

Wallowa County fisherman pulls in a big one

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA LAKE — A Wallowa County fisherman who holds the record for the largest mackinaw caught at Wallowa Lake recently hooked another whopper.

He also has had recent success pulling in kokanee, and said it appears this will be a good season for catching large kokanee at the lake.

It's been a good start to the angling season for Mark Moncrief, a hunting and fishing guide who owns Tri-State Outfitters south of Enterprise.

In a matter of hours during a fishing trip at the lake in late March, Moncrief — who holds the lake record for a 36.5-pound mackinaw he reeled in back in the 1980s, caught a 35.5-pound mackinaw and, he said, hauled in a 33-pounder a couple of hours later.

"I do really well from usually about the first couple week or weeks in March on," he said. "We've done good in February. It depends on the year. On an average by mid-March on we're starting to do good and consistently catching. I do really good on the macks early like that. We have a really large average on our fish. Most macks, people are catching 5- to 12-pounders. Our average here is



Mark Moncrief holds up a 35½-pound mackinaw he caught recently at Wallowa Lake. Moncrief holds the record for the largest mackinaw caught at the lake, one that was just a pound heavier than the one pulled in last month.

15 to 18 (pounds)."

With the kokanee, Moncrief said there has been a cycle between smaller fish sizes but higher numbers, or larger numbers but smaller fish.

"Last year, I saw the cycle swing back to a bigger fish," he said. "This year, this early in the year, I'm catching fish in excess of 20 inches already

They'll grow an inch a month after March."

Most good-sized kokanee, he said, are anything in excess of 12 inches, and he said 18 to 20 inches is getting into trophy-sized fish range.

Business has not slowed down for Moncrief despite the pandemic, especially once restrictions were lifted last year and he was able to get

back on the water.

"When they opened the county back up I was just flooded," he said. "I think it was the COVID. They were just bugging out — a lot of Washington (and) Idaho people (were here)."

Moncrief isn't sure if this year will be as busy as 2020 was for him, but when the large kokanee start showing up

at Wallowa Lake, more people make their way to the water to try and hook a big one.

"I don't know if it'll be as busy as last year, but the word is getting out about these big fish," he said.

This spring, Moncrief not only has had a solid run of catching large fish, but he and his clients are pulling them in large numbers.

UPDATE ON LOCAL FISHING

Chinook salmon numbers are not expected to be good this year, Kyle Bratcher, assistant district fish biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said in a recent update.

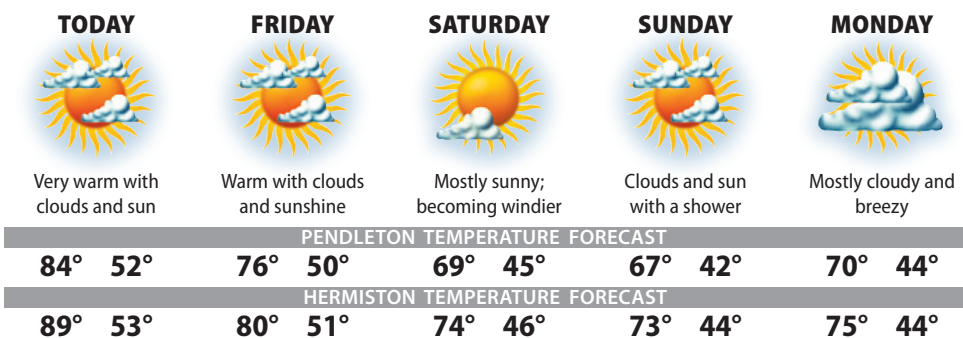
In the report, Bratcher wrote that Hells Canyon opened to spring fishing April 24, and that he looks for the fishing to improve around the middle of May.

Bratcher also reported that kokanee fishing on the Wallowa Lake is turning in fish that are averaging about 10 inches. Steelhead fisheries close on Friday, April 30.

"I had two clients out (from) California. With three of us fishing we boated 62 kokanees," he said, though he noted he personally releases almost all his catches now.

