

CAUGHT OVGARD



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Photo, File

Lingcod a sea creature worth the fight

By **LUKE OVGARD**
For the East Oregonian

BROOKINGS — It had started the day before. My first time on the ocean, I rode out in a small Bayliner with a group of about nine late in the afternoon. The handful of students and three chaperones who decided to brave the afternoon waves thought it would be worth it.

A 14-year-old me agreed.

The newness of the experience alone would have made it worth it to me, but after watching half a dozen black rockfish find their way into our boat, Perry Fields, one of our chaperones, hooked into something that seemed a little bigger.

He battled the beast for a while.

Then his rod doubled over.

If it was fighting hard before, it was now a creature possessed. His rod bobbed and bounced, and I asked if it would break. Everyone had stopped fishing now. We

watched in awe as what could be nothing other than a sea monster slowly rose in the water column and made its way closer to us.

In a moment frozen in time, we saw it. Maybe 10 feet below the boat in relatively clear water, was a fish that looked positively demonic. At first, I thought it had two heads, or maybe a head shaped like a hammerhead shark, but it was just a large fish clamped horizontally onto a smaller fish.

It was a lingcod. The lingcod.

The smaller fish was maybe 16-18 inches in length, but the fish that had attempted to eat it was easily twice that length, maybe more.

As our teacher, Mr. Doug Dean, went to gaff it, its jaws released the poor, hapless smaller fish, and this beast stuck momentarily in the water column maybe 4 feet below the boat.

"Grab me," Mr. Dean commanded, and he plunged the gaff over the gunwale and bent impos-

sibly far over the boat. His body flexed, and he arched backward, the massive, writing beast hanging from the end of the 3-foot gaff.

Leviathan itself railed about on the floor of the boat, actively trying to bite any- and everything it could like a cobra in its death throes. It connected with the edge of a boot, unable to sink its sinister teeth into the hard leather.

Acting quickly, someone cut its gills, and the beast decided not to go down without a fight. It sprayed warm, frothy blood all over as it writhed about on the deck. My new jeans caught a globule of the deathly-dark blood and stained them, and I knew I'd hear about that when I got home. Oh well. It was worth it for this experience.

When we got it back to shore, we were saddened to find ourselves without a scale large enough to weigh it, but it measured some 45 inches in length.

As teenage boys do, we dared each other to place our heads inside its massive jaws. Mine fit with room to spare.

I shuddered.

We filleted the beast out before I remember getting any pictures. The carcass was tossed into the garbage, but I asked if I could cut the cheeks out, since I'd read they were quite good. They agreed.

My grandfather's butchery skills did not pass to me, and as I awkwardly dug out the almost-priceless meat with my old Rapala fillet knife in jagged strokes, the nerve endings in the sea monsters face all firing off, causing the head to shake in my hand like something out of a horror movie.

Each cheek weighed about a pound and a quarter, but my inexperience with a fillet knife probably left a quarter pound of meat in each cheek.

Still, it was the most epic thing I'd ever experienced, and I longed

for a chance to catch one myself.

The next day was uneventful by comparison, but I did manage to catch a lingcod. I had thought I was snagging the bottom too frequently, but I soon realized at least a few were fish, so I tried fighting them.

On light trout tackle with 8-pound mono, it was very much an uphill battle, but I managed to get one to the surface, where, after several attempts, a classmate netted it.

The minimum length was 24 inches back then, and, you guessed it, it was just shy at 23¼ inches long. I was forced to release my first sea monster, but I'd added a new species and set a lifelong quest in motion: catch a sea monster the size of Mr. Fields' someday.

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

Women-only adventure trips becoming popular

By **DAN BAIN**
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Today's consumers are increasingly interested in the types of experiences that adventure travel provides, whether it's exploring new cultures or eco-tourism or taking a trip to hike, cycle or go boating.

For female travelers, women-only adventure trips can be a great option.

In fact, the Adventure Travel Trade Association named women-only itineraries a top trend.

Although some women will feel safer traveling in a group — and certainly there's safety in numbers — the reasons for choosing a women's-only group experience go beyond safety.

A women-only adventure trip can be an empowering experience. In a small group, they'll have a chance to meet new people and forge a deep bond with their fellow travelers. They'll have companions who share their interests and passions. They'll feel comfortable trying new foods, experiences or learning new skills, in a safe and supportive, female-centric environment.

