

## CAUGHT OVGARD

## Fifteenmile Creek a haven for redband trout

By LUKE OVGARD  
For the East Oregonian

DUFUR — Anyone who played football has lasting memories from it. Some may have lasting injuries, too, but I was fortunate.

The sport is more than just a sport; it's a brotherhood, and regardless of the level at which you strapped on pads, it holds some sort of emotional weight for every has-been and never-was. After graduating, I remained involved with my program as an assistant coach who ran statistics. I played at the Class 1A level, which is 8-man football in Oregon.

Though there are more teams in Class 1A than any other division by far, these teams are far-flung, and you can find yourself traveling up to six hours for a league game in parts of the state. For this reason, our team always looked forward to the Dufur Classic, a series of 8-man football games held in Dufur, where some of the best teams in the state could meet for preseason exhibition games to flex on other leagues and build inertia. The small town got up for the event, and it was a pleasant way to spend a late summer weekend.

My purview was mostly with statistics, so I really had no responsibilities outside of game time. On the drive up, we'd look for red fox bounding through crop rows as we left the gorge corridor and made our way south.

Not every game was worth watching, so when we arrived, I found myself wandering. It only took an hour or so to see the entire town, and in doing so, I noticed a small stream flowing through the heart of vintage Americana.

Fifteenmile Creek, a small tributary to the mainstem Columbia that flows into Oregon's largest river just below Cushing Falls, was calling to me.

I always travel with fishing gear, so I double-checked the regulations to confirm my suspicions that it was open during that time of year (it's open May 22 through Oct. 31) and found the nearest park. Fishing is restricted to artificial flies and lures, entirely catch and release, because there's no point keeping the small, wild fish you'll find here.

#### Time capsule

I parked at the Friends of Dufur Park and began fishing with a small Blue Fox spinner, my go-to lure once the treble hook has been replaced with a single hook to reduce mortality.

Wet wading a stream in the summertime is about as good as it gets. Any fish you happen to catch are a bonus. The native Columbia redband trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss gairdnerii*, that populated the stream were plentiful, aggressive and beautiful.

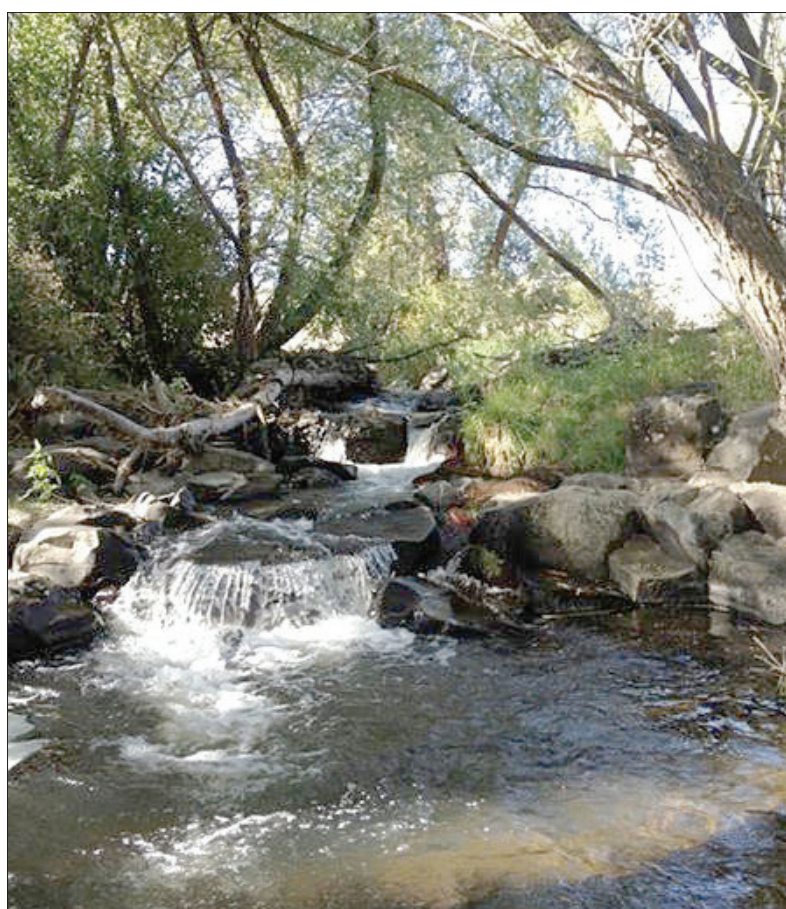
I jumped right into the shallow water, and as I wet-waded up and down, I appreciated the unique-



Photos contributed by Luke Ovgard

Columbia basin redband trout aren't the largest rainbow subspecies, but they're among the prettiest.

