arboretum offers guided tours

East Oregonian

PORTLAND — Home to 2,300 species of trees and shrubs from six continents, Hoyt Arboretum offers beauty and serenity, regardless of the season. Founded in 1928 to conserve endangered species and educate the community, it encompasses 190 acres and includes 12 miles of hiking trails. It’s located 2 miles from downtown Portland in Washington Park.

The Arboretum grounds are open 365 days a year from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. There is no admission charge. Paid parking is available at Washington Park lots and there are limited free spaces on the street. In addition, public transportation is available on MAX, Tri-Met or the Washington Park shuttle.

The visitor center, located at 4000 S.W. Fair-

view Blvd., Portland, is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It offers trail maps and brochures, snacks, nature-inspired gifts and knowledgeable volunteers, who are willing to chat about the grounds.

Also, guided tours are available on Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. through Oct. 27. The cost is \$3 per person. Trained guides share about the plant life and history of the area.

People planning to hike in the Arboretum are encouraged to be prepared for all types of weather conditions. In addition, they should wear sturdy shoes and bring water.

For more information, contact info@hoytarboretum.org, 503-823-1649 or visit www.hoytarboretum.org.

Make the most of your camping trip during Great Outdoors Month

Statepoint

PENDLETON — Great Outdoors Month, celebrated in June, is the perfect opportunity for a camping expedition.

Before packing up, consider the following ways to make the most of your trip.

- Stargaze: Urban and suburban living can interfere with your stargazing potential. Take advantage of your remote location, away from clusters of light pollution, to see the stars at their most vibrant. Check the weather in advance and try to pick a weekend with a good chance of clear skies. You may also want to bring along a telescope to help you pick out constellations, falling stars, planets and more. Remember, campsites are often densely forested, so before night falls, scope out a clearing where you can set up shop for optimal nighttime viewing.

- Use tech support: Get equipped with technology that can support your outdoor adventure even when you are offline or out-of-range of mobile device radio wave transmissions. For example, Casio’s WSD-F30 Pro Trek Smart Outdoor Watch features a compass, as well as offline map usage capability, helping you navigate the trail. Map data downloading is handled through MapBox, a supplier of map data for countries worldwide. Featuring apps that support hiking, fishing, cycling and more, this water-resistant, durable watch will be a useful tool, no matter what activities your camping trip includes.
- Think in extremes: When preparing to spend time outdoors in summer, you may not think much about strategies for staying warm, but many locations can get quite chilly at night. Since the bulk of the time you’ll be spending in your sleeping bag and tent is after the sun’s gone down and temperatures take a nose dive, it’s important to ensure these items are designed to keep you comfortable in the chilliest temperatures you expect to encounter. Likewise, you will probably do most of your hiking, kayaking and other active pastimes during the hotter parts of the day. Be sure you pack equipment and clothing for both of these extremes.
- Get there early: Some sites have a first-come, first-served



AP Photo, File

Great Outdoors Month, celebrated in June, is the perfect opportunity for a camping expedition.

policy, making an early arrival a necessity. However, even if you reserve a site in advance, you’ll still want to make good time and get there before sunset. This can help ensure you get a good lay of the land so that you can pitch your tent on level ground that’s free of extraneous debris that will make sleeping uncomfortable. It’s also a good way to ensure you get all your items unpacked and organized so you know where everything is. Finally, if you only have a couple nights to camp, you don’t want to miss even one spectacular sunset stuck in traffic.

- Stargaze: Take advantage of your remote location, away from clusters of light pollution, to see the stars at their most vibrant.
- Use tech support: Get equipped with technology that can support your outdoor adventure even when you are offline or out-of-range.
- Think in extremes: Ensure your clothing and equipment is designed to keep you comfortable in the chilliest or hottest temperatures you expect to encounter.
- Get there early: Even if you reserve a site in advance, you'll still want to make good time and get there before sunset.