

RECREATION REPORT

WHALE WATCH WEEK SET FOR MARCH 23-31

The spring Whale Watch Week event returns to the Oregon Coast March 23-31 to celebrate the more than 20,000 gray whales expected to migrate north past Oregon over the next few months.

Trained volunteers from the Whale Watching Spoken Here program will be stationed from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day at 24 sites along the coast, ready to help visitors spot the migrating mammals. A map of the volunteer-staffed sites is available on whalespoken.org.

The Whale Watching Center at Depoe Bay will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Visitors to the center can enjoy interactive whale exhibits and take in the panoramic ocean views. Binoculars are provided. Rangers from Oregon State Parks will also be on hand to answer questions about the whales.

An online live stream of whale activity at Depoe Bay returns this spring too; watch it on the Oregon State Parks YouTube channel during the event.

Gray whales migrate north along the coast of the western U.S. annually during spring; they return to Alaskan waters after wintering in the warm lagoons off the coast of Baja, Mexico. Many of the gray whales will be accompanied by their new calves, born during the winter. The first large groups of whales pass by Oregon mid-March and the migratory stream typically continues into June.

For more information about coast parks and campgrounds, visit oregonstateparks.org.

HELLS CANYON RESERVOIR

Fishing is starting to pick up for bass, catfish and crappie. Good fishing for trout can be had at tributary inlets.

KINNEY LAKE

Ice anglers have found success at catching rainbows to 16 inches. Fishing should remain good until ice out in the spring. Access can sometimes be difficult when snow drifts over the road.

WALLOWA RIVER

The daily bag limit of one hatchery steelhead will continue through the end of the season on April 30, 2019. Trout and whitefish fishing can remain good through the winter. Fishing places away from the typical steelhead holes can result in some nice fish with good catch rates.



Photo courtesy of Stephen Veals
Stephen Veals holds up a massive 24-inch brown trout he caught on Halloween Night in 2018. To meet his 365-day fishing challenge, Veals stopped to fish en route to his wife's office party. "The big ones only come out at night," he said. Veals is strictly a catch and release angler, so this monster brown didn't make it to the party — it's still lurking in the deep waters of the Boise River.

FISHING FRENZY

■ Enduring a series of personal challenges, Stephen Veals of Boise decided to fish every day in 2018

By Nicole Blanchard
The Idaho Statesman

BOISE — By his estimate, Stephen Veals spent more time fishing in 2018 than many anglers spend in a lifetime.

The Boise man cast a fly every single day last year. Yep, 365 days straight.

"This was going to be the only way I'd survive 2018," Veals, 31, wrote in a blog post chronicling the effort. "I had to just keep my mind occupied on the positive thoughts of fishing. I needed this." The effort started off as lighthearted competition to best a fishing buddy's goal of 75 days on the water in 2018. Slowly, it became something that buoyed Veals through a tumultuous year.

"(I thought) 'Man, 2018's not looking good,'" Veals said in an interview. "My father-in-law's health was declining, (my wife, Laura, and I) were flying out every other week to visit." Plus, he said, he lost his job as a videographer for a mobile accessories company, had to put down his 12-year-old yellow Lab and learned



Darin Oswald/Idaho Statesman-TNS

Steve Veals ties on a streamer to his line before heading to one of his favorite fishing holes on the Boise River.

the vehicle he'd driven since high school was broken beyond repair.

"Plus, for a public lands fan and advocate, it's been a tough administration," Veals said, referring to the Trump White House. "That was all weighing on me as I evaluated what makes me happy." Fishing was it.

Getting started

From the outset, Veals created rules: He'd have to fish a minimum of 15 minutes per

day in a body of water with fish in it. As a now-freelance cinematographer, Veals is often on the road. To ensure he didn't miss a day of fishing, he'd set a 24-hour timer from his last cast to stay consistent across time zones.

