

RECREATION REPORT

GUIDED HIKES PLANNED FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY AT STATE PARKS

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has scheduled free guided hikes on New Year's Day at 31 parks across the state, including two in Eastern Oregon.

- Emigrant Springs State Heritage Area along Interstate 84 near Meacham: 11 a.m., meet at the day-use parking lot (right of park entrance.)

- Wallowa Lake State Park: 10:30 a.m., meet at the parking area across from the south entrance of Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site.

All hikes will be guided by a park ranger or volunteer who will share stories about the park's history, geology, wildlife and plants.

All hikes are free; day-use parking fees will be waived at all participating parks Jan. 1 only.

Hikers can register for specific hikes online at the Oregon State Parks Store: bit.ly/ParkStoreEvents. While online registration isn't required for participation, visitors are encouraged to register. It helps park staff plan the hike and provides them with participant contact information should hike details change.

OPRD advises visitors to plan for inclement weather, dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes, bring water and remember to carry binoculars for viewing wildlife.

Full details for each hike are also on bit.ly/ParkStoreEvents.

DUCK HUNTING

Duck hunting provides some of the best hunting opportunities in December and January. Cold stormy weather to the north will push birds into our area and increasing rains will fill ponds and flood fields. Many ODFW wildlife areas are reporting ice, but hunters willing to search for open water and hunt over decoys can still do well.

ICE FISHING

Although ice has formed on bodies of water, none is likely to be safe enough for ice fishing. If cold weather continues, some spots could be available for ice fishing later in the month.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER

Steelhead fishing has been difficult this year due to the low number of returning fish and low flows. The river has a lot of ice forming. In some areas, the river is frozen across.

PRESENT POSSIBILITIES

■ Outdoors enthusiasts can be the easiest people to shop for — you probably know already what they like



Tom Claycomb photos

Never mind stockings — the outdoors enthusiast on your Christmas shopping list would love to find a stocked backpack hanging from the mantle.

It can be hard to Christmas shop for a lot of people but if they're an outdoorsman, it's a piece of cake. But you do have to do a little research or you might as well throw rocks at them.

We outdoorsmen love our gear and it can range in price from \$1 on up to \$40,000. If you take your time and shop wisely you can really impress them and not really have to spend that much. And, if you buy something that they use everyday, then they'll think of you every time they use it.

But ... it does have to be the specific item or you will bomb out. So how do you determine which item? Duh, ask them. They'll need/want a million items so have them give you a list. Then it will still be a surprise as to what they get. Or, get them a gift certificate at their favorite outdoor store. That way they can buy exactly what they want and they'll really appreciate it.

I've gotten to test a lot of products over 2018 so I'll list out some of the cool items that tested out well for me.

- Riton Optics Mod 5 4-16x scope
- Benjamin Steel Eagle pellet gun
- Camp Chef backpacking stove
- G Loomis flyrod.
- Diamond Blade The Summit knife
- Diamond Blade Pinnacle II knife
- Smith's 6-inch fine diamond stone or 8-inch Diamond Trihane
- Maps. Find out where they like to hunt/fish/hike/mushroom hunt and order them a MyTopo-maps.
- Lodge Dutch ovens. Check out their new Cook-It-All model
- Brownell's Magna-Tip adjustable torque wrench for mounting scopes
- Spyderco Bill Moran knife
- Handy Man jack for their truck.
- Axe
- Hi Mountain seasoning to make jerky and sausage
- CRKT Bird and Trout knife
- Boots — I wear Irish Setter.

Check out their Traveler, Drifter, Borderland and Vapr Trek models.

- Big game decoys. Check out the selection from Montana Decoys
- Ammo. This gift will be super selective. Find out what caliber, exactly what grain of bullet, etc. I use a lot of Hornady and Aquila ammo.
- Vacuum machine. I use a Caso.
- Gun-cleaning supplies.



BASE CAMP

TOM CLAYCOMB

Check out the selection from Otis. I use their patches, solvents and Gun Cleaning Station.

- GCI cooking station
- Camp Chef four-piece Cook Set
- Camping cookbooks. "In The Wild Chef" by Steve Weston or Randy King's "Chef in the Wild"
- Base layers. Check out what Carhartt has to offer.
- Book. "How to Stay Alive" by Bear Grylls. I've just started reading it.
- Trail camera. I'm not sure which ones to recommend.
- Cordova Coolers are in.
- Gun cases. Check out International Supplies
- Bore sites. Check out Sight Mark
- Sleeping bags, pads and tents. Check out Alps Mountaineering.
- Ear protection. Check out Silynx's Clarus Pro, hearing enhanced system, which is Bluetooth compatible.
- Bonus gift — Mossberg Patriot Revere. Nice rifle for the money and has a walnut stock.
- Binoculars, check out Riton Optics 10x42. That's what I use.

STOCKING STUFFERS

This is where you can really rack up and get multiple items cheap.

- Mister Twister crappie tube jigs
- Mister Twister crappie jig heads.
- Aquila .22 ammo
- Flies, check out flydeallfly.com
- Can of Crosman pellets
- Quaker Boy calls. They offer all manner of hand calls and reeds.
- Browning hiking socks.
- Birchwood Casey splattering targets. Kids really like these.
- Waterproof matches
- First-aid gear. Check out Adventure Medical Kit.
- Water filtration systems. Check out Aquamira
- Bowhunter? Check out Wasp broadheads.
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Lenses rag to clean optics (And lenses spray)
- Fun item. Coldstone throwing knives
- Here's a unique thought, what if you hung up a backpack instead of a stocking? Check out the Alps Mountaineering packs.
- Amazon Kindle. Of course they'd like my knife sharpening, survival tips for the outdoorsman or cooking deer meat books.



