

SHEEP

Continued from Page 1B

They were aware of us, stopping to watch for a moment, then dropping their heads to resume feeding. They moved toward us as they fed, then the biggest one, an almost full-curl ram in the prime of his life, scraped out a bed in the sun and lay down. While the smaller, a half-curl ram, continued to feed.

It is a precarious existence. We camped on a rocky outcrop, our beds laid on an incline and ended the three-day spring hunt without a bear.

By the time this column sees print, the state will have awarded spring bear hunts for the year. For many of us, a spring bear hunt in the Snake River Unit is as close as we will get to ever drawing a sheep tag. Enjoy those moments in the sun. Chances for a sheep tag run about 1 in 200.

A person can draw only one controlled bighorn ram tag in Oregon in a lifetime, but



Jenni Thornton/Contributed Photo

On the floor of the Baker City ODFW office, biologists help Jenni Thornton pound the plug into the back of her ram's horn.

there is a new opportunity, at least in the John Day and Deschutes canyons, for a ewe hunt, which will not count against a hunter's once-in-a-lifetime chance.

In Oregon, bighorn sheep and mountain goat hunts are awarded in June of each year to a few lucky hunters. It's the luck of the draw, but it's not always good luck.

Sometimes that coveted tag

comes at the least opportune time, like when a hunter has put on 75 pounds. The tag is awarded on June 16 and the hunt starts Aug. 15. The "lucky" dude has to drop 75 pounds in two months to get in "sheep shape!"

The deadline to apply is May 15. Apply early. Get to the gym. Oh, right. Well, go hiking then, with a full backpack. A sheep hunt will be



Jenni Thornton/Contributed Photo

With a length of almost 40 inches, 16 inches at the bases, and 9-3/4 inches at the fourth measurement, the 8-1/2-year-old ram is the largest ever taken by a woman in Oregon.

physically demanding. Maybe there will be a trophy at the end of it, maybe not. But the memories you bring back from the high country will be worth it.

Approximately 81 bighorn tags will be awarded in this year's drawing. One of us is going to draw a sheep tag this year. You or me, or that 12-year-old from Portland.

Gary Lewis is the author of "John Nosler Going Ballistic" and "Oregon Lake Maps and Fishing Guide" and other titles. To contact Gary, visit www.garylewisoutdoors.com

RECREATION REPORT

SPRING BEAR TAG DRAW RESULTS AVAILABLE

Login at the MyODFW.com licensing page and look under Recreational Portfolio/Controlled Hunts to view your results.

WALLOWA RIVER

Catch rates for steelhead in the Wallowa River are picking up, which will continue as fish make their way toward hatchery facilities. Late February and March are usually the best times to fish the Wallowa. The bag for steelhead is two hatchery fish per day through the end of the season to ensure enough fish arrive at hatchery facilities to meet production goals.

THIEF VALLEY RESERVOIR

Reservoir is near full pool

with very little ice across the reservoir and currently provides good bank fishing opportunities. Anglers are reporting good fishing for rainbow trout, many of which are healthy, sizeable fish that survived through the summer/fall and into the winter. The spring trout fishery for Thief Valley Reservoir is looking promising.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER

The Grande Ronde has been maintaining good flows for fishing and people are catching steelhead. It's not every year that the river is in shape in February but, when it is, it can be good fishing with relatively few people around.

The bag limit for steelhead has been reduced to two fish per day through the end of April to ensure enough fish return to the hatchery facilities to meet program goals.

UNITY RESERVOIR

Reservoir is completely iced over and provides ice fishing anglers with good and safe ice-fishing conditions. Ice thickness was 8 to 12 inches in most places, and anglers were reporting fair to good fishing for rainbow trout.

MALHEUR RESERVOIR

Ice fishing has been good. There have been some higher catch rates for rainbow in the 10- to 12-inch range, but some larger trout are also being caught. Ice was 8 inches thick as of Feb. 9.

IMNAHA RIVER

The Imnaha will see a push of steelhead out of the Snake soon, and will likely occur with a bump in flows. Expect catch rates for steelhead to increase through the middle of April when snowmelt will likely put the river out

of shape. The bag limit has been reduced to two hatchery steelhead per day through the end of April to ensure enough broodstock can be collected at hatchery facilities. Catch rates will be slow through the winter but there's always a few fish around.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLER

ACROSS

- 1 Same old routine
- 4 Potter's materials
- 9 Attorney's forte
- 12 Birthday count
- 13 GM competitor
- 14 Get one's goat
- 15 Treatment
- 17 Large bays
- 19 Pass near Pikes Peak
- 20 Halo, of sorts
- 21 Look over quickly
- 24 Capital of Syria
- 28 Window parts
- 30 — song (cheaply)
- 31 French article
- 32 Appropriate
- 33 Human trunk
- 35 Heat meas.
- 36 Grad, almost

- 37 Town near Lake Tahoe
- 38 Burns slightly
- 40 Be suspicious
- 43 Pâté de fois
- 44 Wallet stuffers
- 45 E.T.'s craft
- 47 Succinct
- 49 Practice sumo
- 53 Golf coup
- 54 Medieval laborers
- 56 Lightning by-product
- 57 — Jones Averages
- 58 Lovers' meeting
- 59 Bossie's chew

DOWN

- 1 Lab denizen
- 2 "Yecchi!"
- 3 Pigskin prop
- 4 Talk online
- 5 Strode along

Answer to Previous Puzzle

M	E	G		B	U	N	K		S	L	U	E
E	V	A		E	T	O	N		A	I	R	S
R	I	O	B	R	A	V	O		U	L	N	A
E	L	L	E	N		A	T	E	N			
				G	E	E			V	A	U	N
L	O	L	A		A	B	L	E		H	A	H
A	L	A	N		C	U	E		S	O	M	E
K	L	M		O	H	M	S		A	H	E	M
E	A	S	E	D		S	L	Y				
				G	E	T	S		U	S	I	N
V	A	R	Y		A	M	B	R	O	S	I	A
I	H	O	P		L	O	R	E		A	L	L
P	A	C	T		E	G	A	D		K	E	A

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