



A different kind of FLYING FISH



Ron Slabaugh photo

Mike Guardipee of Puyallup, Wash., shows off a rainbow trout that he caught and released in early August on the Wallowa River. These resident native trout can achieve sizes of 16 inches or more. The anadromous variety that migrate to the ocean and return to spawn are Steelhead.

ODFW uses helicopters to airlift fish to remote lakes in the Eagle Cap Wilderness

Thousands of juvenile trout were airlifted to the Wallowa Mountains last week by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to supplement the fish populations of lakes within the 361,000-acre Eagle Cap Wilderness in Northeast Oregon.

The Eagle Cap Wilderness has some of Oregon's most beautiful mountain lakes, including the state's highest lake, Legore Lake, perched above the Wallowa Valley at an altitude of 8,950 feet. More than 40 lakes in the Eagle Cap are above 7,000 feet.

"The extreme conditions involved in maintaining healthy fish populations in a landscape above 7,000 feet has its own challenges," said Jeff Yanke, ODFW district fish biologist in Enterprise, adding, "but anglers have consistently told us that fishing is one of the recreational experiences they expect when they go to the wilderness."

ODFW stocks Eagle Cap Wilderness lakes by helicopter every two years.

The stocking program is paid for with federal Sportfish Restoration Program dollars, which is funded by a 10 percent excise tax on the sale of fishing equipment. In this way, ODFW seeds

off-the-beaten-track lakes with rainbow trout that will hopefully grow to become the eight inchers that anglers can legally retain.

The challenges juvenile trout face in the high mountains are considerable. First there is the long fall from the aerial stocking device (ASD) or "shuttle" underneath the helicopter to the cold waters of the high lake.

In some of those lakes, the rainbows may encounter eastern brook trout, which were stocked in the high lakes decades ago and are a voracious predator. Freezing cold water is another factor in the high lakes that can take a toll on fish.

One way to improve survival rates is to start with larger fish. Fish biologists have long known larger fish are better able to withstand the forces of nature than smaller fish.

However, larger fish also take up more space, which means fewer of them will fit into the two-gallon containers on the helicopter shuttle that ODFW uses to transport fish to the high lakes.

This year ODFW's Enterprise office began testing three sizes of rainbow trout to see which one may fare better with the presence of brook trout in Oregon's highest lakes. The control group, raised to a target size of 2.5 inches, is similar to what ODFW has released into the high lakes in the past and most commonly used for aerial stocking in other locations.

This year two larger sizes: 3- and 4-inch rainbows — were also tested to see if there is any improvement in survival rates as the result of using larger trout. This part of the study will be completed in three to four years.

"Our study was initiated to see if we could increase rainbow survival in our lakes enough by raising a larger fish to overcome predation and competition by naturally producing brook trout," said Kyle Bratcher, ODFW assistant district fish biologist in Enterprise.

One of the concerns was that larger fish might suffer more severe injuries when they hit the water after a 70-foot free fall because their bodies have more surface area to injure.

Finding little or no documented evidence of this, the biologists simulated an air-stocking event by dropping these different groups from varying heights into a small reservoir in advance.

Preliminary results indicate that all three size groups have high post-drop survival rates, according to Bratcher, who noted that samples were sent to ODFW's fish lab in La Grande where they will be assessed for bruising, injuries and other signs of trauma.

In addition, ODFW crews will sample survey the stocked lakes two years from now, with captured fish identified as to species, length, weight, and other criteria that will lead to estimates of population abundance, growth, and condition.



Courtesy of the Oregon Zoo

Leland Brown of the Oregon Zoo examines a ballistics gel. The zoo is inviting hunters and shooters to give non-lead ammunition a free try Aug. 20 at the Eagle Cap Shooters Association.

Shooting club sets free trial Aug. 20

People can try new ammunition technology at Enterprise event

Oregon Zoo and Eagle Cap Shooters Association invite hunters to try latest ammunition technology for free.

Hunters and shooters can give nonlead ammunition a try for free at the association range 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aug. 20 courtesy of the Oregon Zoo's Non-Lead Hunting Education Program.

The range is north of Enterprise. Take State Highway 3 toward Lewiston for seven miles and turn right on Ant Flat Road. Proceed one mile south. The range will be on the left.

A selection of nonlead ammunition from multiple manufacturers will be available a number of common cartridges. Hunters are invited to bring their firearms and current bullets to compare against nonlead ammo for accuracy.

A demonstration will also compare terminal performance of conventional lead hunting bullets and nonlead bullets in water barrels and ballistic gelatin.

"This is a great opportunity to try the latest technology in hunting ammunition without having to buy any," said Leland Brown, the zoo's nonlead ammunition outreach coordinator and a lifelong outdoorsman. "This ammunition offers great weight retention, consistent expansion and exceptional accuracy, all without lead."

Info: eaglecapshooters.com.

Ladies gather for Gayle Beck Invitational event

Between the fair, the Fly-In, Bronze Blues and a couple of golf tournaments that took place last week, county locals along with out-of-town visitors and tourists were kept so busy being entertained they didn't know if they were coming or going.

In any one of the above-mentioned events a high level of energy resonated — you could feel it in the air — so, when all parties ended, that same power of energy had to go somewhere.

It makes kind of Kool-Aid sense that it dispersed into the sky, and over the weekend caused the lightning, thunder and alas the rainfall we found

tee time

Rochelle Danielson

so welcoming.

High expectations for a great golf day echoed from the Apline Meadows clubhouse Aug. 8 as friendly competitors registered for the Gayle Beck Ladies Invitational, one of the annual tournaments.

Thirty high-energy golfers participated including 14 locals, nine La Grande Country Club women, three

Quail Ridge (Baker) ladies and four Buffalo Peak (Union) gals.

Winner for Field: Heather Bruce, gross 64. Net for Field, tie: Carol Marr and Tori Suto, 66.

Winners of KP No. 1/10 — Flight One: Heather Bruce, 4-feet, 5-inches. Flight Two: Jen Godwin, Baker, 20 feet. Long Drive — Flight One: Heather Bruce. Flight Two: Mary Lynn Townsend, Union. Longest Putt — Flight One: Sherrie Currie. Flight Two: Ruby Zollman. Closest to Line — Flight One: Sherrie Currie. Flight Two: Beth Hough.

Club Gross and Net — La Grande CC: Stephanie Williams, gross 81.

Jacquie Myers, net 67. Quail Ridge Baker: Linda Taylor, gross 93. Jen Godwin, net 73. Buffalo Peak — Sandy Southard, gross 86. Kathi Karnowski, net 71.

Falcon Crest, Meridian: Dara Alverson, 118. Sun Willow, Pasco, Karen Weems, gross 98. Alpine Meadows: Carol Marr, gross 85. Judy Ables, net 67.

50/50 Drawing — Jen Godwin. Play and Stay at Wildhorse raffle: Kim Tally.

Congrats to Stephanie Williams who scored her first eagle (that's two under) on No. 6, par 5.

Thanks to Carol Marr, tourney

chair; Cheryl Kooch, decorations and flowers, inside and out; Cindy Parks, basket prizes, gross and net; Kathy Reynolds, Continental Breakfast; all who donated gifts for door prizes; Sherrie Currie, lunch; Greg Oveson, greens crew for a groomed golf course, cup placement and super greens.

Men's Thursday play Aug. 10: Blind Partners Gross and Net, Jerry Hook and Dick Anderson, 186 and 167. Skin Winners: Dick Anderson, Jerry Hook and Tristan Beck.

Rochelle Danielson writes a weekly golf column for the Chieftain.

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