

ODFW to host annual Free Fishing Weekend June 3 and 4

There will be a Free Fishing Weekend throughout Oregon on June 3 and 4, making it the perfect weekend to take a friend or family member out fishing, crabbing or clamming.

During this weekend, no fishing licenses or tags (including a Combined Angling Tag and a Columbia River Basin Endorsement) are required to fish, crab or clam anywhere in Oregon.

"Free Fishing Weekend is a great opportunity for friends and families to get out and enjoy a day or two of fishing," said Mike Gauvin, ODFW recreational fisheries manager. "Lakes and ponds are fully stocked, rivers and streams are open for trout, and don't forget about the coast for crabbing and clamming."

Although no licenses or tags are required, all other regulations apply including closures, bag limits and size restrictions.

Free Fishing Weekend also aligns with State Parks Day on Saturday, June 3, so if you're going camping in an Oregon State Park that weekend, be sure to pack your fishing, crabbing or clamming gear, Gauvin said.

Several state parks will be hosting ODFW Free Fishing Weekend fishing events and



NED HICKSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Fishing, crabbing and clamming will be free to the public throughout Oregon this weekend.

State Parks is waiving park admission and camping fees in many parks on "State Parks Day" Saturday, June 3.

For the do-it-yourselfer there are hundreds of lakes and

rivers, and hundreds of miles of coastline to explore. ODFW's extensive website offers information about how and where to fish for trout, bass, steelhead and surfperch, to name a few.

Anglers will find:
 • The Learn to Fish (www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/learn_to_fish.asp) page describes what you'll need, how to do it and where to go.

• Weekly updates of current fishing conditions in the Weekly Recreation Report are available at www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/index.asp.
 • Great spots to take the fam-

ily fishing in Easy Angling Oregon can be found at www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/easy_angling.

• Trout stocking schedules are available at www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/trout_stocking_schedules.

For the new angler, ODFW and its partners will be sponsoring Free Fishing Weekend events throughout the state. At most events there will be free fishing equipment first-time anglers can use.

Volunteers will be available to help, from baiting the hook to landing the catch. For a complete list of events with times and locations, go to the ODFW website at www.dfw.state.or.us/education/angling/free_fishing.asp.

"Even if you've never cast a line or baited a hook, we can show you how to fish," Gauvin said.

The following scheduled Free Fishing Weekend events will take place on Saturday, June 3, unless otherwise noted.

Near Florence, Cleawox Lake/Honeymen State Park, will host its annual Free Fishing Day on Saturday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Contact Christine Clapp at 541-265-8306, ext. 253 for more information.

Remember that springtime seal pups need space

It's that time of year again, when seal pups begin appearing on beaches along the Oregon coast and beachgoers are asked to stifle their desire to assist these animals in some way, and instead give them space.

For those familiar with the cuteness of a newborn pup, the advice can be hard to swallow. But it's for the best — for people and wildlife alike.

Every spring, harbor seals give birth to pups on secluded beaches or reefs up and down the Pacific coast. The pups are born ready to swim but cannot tread water for long; they need ample time on shore to rest and stay warm, and can remain there for days while their mothers forage at sea.

Concerned observers often report "abandoned" seal pups on the beach, not realizing that the mother might be foraging nearby, or swimming just offshore to maintain distance from curious humans and their dogs.

"This is a perennial springtime issue for us all," said Jim Rice, Stranding Coordinator at the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network. "It's helpful to remind people that it's normal for pups to come ashore to rest, that their mothers often leave them unattended while they forage for food, and that interfering with this natural process is not only illegal but will likely be very detrimental to the pup."

In other words, humans approaching or otherwise trying to "help" these unattended pups may inadvertently cause them harm, as the presence of people may deter mother seals from coming ashore to nurse.

Seal pups are vulnerable and they may yank at our heartstrings, but we often jeopardize matters further by intervening in their affairs.

Rice also pointed out that, being wild animals, harbor seals face myriad challenges to reaching maturity, and pup

mortality is a natural check on robust seal populations in our region. Studies estimate that as much as 50 percent of harbor seal pups born in a given year do not reach their first birthday.

Another reason to give seals a wide berth is the possible threat of disease, said Laura Todd, Field Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Newport.

"Seals and sea lions can harbor the bacteria responsible for leptospirosis, a disease that affects humans and dogs and causes damage to the liver, kidneys and other organs."

The bacteria are present in the infected animal's fluids, including urine, and can easily pass into surrounding water or wet sand.

In general, the Oregon Coast Aquarium is committed to the rescue and rehabilitation of indigenous wildlife when they are deemed injured by human interference.

But in the case of harbor seal

pups, humans should not be approaching these animals in the first place, and the aquarium advises the public to obey marine mammal protection laws and let nature take its course.

"Concerned observers itching to help can call the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network Hotline at 541-270-6830 if a pup is spotted," said Jim Burke, Director of Animal Husbandry at the Oregon Coast Aquarium. "Its staff can post courtesy signs near the seal to inform other beachgoers of the situation."

Stern warnings aside, finding a harbor seal pup on the beach can be an enchanting and poignant experience. To keep these creatures safe, watch with binoculars or take pictures from afar — let the seals take care of themselves.

SWC announces dates for hands-on summer camp

The Siuslaw Watershed Council is pleased to announce summer camp dates for students entering fourth grade through high school.

This year SWC is offering one camp for these age groups on June 26 through 29.

Eligible students are encouraged to be a part of exploring the Siuslaw watershed's many rivers, streams, and lakes.

During the camp participants travel throughout the Siuslaw Watershed learning about plants, animals, water and land.

Classes focus on the restoration work that is being done to keep the watershed healthy.

Campers will get a chance to make a difference by doing hands-on restoration work.

Also highlighted are some of the unique recreation opportunities in the watershed such as stand-up paddleboarding, canoeing and sandboarding.

The cost to attend the SWC Camp is \$75 from June 26 through 29 and scholarships are available.

Registration packets are available on our website at siuslaw.org/camps. Those interested may also contact the SWC office at 541-268-3044 to request a packet.

Siuslaw Watershed Camps are made possible with funding from Siuslaw National Forest Stewardship, Western Lane Community Foundation, in partnership with Siuslaw School District, and through private donations.

Snowy plover chicks on north coast beaches

After more than 50 years, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) wildlife biologists have learned that at least one western snowy plover chick has hatched on a beach at Nehalem Bay State Park.

This is the first verified hatching in the area since the 1960s, and follows three years of increased sightings and species activity, including nesting attempts.

Western snowy plovers are a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act, and are protected in all west coast states. Collaborative efforts like OPRD's Habitat Conservation Plan, developed in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), is showing results with the expansion of snowy plovers northward.

The population is growing along parts of the southern Oregon coast, where areas with signs and nest designations are part of everyday beachgoing in the spring and summer.

Yet, species recovery is

much more likely to continue if populations can establish themselves along the entire coast. OPRD asks that visitors keep a cautious eye out. Plovers nest in dry sand, in tiny, shallow scrapes that are almost invisible.

Not only are nests easy to miss, or step on, but the bird will abandon its eggs if repeatedly disturbed. Plover chicks

are mobile almost immediately after hatching. They freeze in place and hide in small depressions — like footprints — when they perceive danger.

The Nehalem nesting area, like all nesting sites, is clearly designated with signs, and they remain off limits until the nesting season ends.

Maps and more information can be found at bit.ly/wsplover.

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Saturday 5/27	Steven Pfeifer Roger Rice	Florence Florence	RiteAid /Florence Three Rivers Casino Resort
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