For example, on a cultural trip, they can meet with female artists and entrepreneurs and learn what daily life is like for local women whose life experience may be far different from their own.

On an eco-tourism vacation, women can explore the rainforest of Central and South America and learn about efforts to preserve plant and animal life. Women don't have to go abroad,

however. There are plenty of opportunities for adventure travel closer to home. It can be a white-water rafting trip on the Colorado River exploration of Alaska's Denali National Park on a backpacking trip.

Some women also put together their own group of traveling companions — sorority sisters, cousins or BFFs — who want to experience the joy of new places and new pursuits in the company of women with whom they already enjoy a bond.

Whether as a solo traveler in search of a group, or women ready to embark on a vacation together, a travel advisor can help one sort through all the possibilities.

Here are some helpful tips from Travel Leaders Network advisors to consider when exploring adventure travel options.

Decide what type of adventure you want to have — one with lots of physical activity or one that focuses more on exploring a new culture, or one that combines both. Consider what you're able to physically handle, but be open to trying something different. Part of the personal growth — and fun — of going on an adventure involves getting out of your comfort zone. Remember that it'll also be a new experience for many of your travel companions. Determine how full you want your daily itinerary to be. Are you the type of traveler who likes to be on the go all day, with activities preplanned, or would you rather take things more slowly, with some optional activities and free time built in to



AP File Photo

A woman hikes by herself with hiking poles in the Grand Canyon. Women-only adventure trips are becoming more popular for those who want to explore new places and pursuits.

your day? Keep in mind the type of accommodations, too. Are you comfortable "roughing it" in the outdoors, either camping or stay-

ing in a basic cabin? Or, would you rather relax in more luxurious surroundings after a day of activity?

FISHINGBOOKER REELS IN ANGLING TIPS

East Oregonian

Outdoor enthusiasts looking for options of where to go for breathtaking sights and good fishing have a resource available through FishingBooker.com.

The online services has provided a complete guide to fishing in Oregon, offering insight on favorite freshwater lakes and rivers. From rainbow trout and bass to sturgeon, salmon and walleye, FishingBooker.com has you covered. Information about the most popular catches that can be found in local rivers and lakes and top picks for the best fishing spots are highlighted. In addition, it includes general tips, such as which gear to bring and how to get a fishing license.

FishingBooker offers its services across the United States, including the availability to book more than 100 charter trips in Oregon alone. To check it out, visit fishingbooker.com/destinations/state/us/OR.

Also, recognizing that the state has incredible fly fishing opportunities, the team wrote a complete guide to fly fishing in the Beaver State. To view the comprehensive information, visit fishingbooker.com/blog/all-you-wanted-to-know-about-oregon-fly-fishing.

For questions, contact Allison Arthurs at allison@fishingbooker.com or 1-888-676-2635.

BLM releases online maps for climbing sites all across the West



Photo contributed by BLM

A climber in the Wild Rogue Wilderness. The Bureau of Land Management recently released interactive online maps to provide information about climbing sites in the western United States.

East Oregonian

SPOKANE — Climbers looking for sites across the western United States, including Oregon, can benefit from a series of interactive online maps released online.

In an effort to promote climbing and other recreational opportunities on public lands, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management are making the maps available to citizens. Developed in cooperation with Access Fund and Mountain Project, the maps allow people to easily plan exciting climbing experiences.

Climbers can pull information about specific BLM-managed climbing areas through a cen-

tralized online tool while on the go. The maps include useful site information, including photos, season of use, area characteristics and difficulty levels. Visitors can also find nearby attractions for each climbing site.

"We are committed to expanding recreational opportunities on public lands for all Americans, and these interactive maps provide a great tool for folks to further explore the great outdoors," said Casey Hammond, principal deputy assistant secretary of the interior.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt said the Trump administration is committed to expanding and promoting recreational opportunities for Americans to enjoy on public lands.

IF YOU GO

To view the climbing area maps, visit www.arcg.is/1SP18f

"We have some of the best rock climbing sites in the world, and I hope that this new map can help to further highlight these locations and encourage more outdoor enthusiasts to explore our great outdoors," Bernhardt said.

The BLM invites the public to visit featured climbing destinations in Oregon, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. To view the climbing area maps, visit www.arcg.is/1SP18f.