

RECREATION
REPORT

ODFW REPORTS
PROBLEM WITH
MYODFW APP ON
APPLE DEVICES

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife recently became aware that the MyODFW app will not open on iPhones or iPads when the device is out of cell service or in airplane mode. Users will get an error message instead.

The issue does not affect Android devices.

ODFW is working on fixing the problem but isn't sure when it will be resolved. In the meantime, ODFW is asking iPhone and iPad users to take the following steps.

- Take a screenshot of your license and tags.
- Open the app while you still have cell service or Wi-Fi and leave it turned on/logged in during your trip.
- Do not swipe the app off the screen during your trip as this will close the MyODFW app.
- If possible, do not turn off your phone during your trip as this will close the MyODFW app.

Until this problem is resolved, the screenshot showing a valid tag will temporarily suffice to show to Oregon State Police or ODFW, should you encounter them in the field. However, MyODFW app users who encounter this problem must immediately complete e-tagging once they are back in cell or Wi-Fi service. Also, app users will need to update to the latest app version that fixes this problem once it is available as the screenshot will no longer suffice for proof of tag (users will be alerted to update their app once the new version is available).

Hunters and anglers who have this problem with their MyODFW app in the field need to take the following steps:

- HUNTERS: If you harvest an animal, take all the steps you normally would (except for electronically validating the tag and adding the confirmation number to your handwritten tag). Reminder that hunters who are e-tagging need to write their name, ODFW ID, date of birth and harvest date on anything that will stand up to the elements (like flagging or duct tape) and affix it to the animal like a traditional tag. Keep it attached to the carcass in transport. As soon as you are back in cell service, complete e-tagging and write the confirmation number down on whatever is affixed to your animal.

STEEP ROUTE TO ROCK CREEK LAKE ILLUSTRATES DIFFERENCES IN TRAIL-CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Rock Creek Lake.

SIMPLE
ELEGANCE
OF THE
SWITCHBACK

■ Most trails in the Eagle Cap Wilderness zigzag up steep slopes to reduce the grade and make the routes easier for horses to negotiate, but paths in the Elkhorn Mountains generally take a more direct route to their destinations

I never appreciate switchbacks so much as when there aren't any.

My legs and my lungs are especially fond of these simple but elegant bits of footpath engineering. If you have neither the time, inclination nor the budget to build a tram like the one that hauls passengers from Wallowa Lake to the top of Mount Howard — and such conveyances aren't exactly common hereabouts — then constructing a series of switchbacks is the best way to tame a section of wild terrain.

A switchback, as its name suggests, is the spot where a trail abruptly switches direction. Generally this is a roughly 180-degree shift — if you've been walking north, the switchback will set you on a southerly course.

The concept of the zigzag captures the essence of the thing.

Trail designers most often call for switchbacks on steep ground.

A switchbacking trail allows hikers — indeed, anything that has feet and employs them for locomotion — to ascend a slope in a series of traverses that are at a much gentler grade compared with clambering straight up.

For reasons best explained through geometry or physics or anyway some other discipline with numbers and symbols that frighten and confuse me, the steeper, and to some extent the narrower, the hill, the more switchbacks, with shorter traverses, are necessary to moderate the grade.

On a nearly vertical slope

— hardly an uncommon feature in our region where the topography is as rumbled as the piles of clothes on a teenage boy's bedroom floor — a trail might switch directions every couple hundred feet.

In less severe terrain, especially on broad slopes not confined by cliffs or cleaved by a canyon — a traverse might extend for a quarter mile or more before the trail switches back.

Northeast Oregon has a wealth of examples of both approaches to building trails.

Although there are notable exceptions, most trails in the Wallowa Mountains are generously endowed with switchbacks. This design reflects the frequent use of horses to carry visitors, and their gear, into the Eagle Cap Wilderness, Oregon's largest primitive area at 365,000 acres.

Horses are fine climbers, to be sure.

But if you're riding one, or even if it's only your week-end's supply of pancake flour and beer that depends on equine agility, you'll likely prefer the gentler ascent that a well-designed switchback trail encourages.

The Elkhorn Mountains are a decidedly different matter.

Switchbacks are scarce. Trails are also shorter, as a rule, in the Elkhorns compared with the Wallowas.

This reflects in part of the sizes of the ranges, certainly, as the Wallowas sprawl over three times as much ground.

Wilderness, or lack thereof,

is also a significant factor.