*"THE BABBLING BROOK DROWNED OUT THE CARS AND DIN OF HUMANITY, AND I WAS FISHING THERE IN A TIME CAPSULE, ISOLATED IN A BUBBLE OF NATURE THAT WAS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED FOR MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS."*



The best way to fish Fifteenmile Creek is how you fish any small stream in the summer: start downstream and wet-wade your way upstream.

ness of it all. I was fishing right in town, catching fish at a rate of about 20 per hour, and though I was surrounded by civilization, I was alone.

The babbling brook drowned out the cars and din of humanity, and I was fishing there in a time capsule, isolated in a bubble of nature that was relatively unchanged for more than a hundred years.

#### Fishing

In the reverie of the moment, it was easy to lose sight of just how good the fishing was. In a small

stream, time of day isn't significant, so as long as the water is clear enough for fish to see your bug or fish or crawfish imitation, they'll smack it with gusto.

Unfortunately, I quickly lost

my Blue Fox and had to resort to a Panther Martin. I love these lures, but they don't allow you to swap out the treble hooks, so they aren't my favorite.

As I pitched undercut banks,

riffles, pools and current seams with my spinner and a small Rapala, the fish cooperated, reaffirming why wild native redband trout are my favorite species to target. They're beautiful, aggressive and hard-fighting for their size — all character traits in stark contrast to the forgettable hatchery rainbow trout so many are familiar with.

Fish ranged from the tiny, 5-inch fish with eyes bigger than their stomachs to chunky fish between 12 and 14 inches long that hit my Rapala the second I twitched it in the water column.

The stream was healthy and supported several willing fish every few feet. Wild, native trout fishing this good is hard to come by this close to Portland. It was truly a treasure. My outing the first afternoon yielded 34 fish in about two hours. Day two brought 31 to hand. I released every one carefully, taking time to appreciate the surroundings slightly reminiscent of the Powder River in Baker City but far more productive.

Fifteenmile Creek is a gem in the Gorge, and if you haven't fished it, you should certainly consider making a trip later this summer. You may even be able to catch a football game or two.

Order performance fishing apparel or read more at [caughtovgard.com](http://caughtovgard.com); Follow on Instagram and Fishbrain @lukeovgard; Contact [luke.ovgard@gmail.com](mailto:luke.ovgard@gmail.com).

## Summer reminds us of the value of urban trees

PENDLETON — It's deep into summer in Pendleton, and the midsummer sun reminds us of one of the many values of trees: shade.

Try to imagine what life in our area would be like without shade trees. In 1902, Colonel William Parsons wrote a less than pleasant description of the Pendleton landscape, identifying a fringe of "ungainly" and "lowly" trees along the Umatilla River but otherwise found "flanking hills bare of shrubbery and prolific only of frowning rocks and worthless sage-brush". Add summer temperatures in the 90s and it's easy to see why early Pendletonians had a keen appreciation for the wonderful value of shade.

Fortunately, these early residents took the time to plant trees. As current day residents, we are benefiting from their work, as we find the shade from large trees in public and private spaces throughout the city.

It is said that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, and the second best time is now. Whether you are investing in shade for the future, or increasing the value of your property, trees planted now will be worth plenty in years to come. A recent series of international studies showed a 10-20% increase in residential property values from trees.

Commercial districts also benefit from trees, as shoppers report a more pleasant experience in



Staff photo by E.J. Harris, File

Gallery pear trees in full bloom line Main Street in downtown Pendleton.

areas with trees, and have even been found to spend more. This gives older business districts with mature trees an advantage over outlying box stores, groceries, and strip malls. How often had you taken extra time to find a parking spot under a shade tree in the summer?

And then there is the energy savings. It is estimated that trees

planted in Sacramento, California, are now responsible for saving the equivalent of one power plant's worth of energy. Sacramento found that planting the right tree (height and shape) on the south or west side of a home resulted in a 30% savings on summertime air conditioning costs. And these energy savings help with climate change, as less power generation

leads to lower carbon emissions from power plants; up to 41,000 tons fewer emissions in the case of Sacramento. Less carbon in the atmosphere means less climate change.

Some shade trees can cause problems, however, as they grow and begin to block views or threaten to become intertwined with overhead utility lines. The

#### GLANCE BOX

##### Resources:

<http://extensionweb.forestry.oregonstate.edu> for an Oregon Homeowner's Guide to Tree Care, including more detail about proper planting and pruning  
<https://pendletonparksandrec.com> for the Right Tree-Right Place recommendations

temptation may be to "top" the tree, a tragic recipe for an ugly, unhealthy tree with continued problems. A better idea is to consult a tree-care expert for professional advice and help thinning the crown.

Enjoy the shade of trees planted in the parks, along the streets, and in the yards, and when you do, thank those forward-looking early residents of Pendleton. Planting a tree now is a perfect example of a purely altruistic act, one that will benefit our city for generations to come.

The Pendleton Tree Commission is appointed by the city council and assists in guiding the city's tree management program. This does not include trees on private property, but the commission is providing this information to the public to help keep all of the trees in the city healthy and happy.