

Annual Shamrock Run registration begins

The annual Shamrock Run 5K and 2K walk (optional to bring your dog) is set for Saturday, March 14. Help support the Siuslaw Middle School track and field and cross country programs.

Also included will be a fun dash for children ages 5 years and younger. Pre-registration for the event ends Sunday, March 8. For more information, stop by Coastal Fitness.

SHS bowling team fundraiser raffle continues

Holiday Bowl is host to the final Siuslaw High School bowling team fundraiser to help prepare for next season. The fundraiser is a raffle that began Feb. 9 and continues through May 5. The raffle winner will receive a 55-inch LED television with a wi-fi ready blue

ray player. The cost is \$5 per ticket, \$20 for five tickets or 50 tickets for \$100. See the TV and purchase tickets at Holiday Bowl before May 4. For more information, call 541-997-3332.

Study finds lamprey decline in Oregon

CORVALLIS — A new study aimed at understanding habitat needs for Pacific lamprey in western Oregon found this once-abundant fish that is both ecologically and culturally significant prefers side channels and other lower water velocity habitats in streams.

However, because of the legacy of historic land uses in the Northwest — including human settlement and activities — these habitats are much less common than they were in the past. And that may explain why populations of lamprey have declined over the past several decades — not only in western Oregon, but throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Results of the study were just published in the *Ecology of Freshwater Fish*.

“The lamprey decline has probably been going on for the past half century, but it wasn’t until the last 15-20 years that it has been recognized by many in the scientific community,” said Luke Schultz, a research assistant in Oregon State University’s Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and lead author on the study. “Today lamprey populations are at about 5 to 10 percent of the 1960s totals at Bonneville Dam, and the story is much the same elsewhere.”

“The Willamette River basin is one of the few places that still appears to have decent numbers of lamprey because of its system of sloughs and side channels,” he added. “But they are facing new threats, such as introduced fish species that prey on them — especially



courtesy photo

Juvenile lamprey eel

bass — so we’ll likely be hearing more about this emerging threat in the next few years.”

Schultz is project leader Oregon Cooperative Fish Research Unit’s Pacific lamprey project — a joint effort between OSU and the U.S. Geological Survey that is seeking to learn more about the fish and restore its habitat.

Although this latest article focuses on the Willamette Basin, Schultz and his colleagues at OSU, the USGS, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have looked at lamprey populations and habitat from the Columbia River in northeastern Oregon to southern Oregon’s Umpqua River.

The causes of Pacific lamprey decline are myriad, the researchers say. Restoring their numbers will require mitigation in the form of restoring habitat to include complex channels and deep pools, and the removal of barriers that block access to spawning grounds for adult lampreys, the authors note.

“Removal or mitigation will allow lampreys to recolonize those areas,” Schultz said.

Some factors affecting the lamprey decline may be out of the researchers’ control, Schultz said, specifically ocean conditions. They require an abundance of food; ocean conditions that are favorable to salmon are usually beneficial for lampreys, as well.

Rather than swimming freely, they may attach themselves to large fishes, or even whales, sea lions or other marine animals — and the abundant ocean prey lets them grow large.

“Pacific lamprey may spend one or two years in the ocean,” Schultz noted. “They will weigh less than an ounce when they go out there as juveniles, and they may grow to 30 inches in length and up to two pounds before they return.”

Although Pacific lampreys are anadromous, another species, the brook lamprey, only grows to a length of 6-7 inches and stays in fresh water for its entire lifespan of 4-8 years.

It is the Pacific lamprey that researchers are focusing on because of their one-time abundance, larger size, and more prominent ecological role.

“These are really interesting

animals that have historic importance in the Pacific Northwest,” Schultz noted. “They can live up to about 10 years or so — about three times longer than the coho salmon life cycle — and they are roughly six times as energy-dense as salmon, making them important prey.”

“Because of that, I like to call them swimming sticks of butter.”

When lampreys are abundant, they reduce predation by a variety of species — especially sea lions, but also sturgeon, birds, bass and walleye — on juvenile salmon and steelhead. It may not be an accident that salmonid numbers have declined at the same time lamprey populations have diminished.

The research in the study has led to some habitat restoration work supported by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Helping lamprey populations recover has important social significance as well as ecological importance, Schultz said.