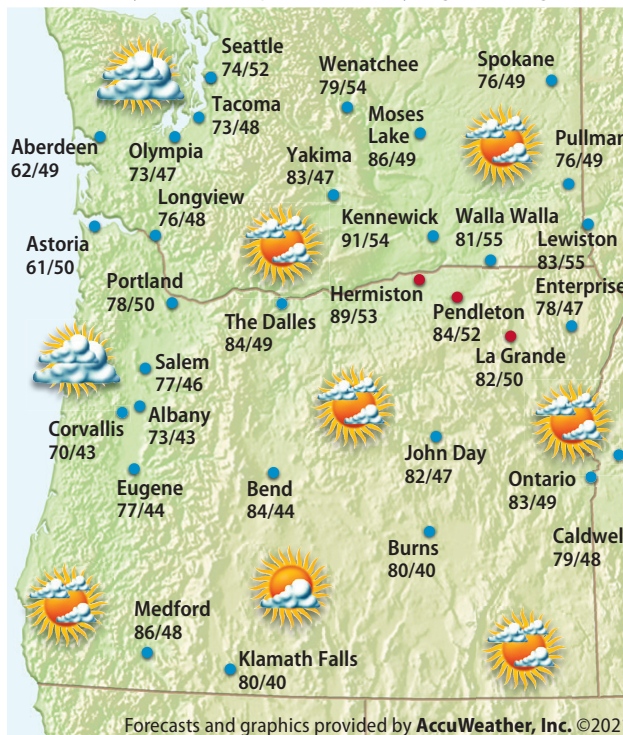
Catching big kokanee, by the way, is not just a trait of his — it runs in his family. The second-biggest kokanee pulled in, in the world was one he said his daughter, Shelby, caught at Wallowa Lake 10 years ago — a 27-inch, 9.5-pound whopper.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	72°	41°
Normals	66°	42°
Records	95° (1926)	24° (1907)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.22"
Normal month to date	1.08"
Year to date	3.56"
Last year to date	5.06"
Normal year to date	5.04"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	76°	42°
Normals	68°	42°
Records	91° (1939)	28° (1935)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.08"
Normal month to date	0.81"
Year to date	1.28"
Last year to date	0.51"
Normal year to date	3.92"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Fri.
Boardman	SW 6-12	WSW 10-20
Pendleton	NW 4-8	W 8-16

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:46 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:00 p.m.
Moonrise today	11:51 p.m.
Moonset today	7:34 a.m.

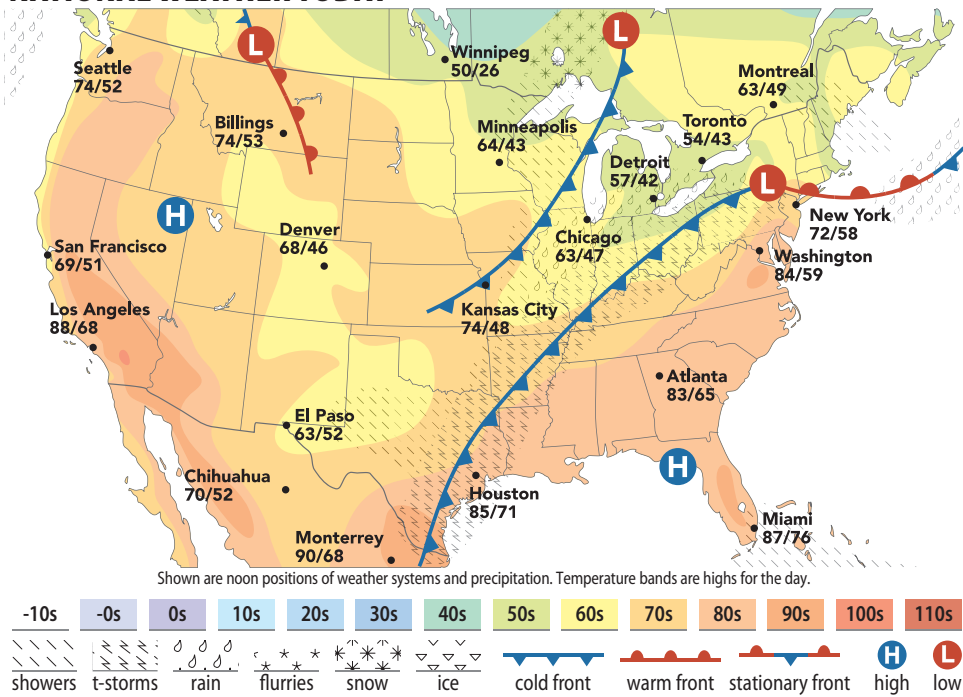
Last New First Full
May 3 May 11 May 19 May 26