The Wallowas are mostly designated as federal wilderness, which means motorized vehicles aren't allowed. Most popular destinations such as lakes lie several miles from the end of the nearest road.

By contrast there's very little official wilderness in the Elkhorns, so roads — terribly rough roads, in many cases, about which more later, but roads just the same — penetrate deeper into the mountains, resulting in shorter trails.

But the comparatively puny trail mileage in the Elkhorns also reflects trail builders' choice to largely eschew switchbacks.

Attacking the terrain directly, as most trails do in the Elkhorns, is a shorter, steeper way to get to where you're going.

Several trails exemplify this strategy.

But none demonstrates it quite so brutally, or so my quadriceps tell me, as the path to Rock Creek Lake on the east side of the Elkhorns.

The 4-mile trail includes a section about a third of a mile long that is, if not the steepest sustained climb among Elkhorns trails, then surely belongs in the upper echelon.

(The path from the North Powder River to Summit Lake is comparable, although I believe its most torturous stretch is slightly shorter.)

Were the Rock Creek trail rebuilt to the general specifications common to the Eagle Cap Wilderness, it would be at least 50% longer, and probably nearer to twice the distance.

Its antithesis is the trail to Frances Lake, on the east



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Rock Creek Lake occupies a glacier-carved basin below Rock Creek Butte, tallest peak in the Elkhorn Mountains at 9,106 feet.

If You Go...

From downtown Haines, turn at the sign for Anthony Lakes and drive 1.7 miles to the first corner. Stay straight, then left on Pocahontas Road for a few hundred yards to a junction with South Rock Creek Road. Turn right (west, directly toward the Elkhorns) on South Rock Creek Road.

Follow this paved, two-lane road, which turns to well-graded gravel after about 3.5 miles and then to a rough, rock-strewn and dusty road for which four-wheel-drive and high clearance are all but necessities. Continue west, uphill, into the mountains. Pass the Killamacue Lake trailhead about 2 miles from where the road deteriorates (the trailhead is not marked, but it's where the road crosses Killamacue Creek) and continue past Eilertson Meadow (on the left side, past a bridge over Rock Creek).

About 1 mile beyond Eilertson Meadow turn left on Road 250, a short (less than a tenth of a mile) spur that descends slightly and ends at the trailhead.

side of the Lostine River Canyon in the Wallowas. The Frances Lake trail, which replaced an older, steeper and shorter route, ascends the canyon in a series of long traverses, connected by switchbacks, that are so consistent and so gradual that when I hiked the trail several years ago with my father-in-law, Howard Britton, we scarcely detected the elevation gain.

And it's a considerable gain, at about 3,000 feet from the trailhead to the ridgecrest several hundred feet about Frances Lake. But that elevation is spread over about 8 miles.

There's nothing so subtle about the Rock Creek trail.

After crossing the North Fork of Rock Creek and then the mainstem, both in the first tenth of a mile, the trail climbs steadily but at a moderate grade for half a mile or so until it plunges into the jungle.

That, at any rate, is what I've long called the short stretch where the trail cleaves a grove of alders and thimbleberries and cow parsnip with stalks as tall as an elk's back, much of it dangling across the trail.

Fortunately none of the species that make up this vegetative gantlet is especially scratchy.

The hard work, though, starts where the trail emerges from the jungle. The path immediately scrabbles its way up a forested slope so steep that the trees seem to be

growing at a peculiar angle.

And yet as taxing as this trudge is, I never fail to be amused, as I plod along, heart thudding and breath wheezing, at the pathetic gesture the trailblazers made to acknowledge the severity of the terrain.

I would describe their efforts as half-hearted except that cliché strikes me as an exaggeration. And quarter-hearted is an awkward alternative.

Regardless, the trail does meander a bit as it climbs toward the gap that Rock Creek has spooned out of the Elkhorns' geologic goulash over the millennia.

But these slight squiggles don't qualify as switchbacks even under the most generous definition of the word.

If anything, the trail gets a trifle steeper at these spots. A well-constructed switchback requires a fair amount of digging, to keep the grade steady. The Rock Creek trail has none of this.

At the top of the climb the trail — perversely, it seems to me — descends briefly. This, of course, merely ensures that on the way back hikers, rather than relishing the downward tug of gravity all the way, after having defied it so sweatily on the way up, instead, albeit briefly, give truth to the old adage about how in the old days people had to walk to school “uphill both ways.”