

AVALANCHE

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Most notably, the Alps teem with villages and ski resorts and highways, all built in avalanche country. Most of the avalanche-prone terrain in Northeastern Oregon, by contrast, is uninhabited and visited by a comparatively tiny number of people.

The bottom line is that any avalanche in the Alps is much more likely to have humans in its path than one in this corner of Oregon.

But McNeil said the conditions that breed avalanches frequently occur in parts of Northeastern Oregon — slopes that are steep (but not necessarily vertical, since cliffs can't hold enough snow to fuel a big avalanche), and weather conditions that create unstable layers within the snowpack.

A relatively common situation that poses a hazard — and one that's in place now in much of the region — is a long period of tranquil weather, with little snow falling, McNeil said.

In that case, and in particular when the surface of the snow melts and refreezes, the shape of the snow grains tends to morph from circular, with the grains readily bonding to create a firm structure, to square.

These squarish grains, what skiers often call "sugar snow," do not bond as well, McNeil said, resulting in a layer of weak snow.

When new snow accumulates on that weak layer, the weight of the new snow can trigger an avalanche.

The weight of a skier, snowshoer or snowmobile, naturally, greatly increases the risk.

An ice layer on the surface is similarly dangerous because new snow, like

boots losing traction on an icy sidewalk, is likely to slide off rather than stick.

Various other conditions also can exacerbate avalanche danger, McNeil said.

If a couple feet of snow falls in a short period, as happens most winters in parts of the region, the new snow, even if accumulates on a stable layer, might not be internally stable for a few days, he said.

During that period the deep, unconsolidated snow can be prone to sliding.

Wind is also a major factor.

When wind blows from a consistent direction at a speed of between about 10 mph and 15 mph for an extended period it can cause slabs of snow to form on the leeward side of ridges.

If slabs accumulate atop layers of less dense snow, there is a greater risk of what are known as "wind slab avalanches," McNeil said.

He said the Center's staff members use a variety of data, in addition to their own observations from snow pits they dig, to compile their forecasts. These include readings from remote weather stations.

One of those stations has a direct, and poignant, connection to the Wallowa Avalanche Center.

The Kip Rand weather station, in the southern Wallowa north of Halfway, was named for the man who McNeil succeeded as the Center's director.

Rand died on March 8, 2016, from injuries he sustained in an avalanche on Chief Joseph Mountain in the northern Wallowa, south of Joseph.

The Kip Rand station is vital because it measures wind as well as temperature.

Most of the other remote stations lack an anemometer.



Victor McNeil/Contributed Photo

Victor McNeil, director of the Wallowa Avalanche Center, dug this snow pit in the upper Rock Creek area of the Elkhorn Mountains on Jan. 26, 2022. Snow pits allow experts such as McNeil to examine the snowpack for potentially weak layers that raise the risk of avalanches.



Victor McNeil/Contributed Photo

Avalanche experts use a magnifying glass to study snow crystals. Over time, crystals can change shape, leading to unstable layers in the snowpack.

DAUBLE

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Ice fishing gear is scaled down in size. I paid \$25 for a 42-inch-long, light-action "Ugly Stick" spinning rod and open-face reel loaded with 50 yards of monofilament line. For comparison, an friend from Minnesota dropped a C-note on a 36-inch ice rod and free-fall inline reel. His purchase seemed extravagant, but then again, I own a 5-weight Winston boron fly rod with serial numbers etched in cursive above each ferrule. Each to their own it seems.

Unlike most other fish that frequent western waterways, perch are active feeders all year long. However, patience is required to hook these soft biters. Downsizing my terminal lure to a Swedish Pimple and attaching a worm-baited dropper hook up the line quickly led to a dozen perch flopping at my feet. Watching one rod instead

of hopping back and forth between two also improved hookset percentage. The majority of a newly populated tackle box remained in place though, suggesting that ice fishing — along with most forms of angling — leads to purchasing way too much gear.