"Traveling caused the most anxiety," he said. "I was sweating plane delays, lost luggage. That could end my streak, and it's out of my control." He set reminders on his phone. Sometimes he would dash out of the house late at



Darin Oswald/Idaho Statesman-TNS

Veals holds a 14-inch brown trout he hooked along the Boise River on Feb. 24, 2019.

night, trying to beat the clock and keep working towards his goal.

"I'd leave my wife on our comfy couch during a Wednesday Netflix night only to go fish right at 11:40 p.m. just so I could log a day's fishing," he wrote in his blog. "I'd sweat the short 5-minute drive down to the water while mentally scolding myself on how reckless I was acting by nearly forgetting to fish that day." He fished across the country and the globe — from

the Boise River to California mountains to a pond beside the Oslo Airport — trying new techniques and reeling in fish he'd never dreamed of catching.

Veals headed to Jim Schwartz's private pond in Parma to try his hand at sturgeon fishing on a fly rod. After a three-and-a-half-hour fight, he brought in a 6-foot-6-inch fish weighing in at over 100 pounds.

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A good flashlight can save your day — or life

I suppose that I am no different from any other outdoorsman in that I count a flashlight as a vital part of my gear. And like you I am always looking for a more powerful, compact, rechargeable flashlight. At the SHOT show this year I discovered the ASP XT DF flashlight (Armament Systems & Procedures XT Duel Fuel) which is going to become my go-to flashlight. Having a dysfunctional flashlight in a crisis can be life-threatening, whether you have a bear come into camp at night, you're packing out in the dark or you're broke down and working on your truck.

I remember once my buddy Shawn Lee had packed our elk camp into the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area in Idaho on his pack string. I couldn't make it until a day later so I took off after work and got to the trailhead after dark, loaded the rest of my gear



BASE CAMP
TOM CLAYCOMB

in my backpack and took off down the narrow trail. Not far down the trail my main flashlight broke and I ended up hiking the last 3 miles with the aid of only a little rinky-dink light. Not fun in bear, wolf, cougar and moose country. Much less while trying to not tumble off the trail into the river below. The year before we'd had two horses and a mule roll off in this same stretch.

As I've gotten older, I only use good flashlights. I could give a million more examples of disasters like above due to dysfunctional flashlights, but you get my drift. Which is why I was excited to meet the ASP crew at the SHOT Show this year and get to test the ASP XT DF flashlight.

There are a few things I look for in a flashlight.



Photo by Tom Claycomb

Investing in a good flashlight can make a big difference in how enjoyable your outdoor adventures are.

Anytime, I like rechargeable lights. The better flashlights all seem to use expensive batteries nowadays so you'll go broke buying batteries if you use your flashlight much. Buy rechargeable ones. The ASP XT DF flashlight comes with (4) attachments that allow you to charge it in your truck or at home in a wall socket. One is especially unique in that it is a retractable cord

which helps keep it compact and prevents it from being a tangled mess like most of my cords become. And on top of this, the ASP XT DF flashlight comes with a canvas carrying case.

The ASP XT DF flashlight has a 5-mode setting, Max, High, Medium, Low and Strobe. It runs on one 18650 battery or it can also run on two C1234A rechargeable

batteries. It has two O-ring seals so it is water-resistant. It is the perfect size, and light by my standards. Not too big to be uncomfortable to carry but also not too small to be able to meet all of my needs.

If you're like me and spend a lot of time in the backcountry, then I'd recommend buying a double set of the rechargeable C1234A batteries for back up. Or, another option is to get a solar charging panel and carry it along. And, with the solar panel you can also charge your GPS, camera and other electronic gear.

And one last feature that might interest a lot of you is that it also has a reversible pocket clip. In the ASP XT DF flashlight, you get a lot of quality and options packed into a small package for the MSRP of \$160. Or you can go the cheap route like Indiana Jones and carry a torch and pray that the wind doesn't kick up and blow it out.