

RECREATION REPORT

YOUTH SHOTGUN SKILLS CLINIC SET FOR AUG. 11 AT LADD MARSH

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has announced a youth shotgun skills clinic Aug. 11 at the Ladd Marsh State Wildlife Area. This free clinic is a chance for youth age 17 and under, who have completed hunter education or are currently enrolled in a course, to tune up their shooting skills prior to the youth pheasant hunts in September and the general game bird seasons this fall. Remember to bring your hunter ed card or proof of enrollment.

The clinic will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Ladd Marsh headquarters office, 59116 Pierce Road. Advanced registration is encouraged by calling 541-403-0724 or 541-963-4954.

Participants will be taught basic shotgun shooting skills under the supervision of local hunter education instructors. Clay targets and shotshells will be provided, both 12- and 20-gauge steel loads, along with hearing protection and shooting glasses. For those bringing their own ammunition please note that nontoxic shot is required on the Refuge. Youth are encouraged to bring their own shotgun but asked to ensure it is in safe working order, steel shot compatible, and with an improved cylinder or modified choke. Chokes tighter than modified, such as full choke, are not permitted with steel-shot shotshells. Several youth 20-gauge semi-auto shotguns will also be available for use.

Thatcher's Ace Hardware in La Grande and Baker City has also donated a youth 20-gauge shotgun to be raffled midway through the event. One free raffle ticket per youth participating. An adult 21 years or older must be present with participants during the clinic and to take legal custody of the raffled firearm.

STATE PARK FIRE BAN REMAINS

SALEM — The ban on campfires and open flames remains in effect for state parks, with the exception of parks along the coast.

The ban applies to wood, charcoal and other sources that cannot be turned off with a valve. The ban includes campgrounds and day-use areas. The extended campfire ban is expected to last at least one week, but will be evaluated based on weather.

SOAK UP SUMMER SIGHTS, SCENTS WITH A BICYCLE RIDE AROUND THE GRANDE RONDE VALLEY



Photo by Mavis Hartz

A sunflower field beginning to bloom in the Grande Ronde Valley.

Pleasant pedaling

When life gets hectic, a short, scented bicycle ride may be all you need to slow things down and put life's difficulties into perspective.

One such route exists in a 23.3-mile circuit starting and ending in La Grande. This loop, encompassing Foothill and Pierce Roads and Booth Lane, is filled with Oregon Trail and state history, marshland, fowl, elk, airplanes, spectacular vistas and lovely crops. This marvelous orbit gains and loses just over 500 feet of elevation, contains just over two miles of gravel and centers at the local shop, Mountain Works Bicycles.

Leave Mountain Works traveling west on Adams Avenue. Wave to the Cook Memorial Library and turn south on Fourth Street. Continue on Fourth Street until it runs into C Avenue. Rotate east on C Avenue, one of the original streets of La Grande that ducks into the Historic Oregon Trail in a couple of places. Spool past the grounds of Eastern Oregon University, home of Pierce Library, and onto Gekeler Lane. Spin away from town on 20th Street, toward Grandview Cemetery, then quickly veer east on



Photo by Mavis Hartz

Round hay bales in the Grande Ronde Valley.

Foothill Road.

Foothill Road, once a main throughway and part of the Historic Oregon Trail, contains a number of Century Farms and beautiful barns. With the construction of I-84 and Oregon State Highway 203, only local traffic, and a horde of exercise enthusiasts, seems to take the time to enjoy this road on the southeast side of the Grande Ronde Valley.

At mile 5.5 lies the Foothill Road viewpoint of the Ladd Marsh Wildlife

Area. This little knoll is worth a stroll as it looks down on West Fork of Clear Creek and the surrounding expanse. Ladd Marsh contains the largest remaining hardstem bulrush wetland in Northeast Oregon. *Scirpus acutus*, a huge rhizomatous sedge, was historically key for building baskets, clothing and more for the human inhabitants of the region, as well as food and shelter for animals and birds large and small. In the spring the number of birds using the marsh as a breeding

ground is truly impressive. For more information, I suggest attending the annual Ladd Marsh Bird Festival in May and keeping an eye out for sandhill cranes and other exotic birds.