“Lampreys were an incredibly important resource for many Northwest tribes because they provided a source of protein in the summer months when salmon weren’t as readily available,” he noted. “Now the only place where there is even a limited tribal harvest is at Willamette Falls.”

More information on lampreys is available in this feature article in OSU’s *Terra Magazine* at www.bit.ly/1fhu8k4.

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Fishing from 1B

good through the weekend.

SIUSLAW RIVER: Steelhead

The winter steelhead fishery is producing fish in both the Siuslaw and Lake Creek. The next few weeks should see a good push of fish. River conditions should remain good through the weekend. Typical steelhead angling tactics apply.

YAQUINA RIVER: Steelhead

The winter steelhead fishery is fair to good in the Big Elk. River conditions should remain in good condition through the week. Anglers are advised to watch for private property. Typical steelhead angling tactics apply but the Big Elk is bed rock dominated and does have a lot of snags.

COOS RIVER BASIN: Dungeness crab, bay clams, steelhead

Steelhead fishing is good. There is bank access on the West Fork Millicoma at the Millicoma Interpretive Center

and on the East Fork Millicoma at Nesika Park. Access to the South Fork Coos River is through Weyerhaeuser property and anglers must have the appropriate permit from Weyerhaeuser. In the Coos Basin starting one additional fin clipped steelhead may be retained per day for a total aggregate of three adult fish harvested daily.

UMPQUA RIVER, SOUTH: Steelhead

The South Umpqua is open for steelhead fishing. Although the peak numbers of fish normally show up from February to late March, the recent rains have moved fish into the Canyonville area and hatchery fish have been reported. The South Umpqua offers the best chance for catching an adipose-fin clipped steelhead for harvest. The hatchery program for winter steelhead is centered in the South Umpqua.

Most hatchery fish are caught from Canyonville downstream. All wild fish must be released unharmed. As the river drops from last

weekend’s rain, plunking should be good at places such as Lawson Bar, Myrtle Creek and behind Seven Feathers.

WINCHESTER BAY: Bottomfish

Fishing for bottomfish in the Triangle and South jetty has been successful. Crabbing has been slow recently.

PACIFIC OCEAN and BEACHES: Bottomfish, Dungeness crab, surf perch

The ocean is open for harvest of Dungeness crab.

A few anglers have been catching surf perch from the beaches near Bandon and Coos Bay. Sand shrimp is one of the best baits to use when fishing for surf perch.

Fishing for bottom fish, including rockfish and lingcod is open to all depths. The marine fish daily bag limit is seven fish and a separate daily limit of two lingcod.

Anglers are only able to keep three blue rockfish as part of their daily limit and there will be no harvest of China, quillback or copper rockfish.

Sometime in March, once a

parallel federal rule is adopted, ODFW will announce that anglers can retain one canary rockfish as part of the marine fish daily bag limit.

Retention of cabezon is not allowed through June 30.

PACIFIC HALIBUT: The Pacific halibut seasons have all closed for the remainder of the year.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) will set 2015 quotas for all areas in later this month. More information on the 2015 seasons will be available after that time.

BOTTOM FISHING:

The ocean is open to bottom fishing at all depths. This time of year, whenever the weather permits, bottom fishing can be great fun and very productive.

Calm seas have brought good fishing, with anglers bringing home mostly lingcod, black rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, and a few blue and other nearshore rockfish.

Cabezon fishing is closed through June 30.

The marine fish daily bag limit is seven fish. China, copper, and quillback rockfish may not be retained; and only three blue rockfish may be retained per day (as part of the seven-fish bag). Sometime in March, once a parallel federal rule is adopted, ODFW will announce that anglers can retain one canary rockfish as part of the marine fish daily bag limit.

There are separate daily limits of two lingcod and 25 flatfish other than Pacific halibut.

Remember: yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish can not be retained.

RAZOR CLAMS: Due to the large number of small razor clams on the beach, diggers should be highly selective about which shows they pursue. Harvesters are reminded they must retain the first 15 clams regardless of size or condition.

CRABBING: Sport ocean crabbing in the ocean and bay remains slow. Keep in mind that major rain events can dramatically lower the salinity in some bays and prompt crab to move lower in the bay or out to the ocean.

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