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 105° in Cotulla, Texas Low 10° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Union, Umatilla and Wallowa counties' search teams certify new team members

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

LA GRANDE — The search and rescue teams from Union, Umatilla and Wallowa counties gained almost 25 newly certified members recently following two week-ends of training and practice held in La Grande and at the Mount Emily Recreation Area.

Wallowa County Sheriff's Search and Rescue gained 11 new team members and the Union County and Umatilla County sheriffs collectively added more than a dozen to its certified teams. All SAR members are volunteers.

The training, led by Union County SAR Coordinator Nick Vora, included instruction and practice in basic survival, map reading and navigating, knot tying, communications, tracking and understanding the behavior of people who were lost. The field exercises included demonstrations of search techniques and team coordination during rescues.

Experienced volunteers from Union, Umatilla and Wallowa counties' SAR units provided instruction and coaching for the training.

"The instructors all are a wealth of knowledge and this is an amazing team. I am proud to be a part of it," said new Wallowa County

SAR team member Jennifer Harmon.

The newly certified SAR members bring a variety of skills to the already robust organizations, including nursing and radio communications, as well as expert skiing and back-country experience.

"It's a great organization of dedicated volunteers," Wallowa County SAR Training Coordinator Jim Akenson said. "The new members will make it even better."

The new cohort brings the total number of Wallowa County SAR volunteers to about 50, he said.

"That's pretty extraordinary for a small community," Akenson said.

IN BRIEF

Bill aims to help forewarn police of deaf driver during traffic stops

SALEM — A deaf driver is pulled over by the police. The officer approaches the car.

The driver doesn't respond to commands. The situation escalates, sometimes with fatal results. It's something deaf people worry about.

"They are scared to communicate with law enforcement officers because they are worried they are shot in case they 'act' as if they are not listening to the police officers' instructions," said Steven Brown, vice president of Oregon Association of the Deaf.

The Oregon Senate unanimously passed a bill on Monday, April 26, to keep such situations from developing. It was earlier passed by the House, also unanimously. It allows a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to have that noted on their vehicle's registration and on their driver's license.

"The intent behind the measure is to provide law enforcement with this information before they come in contact with an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing," Lindsay Baker, assistant director of the Oregon Department of Transportation, testified in support of the bill.

If Gov. Kate Brown signs the bill into law, law enforcement officers would be able to learn — before walking up to the vehicle — that a driver is deaf as they run the license plate through their database.

Out-of-state drivers may no longer need knowledge test

SALEM — People who move to Oregon from another state would not have to demonstrate knowledge of their new state's traffic laws in order to get a driver's license under a bill on its way to the governor's desk after final Senate passage on Monday, April 26.

It's part of an effort to help the Oregon DMV clear out a backlog of paperwork that's the result of measures the agency took last year to slow the spread of COVID-19 among its customers and employees.

The DMV said it administers about 100,000 such tests a year, and waiving the requirement would free up appointment slots at its field offices.

Currently, an appointment is required to conduct in-person business at the DMV.

Eight states, including Oregon, require someone with a valid out-of-state license to take a knowledge test to transfer their licenses, according to testimony from DMV Administrator Amy Joyce.

House Bill 2137 would also extend a grace period for drivers with expired licenses or vehicle registrations. It would allow the use of such documents for up to six months after the expiration date.

The current grace period for expired documents ends April 30. The bill would extend it through the end of 2021.

— Associated Press and The Oregonian

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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