Continue on your journey to mile 6.2, the Glass Hill Winter Range stage area with a newer barn, parking, kiosk and public restroom. This 850 acres of land, which rises out of the marshy valley and up Glass Hill, recently joined the Ladd Marsh family and is also managed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. This portion of the marsh caters to the 120 to 500 elk that call this stretch their home. To see these magnificent creatures, I suggest riding this route during the winter in the early morning as they enjoy a light snack of hardstem bulrush.

At mile eight, just after crossing over the interstate, the paved road becomes gravel in a brief two-mile hiatus. Turn north on Pierce Road. Like all gravel roads, its condition varies based the moisture content of the ground and amount of vehicle traffic.

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Handling the heat: Set up camp in the mountains

I'm starting to love summers. How can you not? Sure, it gets a little hot and dry but that's why we retreat to the mountains, isn't it?

But it could be worse. My son-in-law is stationed at Fort Irwin which is in the Mojave Desert. According to my daughter, the temps are mild here. They were here last week and when they flew out Katy and I took out for the mountains to meet my buddy, Shawn Lee.

Shawn schedules a big camping trip every July. It's made up of a mixture of family and friends. If you want to set by the campfire and read a book or go out hiking, your choice. A few years ago a bunch of us jumped on the horses and rode up to a high mountain lake. I've never been so saddle sore in all of my life. The 20-mile ride in one day about killed all of us.

Of course we lost the trail so it was rough riding for a while. And I was on a stud and there was a mare in heat in the string so I was fighting to keep him under control for the first six miles. But still, it was a great day and we caught a lot of fish.

If you're new to Oregon and want to go camping but don't know the ropes, maybe you can pick up a few ideas. In this article I'll half tell what we did and half give you advice.

First question. Where do you go? The national forests are ours despite what the feds would have you believe. So grab a Forest Service map and go exploring. When you find an area you like, get a detailed map from MyTopoMaps.

ACTIVITIES

You don't just want to go camping. You'll want to have some activities



Photo by Tom Claycomb

Assembling all your camping gear before you leave is a good way to make sure you don't forget anything vital.

planned. Here's a few things we did.

HORSES

Everyone likes to ride horses in the mountains. You can cover more ground plus you can look around and enjoy the scenery. You don't want to take a string of spooks up in the mountains though. Someone will get hurt.

GAMES

Someone brought a game called Cornhole <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDhjXhtb-B8>. I wasn't familiar with this game but it's a blast. I found a YouTube in which a guy tells you how to make your own board. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18kucue70UQ>

SHOOTING

Of course everyone loves shooting

and there are a million options. Shotguns, rifles, pistols or another fun option that doesn't make as much noise are airguns. I took my Benjamin Steel Eagle. Tin cans, targets, you name it, the sky is the limit.

Unbeknownst to me, everyone brought their bows. Ughh, I wish I had brought mine. I need the practice.

FISHING

Always camp near a river or lake so you have water and fishing is available.

THROWING KNIVES & HATCHETS

I wish I had taken my throwing knives and hatchet. Shawn had a chain saw and so we had some big slabs we could have thrown at. If you want some elite throwing knives,

check out Buck Knives. These are fun to pass time with.

FOUR-WHEELERS

Of course 4-wheelers are as common in camps now as sliced bread. I don't want to sound like the dad, but be careful. I love 4-wheelers but in a hot second, someone can get hurt or die. A few years ago my church went on a big camping trip and I flipped mine and it pancaked me pretty hard. Ughh, I had an hour ride out with broken rib, messed up shoulder etc. Then two years ago one flipped on the asphalt. Luckily Katy was able to lift it off of me. Another fun run to the hospital. Be careful.

COOKING

A big part of camping is the eating and fellowship. Plan your meals. Everyone is on a budget but for sure plan on smores around the campfire. You'll need to gather some cooking gear. You can pick up dishes cheap at Goodwill.

Well, we're out of room but not out of camping places. That's why you live in Oregon!

CAMP GEAR

- GCI Outdoor makes a cool cook station. I just got one. They're great to cook on and hold a lot of items.
- Dutch ovens make great food and add a Western flair to camp. Check out Lodge DO's.
- Everyone has a Camp Chef 2-burner stove.
- Lantern. I've always used Coleman fluid but propane bottles are nice.
- Lay a tarp on the inside of your tent so the inside doesn't get wet.

