

Visions of rushing streams, wild trout

Stream trout snuck up on me this year. It hasn't always been so. There was a time when a frantic feeling of anticipation accompanied opening day of trout fishing. When I'd wake up in the dark before the alarm went off with butterflies in my stomach.

My high school buddies and I hit a river trail before the morning sun lit up canyon walls, with a goal to be first on the water. When rivers ran high and roily, we'd hop barbwire fences and drop a worm in feeder creeks that ran through pastures surrounded by "No Trespassing" signs. Back when catching the biggest and most trout was the closest most of us got to sex.

Nowadays I'm more apt to start the season on the Umatilla River near our family cabin. The river runs bankfull, still charged with high-elevation snowmelt. Evidence of the February 2020 "100-year flood" is everywhere: brush pinned shoulder high in the crooks of streamside alder, meanders straightened, deep pools gouged out, log jams that stem



THE NATURAL WORLD
DENNIS DAUBLE

the flow, and long, wide stretches of exposed cobble.

It's 6 a.m. Opening day of trout season, 2021. No longer able to ignore light creeping under the window shade, I roll out of bed and start a pot of coffee. The cabin's porch thermometer reads 38 F and rain drips lightly from the metal roof. Three hours later, after a hearty breakfast of sausage, scrambled eggs, and day-old doughnut, I shove a fat log in the woodstove and head upriver. Air temperature has warmed to 42. The tops of fir trees toss in an upriver breeze.

The first stop is a braided section formed where rushing flow meets an immovable basalt formation and splits in two. To get to the best hole requires fording knee-deep water so cold my teeth chatter. The next challenge is tying a clinch knot against muted light when I put together a two fly tandem:

Renegade lead fly (its white hackle allows me to track my offering) and Prince Nymph dropper.

Light rain sprinkles the water's surface. A waterproof jacket would have been a better choice than a hooded sweatshirt. My favorite stream bird, the American dipper, chatters past. Cottonwood and willow shoots poke out from crevices of bare cobble as if to promise a riparian corridor will once again provide cooling shade for trout during the heat of summer.

The next hour is spent working current margins, pocket pools, and shallow runs. There is no flash of trout on my best casts. I reflect back to Boy Scout days when I held "Atlas" salmon eggs in my mouth to speed up the process of re-baiting.

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Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

Dabbling a fly or using a bow-and-arrow cast to put a fly into small pools can lead to catching rainbow trout from rivers running high and roily in the spring.



Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

Native rainbow trout of the Blue Mountains are of the "redband" strain. Most exhibit dark oval parr marks and a narrow red stripe along their lateral line.



7 steps to fly-fishing freedom



ON THE TRAIL
GARY LEWIS

Stroll into any fly shop in Eastern Oregon and chances are the person who walks in behind you has never fly-fished before. They're looking to get into the sport and don't know how to start.

Here's what happens. Somebody has invited them on a trip. Perhaps it's a "bucket list" thing — they need to check it off as something they've done. Maybe they just moved here from California and have always wanted to fly-fish. Maybe they saw a movie with the young Brad Pitt casting a fly on a rollicking cutthroat stream.

For whatever reason, they are here and ready to fly-fish. They're a bit scared, afraid what other people might think when they see them hang a fly in a tree.

Here's the thing. We all start at zero, ground level. No one is born knowing how to tie a knot or execute a roll cast or dead-drift a dry. We have to learn it. Sometimes at an early age. Sometimes later. Fly-fishermen, despite our self-righteous tendencies, are welcoming. We like to see people learn to cast, select a fly and take it to water.

Yet the first-timer's fear, it lingers.

Picture the president of a successful company. He does everything well, he is admired, successful and now he wants to fly-fish. He knows he has no skills, he knows he has to start at ground level and work his way into a sport in which he is a latecomer. Some people never get past this point. It is time to face the fear, pick up a rod and learn a new way of life. That's what it is.

Let's say you are fishing next week. This might be the first time, it might be the first time in a long time. If you want to hide the fact you are a rank amateur, here is how to get ready for the first trip.

Take a casting lesson

You're going to have to admit to someone that you don't know how to cast. Go into a fly shop. Schedule a lesson. Learn the simple pick-up and lay-down, the basic overhead and the roll cast. It can all be taught and absorbed in an hour.

Learn a knot

Go online and learn to tie the improved clinch knot. That's the only one you really need to know right now. Later on you will want to learn the blood knot and the surgeon's knot, but that can wait.

Get a fly rod

Don't borrow someone else's gear. Get



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

Mikayla Lewis with a fly rod rainbow, one of 9 caught and released in an evening's fishing. Mikayla was casting and retrieving a CJ Rufus streamer.



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

This Eastern Oregon rainbow fell for a CJ Rufus, a streamer with a marabou underwing and lots of flash.

your own. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money. There are combo outfits on the shelves at sporting goods stores.

Put it together, watch some YouTube

videos and practice simple casts in the backyard.

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Tom Claycomb/Contributed Photo

Spending time with your daddy is the best gift that you could ever give him.

Gift ideas for an outdoors dad

It's almost Father's Day. I don't know about you but my father was always hard to buy a gift for, not that he was picky, he just didn't really need anything. So, I always ended up buying him a pair of leather gloves to use for building fence and working our cattle. Looking back, maybe I should have been a more creative shopper because him and mom bought a trailer in their later years and traveled around a bit. So I guess I could of bought him some camping gear.

But before you jump off the cliff, if your dad is an outdoorsman there are a million gifts that you can buy him. And if you shop wisely you don't have to spend that much. So, let's go over some of the items you might want to consider for dad.



BASE CAMP
TOM CLAYCOMB

CAMPING

- Tents. Check out Alps Mountaineering tents.
- Propane camp stove
- Cooking gear. Cast iron skillets, utensils, plates etc.
- Camp tables. We always are short of tables.
- Cooking setups. They make cool multi-level tables to cook on and hold your cooking supplies.
- Lantern, flashlights. I've been testing some Black-fire lights this year that are awesome.
- Tarp(s)

HUNTING

- Knives of Alaska Professional Boning Knife.
- Ammo. Ha ... if you can find any.
- UMAREX Synergis .22 cal. air gun.
- UMAREX .25 cal. gauntlet.
- Knives. Outdoorsmen love knives. Smith's Consumer Products offers some economical folders.
- Knives of Alaska has some well-designed, high quality hunting/fishing knives.
- Knife sharpening stones. Smith's Consumer Products owns the market. Get him a fine diamond stone.
- Calls Turkey (4-Play), varmint (FOXPRO), crow, elk and duck calls.
- GRIPSHIELD Keeps your hands dry for competition shooting.

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