

## A basket of memories

**Reviving Grandpa's wicker creel also spurs fond recollections**



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THE NATURAL WORLD

**Snow-Charged Streams and Days Gone By**

Springtime in the Blue Mountains heralds the sound of passerine songbirds and snow-charged streams. While nature's blessings brighten the spirit, sunlit days eventually remind of need to catch up on chores conveniently ignored over the darkness of winter.

Entering a garage cluttered with fishing gear and wood-working projects, my eye catches on Grandpa Harry's ancient willow creel, aka fish box. I pull the creel down from the wall and lift its creaky lid. Bits of dried fern and the faint glitter of aged fish scales greet me. The syrupy sweet odor of fair-caught rainbow trout wafts from its interior like bacon grease plated on a cast iron skillet.

Fish boxes, as willow-weave creels were referred to in the "olden days," are designed to hold a limit of fresh-killed trout. Their open weave design allows for water to drain off when dipped in the stream and for evaporative cooling of the day's catch. A few decades ago, a basket-type creel was an important accessory for every serious angler. Nowadays they're as obsolete as horsehair line. Not to mention that any self-respecting fly fisher who kills a fish in public waters stands a good chance of being ostracized by his peers.

A careful review of Hugh Chatham and Dan McClain's classic reference, "The Art of the Creel," provides insight on the origin of Grandpa's creel. Such features as a "side-hole," a single leather strap around the front and lid, reinforced back corners, and a 3-inch-wide leather flap hinge, suggest it's a "Hazeldell," product of the so-called king of the creel-leather business, George Lawrence Company of Portland, Oregon.



Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

Brother Dusty casts into the tongue of the river's current, hoping to hook a trout that he can slip into his willow creel.



Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

Grandpa Harry's restored fish box, wading stick, and fly rod are ready for action by the front steps of the family cabin.

It would be difficult to prove the creel was made by G.L. Co. because it lacks a metal cartouche, engraving, or similar stamp of authenticity.

Assuming the creel is an early G.L., though, it would be a No. 3 or the smallest of four sizes originally offered, having a capacity of

20 pounds (their largest, No. 7, was introduced in 1929 with a 40-pound capacity!). Since the horizontal weave or "weft" of Grandpa's creel is whole willow, not split, as were early versions built in the wickerwork or French weave style, it closely conforms to No. 14x in the wicker-weave series, first built by G.L. in 1941.

The heirloom creel represents the last of Grandpa's angling legacy after brother Dusty dumped a rubber raft on the Deschutes River and Grandpa's bamboo fly rod sunk to the bottom of Whitehorse Rapids. The rub of it though, is the creel has fallen into disrepair. It's not so much I ignore it when I pack my fly rod and vest, but why strap on a bulky creel in a catch-and-release world? Not to mention the occasional raised eyebrow when someone senses my goal is to fill a frying pan with a brace of trout. And, if and when I decide to keep a small trout for breakfast, it's easy to slip the fish into the inside pocket of my fly vest.

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## It's almost turkey time in Oregon

**April 15 isn't just tax day for hunters**

EO Media Group

Never mind those pesky taxes. April 15 is a milestone of a different sort for many hunters in Oregon, marking the start of the statewide spring turkey hunting season.

The general season continues through May 31.

Hunters can take male turkeys or turkeys with a visible beard. The season limit is three turkeys.

A youth turkey hunt, for hunters 17 and younger, will precede the regular season, on April 9-10.

For the youth hunt, an adult 21 or older must accompany each youth hunter, and the adult can't hunt.

Youth hunters need a 2022 youth spring turkey tag. Youth hunters who have an unfilled tag after April 10 can also hunt during the general season April 15-May 31.

Youth participating in the Mentored Youth Hunter Program are not eligible to participate in the April 9-10 youth hunt.

Wild turkeys are not native to Oregon according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

But since their introduction in 1961, and the first turkey hunting season in 1987, turkey hunting opportunities have increased more than tenfold.

The first turkeys introduced



Jim Ward/Contributed Photo, File

A male turkey grows a tuft of stiff feathers in the middle of its chest referred to as a beard. Mature males sport beards 9 to 12 inches long.

into Oregon were the Merriam's turkey, native to the pine forests of Arizona and New Mexico. In 1975, Oregon began introducing the Rio Grande turkey, and the two subspecies have hybridized widely.

ODFW's management strategy for wild turkeys focuses on the Rio Grande subspecies.

Spring is prime turkey hunting season. This is breeding season and successful hunters often set

up in a well-camouflaged location and try to call a male turkey into shooting range.

**Shotgun or bow?**

Turkey hunters can use either a shotgun or a bow (recurve, compound or long; crossbows are illegal).

For shotguns, 12-gauge and 20-gauge models are the most popular. Shot sizes 4, 5 and 6 are typically used for turkey hunting.

For big, stationary targets like turkey, a full choke is the best choice and is usually included with the purchase of a new shotgun. This choke concentrates the pellets into a small pattern, ensuring more pellets hit the target zone.

Many turkey hunters prefer a better sight on their shotgun than the typical one or two metal beads on top of the barrel. Turkeys are normally a stationary target — unlike a flushing pheasant or a decoying duck — and ideally hunters try for a head shot that doesn't spoil the meat. Two popular kinds of sights to help you acquire your target and shoot accurately:

- A fiber optic sight is brighter than a metal bead, making it easier to locate the sight and line it up with the head of a turkey. Many shotguns designed for turkey hunting come with a single fiber optic sight mounted on the front of the barrel. You also can buy aftermarket fiber optic sights to install on the gun you already have, as long as it has a ventilated rib and metal bead on top of the barrel. Popular colors are orange, yellow or green.

- A red dot sight contains an illuminated dot inside a sight housing. These are considered the most accurate sights for turkey hunting. A red dot sight is typically very low power; some have no magnification. Some need a battery to operate, some don't. In Oregon, a battery-operated sight or scope is legal on a shotgun as

long as it doesn't project a beam onto the target.

**Turkey tagging options**

Hunters can use either paper tags or electronic tags.

- Paper Tags — Successful hunters must immediately validate the tag by writing on the tag, in ink, the date and time of harvest, and the unit where harvest occurred; and attach the tag in plain sight securely to the turkey.

To keep the tag legible, one option is to place it in a plastic bag to protect it.

Paper tags must be signed upon purchase or prior to use in the field.

It is unlawful to have in possession an unsigned tag and/or reproduction/photocopied/resized tag(s).

- Electronic Tags — Successful hunters must immediately validate the tag by pressing the "Validate" button on the image of the tag in the MyODFW mobile application. Follow the prompts and complete the tag validation process by clicking "Save." After validation a confirmation number will become visible.

In addition to validating a tag electronically, the tag owner's name, date of birth, ODFW ID number, harvest date, and confirmation number must be written in ink on material of the tag owner's choice (options include flagging tape, duct tape, and paper in a plastic bag to protect it), and attached in plain sight securely to the turkey.

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