

## Bear hunt can yield a bounty

Successful hunters get meat, a pelt or rug, and useful grease



**GARY LEWIS**  
ON THE TRAIL

**B**ack behind a screen of limbs, I saw the legs of a bear. Hidden by branches, I could see parts but not the whole. I knew it was a boar.

My thumb was on the safety. I saw nose and head, then foreleg, then lower half of the body. In an instant, the rifle was at my shoulder and I had the vitals in the crosshair.

The trigger broke, the rifle crashed and the 165-grain Nosler AccuBond took the bear behind the

shoulder. Spinning, the bear smashed into an alder that shivered all the way to the top of the tree.

When the magazine was topped up, when the sounds of the forest returned, when the birds lit, cautious, in the treetops again, I counted steps, pushing the muzzle in front of me. Eleven paces. Fifteen paces to the edge of the clearing. Twenty-three steps to the bear.

A few of my friends are still grumbling. They didn't draw deer or elk tags this year. I think the best antidote for the lack of a deer or elk tag is to go bear hunting. The season

starts Aug. 1 and a hunter who bags a bear is likely saving a few elk calves and deer fawns for next year.

In Oregon, a bear hunter can draw a tag for the two-month spring hunt and get a second tag over the counter for the fall bear season. My favorite time of the season is Aug. 15 through the second week of Sep-

tember, when berries are ripe and apples, pears and plums hang heavy in forgotten orchards.

Hunt bear for what it provides. Not only the meat — the burger, steaks and ribs — but a hide, a pelt or a rug and the claws and the skull, all of which can be preserved in one way or another to remember the moment, the animal.

One of the things we should preserve is the grease from the bear.

Put a block of the good, clean white fat in a pot and cook it on low till it turns to oil. Skim the cracklings off the top and pour the grease through cheesecloth or clean game bag fabric. I like to strain it four times. Now the fat is ready to freeze for future use for pie crusts, biscuits and doughnuts. Be sure to pick apples or berries after the bear hunt. There is nothing better than apple pie with a bear grease crust.

Bear grease can be used in healing salves, in hair and to treat leather. I use it to lube muzzleloader barrels. And save the cracklings for the birds.

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« Lucas Simpson (right) and Gary Lewis head up a creek bottom to the site of an old homesteader orchard to try to call in a fruit-eating bear with a predator call. The animals that came to the call did not show in the opening, but padded unseen at the edge of the tree line.

Samuel Pyke/Contributed Photo



« With a bear spotted on a high slope and heading down to water, Lucas Simpson (left) and Gary Lewis had to quickly formulate a plan to close the gap and try to spot the bear again. Samuel Pyke/Contributed Photo



« Bear season hunting season starts Aug. 1. Jim Ward/Contributed Photo, File



## Snow continues to clog parts of Eagle Cap Wilderness

Snow also lingers in parts of the Elkhorn Mountains

By **JAYSON JACOBY**  
Baker City Herald

**H**ikers and equestrians hoping to visit some of the spectacular alpine lakes and high passes in the Eagle Cap Wilderness over the next few weeks will have to go back in time, in a manner of speaking, to get there.

Wilderness travelers will need to cross the lingering evidence of blizzards that plastered the Wallowa Mountains months ago.

Snowdrifts, to put it plainly. Those slippery frozen obstacles are much more numerous this summer than in the past several, said Sweyn Wall, Forest Service recreation program manager for the Eagle Cap and the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

The persistent snow is due to a cool, damp spring that not only preserved the winter snowpack, but also brought fresh snow to the mountains as late as the second week of June.

“The snow is hanging on,” Wall said on Wednesday, July 6. “At this point we’re two to three weeks behind on access based on the past 10 years or so.”

That’s the situation in some of the more popular parts of the Eagle Cap, which at 365,000 acres is Oregon’s biggest federal wilderness.

Lower elevations are snow-free, Wall said.

But most of the frequently visited lakes in the Eagle Cap — Ice, Aneroid and the Lake

Basin on the north side of the wilderness, Eagle, Echo and Traverse on the south end, to name just several — are above 7,000 feet.

And above 8,000 feet in a few cases, such as Glacier Lake at the head of the Wallowa River’s west fork.

Wall said it’s likely that many of the higher lakes in the Eagle Cap Wilderness are still frozen.

He said trail maintenance crews and visitors are reporting either snowdrifts, or “solid snow,” along the upper parts of many trails.

Examples are the heavily trav-

eled trails that start at Two Pan campground — those on the west and east forks of the Lostine River.

Wall said that late last week, hikers found snow three to four feet deep at the top of the switchbacks on the East Fork trail, before the trail enters the long meadow that leads to near Mirror Lake in the Lake Basin, the most popular destination in the wilderness.

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From the trail just below Horton Pass the view includes two of the major drainages in the Eagle Cap Wilderness — the East Fork of the Lostine River at left, and Hurricane Creek at right — as well as the summit of the Matterhorn, the white peak at far right. Unlike in this view from a previous summer, snow will likely linger at Horton and other high passes well into August. Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald, File