

SNOWSHOE

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We didn't start hiking until just after 6 o'clock, a time when we're usually sitting down for dinner, and it was a curious sensation to just be starting out into the woods when the sun is low in the western sky.

But queer sensations aside, it was a glorious evening to be in the high mountains.

The air had the crystalline quality unique to the alpine environment, the granitic bulk of Gunsight Butte and Lees Peak and the Lakes Lookout standing so sharply against the denim blue background that they seemed almost two-dimensional, like the scrolling mountains in a Road Runner cartoon.

It was chilly — the dashboard thermometer showed 37 when we parked.

But the wind was gentle and the slanting sunlight held a bit of warmth and there was something jolly about seeing our breath condense into fog, as though we were getting in some exercise before Thanksgiving dinner, or searching for a Christmas tree.

The lodgepole pines and sub-alpine firs had shed most of their snow burden from the previous day's storm but their branches still dripped constantly, and the westering sun transformed thickets into a glittering light show, like waterfalls illuminated from within.

Water, indeed, dominated the scene.

Snowmelt freshets gurgled beneath the drifts in places that come August will be dusty.

The pocket meadows were inundated and even the granitic boulders beside the trail sweated and dripped and in places were festooned with icicles.

I was reminded, as I frequently am, of how the mountains are such monumental sponges, the inverted reservoirs without which our valleys, already quite arid in some cases, would be ever closer to true desert.

There is ever a strangeness when seasons don't so much overlap as collide. I have long since adjusted to the imminence of summer, have banished long pants to their drawers in favor of shorts. My down jacket has taken up its long residence hanging from a post on our lodgepole bed frame.

And yet it occurred to me as we crunched through the snow, some as fresh as salmon from the sea and some having lingered here since November, that this wintry scene is more common here than any other.

Snow defines the Elkhorns as much as gray-white stone and the dark green of the subalpine fir and the softer shade of the whitebark pine. Here summer is the interloper, the brief guest



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Snow still covers sections of the tributary of Antone Creek that flows from Black Lake.

who never truly settles in. Here the sizzling July afternoon feels ephemeral and you can sense, even as the sweat beads on your forehead, that the frost-spangled grouse huckleberries is not far in the future, that the descending clouds of the first autumn storm are as likely to bring snow as rain.

We turned around at the northern shore of Black Lake. The tarn occupies a glacial gouge at the eastern base of Gunsight and here, behind one of the mountain's craggy shoulders, the sun had already gone.

The temperature had dropped and a crust was beginning to form on the snow, clattering with each step of our plastic MSR snowshoes.

The sky was mainly clear. And with the moon only a few days into its waning, its cold light would have brightened the forest considerably.

But we hustled back the mile or so to the parking lot to beat the dusk, which felt more like a winter's twilight with each passing minute, the dark arriving with the suddenness that happens only in the forest.

I turned on the headlights and we chased their twin beams through the gloaming back down the mountains, back toward the valley and back toward summer.

GIFTS

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Make sure you buy the size he wants and with the desired features.

KNIVES

(Whoa, this could be a whole list by itself since we use so many different knives)

- Knives of Alaska Pronghorn, Elk Hunter, Cub Bear or Legacy.
- Spyderco folding knives, Native Chief, Endura, Endela.
- Stones, Smith's Consumer Products makes the best. Fine Diamond stones, Tri-hone stone etc. They also offer a lot of folding knives and a boning knife.

FISHING GEAR

(You can buy a lot of small inexpensive items here)

- Lures, flies, weights, fishing line, jig heads, plastics, Pautzke Crappie Fireballs, Field & Stream fishing rods.
- Dip net
- Fly vest
- Polarized sunglasses

CAMPING

- Tents — I've got a few Alps Mountaineering tents.
- Lodge Dutch oven
- Camp Chef backpacking stove
- Grizzly makes some great coolers. They're durable, bear-rated and hold a lot of food.
- Cook set. If you're on a tight budget, go to Goodwill and put together a cooking set. Pots, pans, plates, silverware, glasses etc. and put in a large Tupperware container.
- MyTopoMaps makes the best maps on the market.
- For fun around camp get him a Daisy P51 slingshot or a throwing knife or hatchet.
- SneakyHunter BootLamps for hikers. These are like headlamps for your feet.

HUNTING

- Get him a Umarex air rifle. He'd have a blast plinking.
- Ruger 10/22. I love these little rifles. They are the most popular .22 on the market.
- Brick of Federal or some CCI .22 ammo.
- Riton Optics scopes and binoculars
- Swab-Its makes some cool gun cleaning swabs.
- NRA magazine subscription
- SneakyHunter BootLamps. They have three light options, one of which is a blood tracking light.
- Targets. He'd love the Birchwood Casey Shoot-NC targets.

SIMPLE GIFTS

- Tell him you don't have much but you'll go fishing/hiking/camping/hunting with him. I love it when my wife or daughters go with me. That means more to me than any gift in the world. That way I'm doing what I love and with the people I love the most!

Some state parks on the Oregon coast to remain closed

By Jamie Hale

The Oregonian/OregonLive

Though state parks and campgrounds on the Oregon coast have started to reopen, some will remain closed through summer.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department announced the long-term closure of all or part of six state park sites on the Oregon coast Thursday, most of which will remain closed through Labor Day:

Closed through Labor Day

- Alfred A. Loeb State Park

(south coast)

- Arizona Beach State Park group camp (south coast)
- Cape Blanco State Park (south coast)
- Carl G. Washburne Memorial State Park campground (central coast)
- Devils Lake State Park campground (central coast)

Closed through July 31

- Beachside State Recreation Site (central coast)
- The parks department said the

news "will disappoint many visitors and campers and we sincerely understand how this decision affects you," in its announcement on Twitter. "We apologize for the disruption and will continue to evaluate our situation throughout the summer."

All campground reservations made for dates during the extended closure will be automatically canceled. The parks department will issue full refunds within 10 days of notifying people of the cancellations, officials said.

Social distance, sanitizer and surfers at reopened Oregon coast parks

The continued closures are the result of an estimated \$22 million budget shortfall at the state parks department, caused by the coronavirus pandemic that resulted in an economic crisis and forced the parks department to shut down all park sites March 23. The department is not funded by taxpayers, but by Oregon Lottery proceeds, camping and day use fees, and RV registration fees.

On June 2, the department announced that it will lay off 47 full-time employees by the end of the month, in addition to the 338 seasonal staff that will not be rehired this year.

Park officials have warned that some reopened parks will have limited facilities, and that visitors should not rely on having drinking water, clean restrooms or trash service.

The six coastal parks are the only places where extended closures have been announced.



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