I've since heard reports of hand-size crappie and bluegill pulled through area ice. A friend from Minnesota tells of taking walleye, holdover rainbows, and a largemouth bass. Assuming sub-freezing temperatures remain in effect, I plan to give ice fishing another try. Freezing your butt off waiting for a bobber to sink sure beats looking out the dining room window and grousing about lost opportunity for steelhead.

Dennis Dauble is the author of "Bury Me with My Fly Rod" and the recently released, "Chasing Ghost Trout." Contact him via his website at Dennis-DaubleBooks.com.



Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

A bucketful of perch makes for a fine January day on an ice-covered lake.



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CROSSWORD PUZZLER

- ACROSS**
- 1 Dutch carrier
 - 4 Tune for a diva
 - 8 Command to Fido
 - 12 Sister of Helios
 - 13 Rain icy pellets
 - 14 Diva — Gluck
 - 15 Palace entrance
 - 17 Nanny's charge
 - 18 Faux pas
 - 19 Pigment
 - 21 Fall blooms
 - 23 Hydrophobic
 - 26 Not at all relaxed
 - 27 Jump over
 - 28 Shogun's domain
 - 31 Colo. neighbor
 - 32 Place of safety
 - 33 Econ. indicator
 - 36 Heavy cavalry sword
 - 37 Follow
- DOWN**
- 1 Frat-party fixture
 - 2 Hawaii's Mauna —
 - 3 Colo. setting
 - 4 Contented sigh
 - 5 Gather leaves
 - 6 VI halved
 - 7 Swit costar
 - 8 Expedite
 - 9 DeGeneres of TV
 - 10 Kuwaiti leaders
 - 11 Backslide
 - 16 Shorten an article
 - 20 Three ft.
 - 22 Getz or Musial
 - 23 Angry dispute
 - 24 A Vanderbilt
 - 25 Publicity info
 - 28 Poke
 - 29 Gladiator's hello
 - 30 Each
 - 32 Joke response (hyph.)
 - 33 Chitchat
 - 34 Pen point
 - 35 Pilot a ferry
 - 37 Musical pros
 - 38 Turmoil
 - 39 Habituate
 - 40 Sauteed
 - 41 Bacon Rouge loc.
 - 43 Claims
 - 44 Mr. Lugosi of film
 - 47 Winning streak
 - 49 Bad prefix
 - 50 Hosp. scan
 - 51 Roadie's gear
 - 54 DJ's disc

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

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HOROSCOPES

by Stella Wilder

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2022
 YOUR BIRTHDAY by Stella Wilder

Born today, you are known for your ability to "come from behind" and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat -- and you do it time and again, in situations both trivial and important. What you have going for you, more than anything else, is your ability to see past your own shortcomings or any difficult circumstances by which you may be pumpeled at any given time; you are able to see beyond the troubles that might be too much for someone else and see the results that wait for you.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6
 AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) -- You may have to follow someone's plan today, but you are certainly free to implement new elements if you are inspired to do so.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) -- Your "attack" today will make all the difference. Do you want to be aggressive or more subtle than that? Each sends a different message.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- You'll be able to say much today simply by keeping yourself busy and letting your actions speak for you. Others appreciate this approach.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- You don't need to "announce yourself" as you get started today -- just start! Indeed, the more you can remain in the background, the better.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- You may have to do a thing or two today that you would normally not do, but this is not a normal day! Never fear, this phase won't last long.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- You will have more insight into their people's motives than usual today, and this should give you a marked advantage over a close competitor.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- What you avoid today is likely to come back to haunt you tomorrow, so you are better off dealing with it head-on right now.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- Seek a way out for yourself and you're likely to find the way out for someone else -- but you may be stuck where you are for a while longer.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) -- You may be restricted by a rule that no one pays any attention to anymore. It may be up to you, then, to begin the process of repealing it!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) -- You're in no mood to get your hands dirty, yet that may be unavoidable if you stay where you are. Your hands-on assistance will be required!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) -- It may be time, finally, for you to update your approach to a certain routine problem. You've "made do" for long enough!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- You may be tempted to reveal a sensitive piece of information that you merely stumbled upon recently, but it's best to keep mum today.

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