Gary Lewis/For The Bulletin

Out of Oregon City, Benchmade's Altitude is a skeletonized lightweight hunting knife with carbon fiber micro scales.

By Gary Lewis

For WesComNews Service

They crossed the Blue Mountains, floated the mighty Columbia and portaged around Celilo. They carved pathways like the Barlow Road and the Applegate Trail. And they settled in places like Oregon City, Salem and Eugene City.

"We went down Laurel Hill like shot off of a shovel," said William Barlow of that terrible trail in December 1845.

Founding new communities, they had none of the comforts we take for granted.

A man named Monteith started a mill at Albany and, for some pioneers, that summer of 1853 was the first time any of them had tasted bread in years.

Captain Applegate (as remembered by Bud Thompson) said, "No delicacy, no morsel of food ever eaten in afterlife tasted half so delicious as that bread."

Winters brought the hardest times. The Kincaids, Thomas and his wife, Nancy, in Lane County on Dec. 25, 1853, shared a grouse for dinner and thin cakes made of dried fruit, flour and brown sugar.

William "Bud" Thompson wrote, in "Reminiscences of a Pioneer," that the settlers saved their starving cattle by turning them loose to eat the long streamers of moss. The cattle learned to associate the crack of an ax with the soon-to-be-felled tree and the life-giving moss.

"The stock soon began to thrive and cows gave an increased amount of milk, which was hailed with delight by the small children," Thompson wrote.

Celebrating the holidays in Oregon Territory is more comfortable now. For those with outdoors enthusiasts on their list, shopping for gifts is easier, too.

Let's start with sharp things:

Out of Oregon City, Benchmade's Altitude is a skeletonized lightweight hunting knife with carbon fiber micro scales. If a hunter counts every ounce, this blade is a great choice (\$230).

Ashland-based Work Sharp has a new guided field sharpener with diamond plates, ceramic rods and leather strop for fine-tuning blades. Built-in angle guides help to keep a consistent bevel (work-sharptools.com, \$34.95).

Ever wonder how some of your friends always cast farther than everyone else? There are a couple of tricks. When the guides are slick and the line is slick, you can cast 10 to 15 percent farther. Give the gift of Real Magic. Spray it on the reel, wipe it on the line and soak the guides. And there are a lot of other uses for this stuff, too (ttiblakemore.com).

For the gear fisherman who wants an edge on steelhead and coho there is a new way to fish a spinner, proven on the Olympic Peninsula. Pre-tied on a long leader, Wicked Lures are designed to add a weight for trolling or casting (wickedlures.com, \$7.99).

There are few places where it rains harder than in Grays Harbor, Washington. Grays Harbor Unders has figured out how to keep people comfortable in the rain, sleet and snow. Give a steel-header Grays Harbor Unders fingerless

gloves (ghunders.com, \$25.99).

If your favorite angler has sprung a leak, check out the new Aquaz Kenai convertible waders (aquazfishing.com, \$199.99).

Another thing that wears out from time to time is a net. If we are using them right, we break them or lose them. It's what we do. One great new landing net is the KastKing Madbite (kastking.com, \$45.98).

Eyes wear out, too. That's why I am tying knots with the aid of KastKing Hi-wassee bifocal sport sunglasses, \$39.98. And no one can tell.

Another optical option: Ombraz sunglasses (ombraz.com, \$160) with no frames! Instead, you slide two friction-fit beads on the cord to hold the glasses on.

Fly-fishermen will sniff, but the trophy trout hunter who employs spinning gear would sure like Pro Cure trout sauce in the Christmas stocking (pro-cure.com, \$8.87).

People who love their family members should not let them fish bad tackle. A Ceymar spinning combo from Okuma is a good way to get good gear in someone's hands.

Fish Fighter Products is an innovative company from Mountain Home, Idaho. Its approach to downrigger weights allows an angler flexibility when targeting various species in diverse conditions (fishfighterproducts.com, \$69.99). Another great product, for cold-weather fishermen, is Fish Fighter's reel feel disposable gloves (30 pair for \$19.99).

Know someone who cleans a lot of fish? Fillet Away fish mats are stink-free and easy to clean. I keep one on the woodpile and hose it off after each batch of hatchery trout or kokanee we bring home (filletaway.com, \$27.99).

For the hunter, it's hard to beat binoculars. Testing new glass this year, two favorites rose to the top: Leupold's BX4 Pro Guide HD (\$744.99) and Sig Sauer Zulu 7 10x42mm (\$839.99).

And the Sig Kilo range finder Kilo2400ABS proved itself from New Zealand's alpine to Oregon's outback.

Everyone needs luggage. If an outdoors-person is climbing on floatplanes, drifting rivers or crossing salty bays, he or she should have a Crusader X waterproof roll-top duffel from Alps Outdoorz (alpsoutdoorz.com, \$99.99).

New from Camp Chef this year is the Stryker 200 multi-fuel stove. It runs on propane or butane and heats half a liter of water in only two minutes (campchef.com, \$104.99).

If holiday travels take you past places like Stinkingwater or Tombstone Pass, reflect on what it must have been like for a band of pioneers with horse-drawn wagons headed to the Willamette Valley in the weeks before Christmas not so long ago. Bring a fresh loaf of bread.

— Gary Lewis is the host of "Frontier Unlimited TV" and author of "Fishing Central Oregon," "Fishing Mount Hood Country," "Hunting Oregon" and other titles. Contact Gary at www.GaryLewisOutdoors.com.