

# SNOWSTORM SURPRISE



JAYSON JACOBY  
ON THE TRAIL

Weather, forecast models and a 'huge miss'

**W**eather forecasters don't get much attention until they're wrong.

Immensely wrong. Which, I suppose, makes meteorologists the scientific analog to football punters.

Fans as a rule don't care about their team's punter unless he fumbles the snap or his kick is blocked.

Then the punter becomes the ideal scapegoat.

(As a University of Oregon alumnus, I can attest that when both types of major punting miscues happen in the annual Civil War game against Oregon State, as was the case on Nov. 26 when the Ducks miraculously managed to blow a 21-point lead late in the third quarter, the punter quickly moves from obscurity to the spotlight. In Oregon's case the punter was spared, somewhat, by the Ducks botching so many other plays that the punting problems didn't stand out.)

The people who predict weather enjoy a similar sort of anonymity so long as their fore-

casts hew relatively close to reality.

Which they do, most of the time.

Weather Service pegged it at 37, nobody's filing a class action lawsuit to compensate for the mental anguish of feeling a trifle

misses so badly — the equivalent to a punt that goes sideways — that people are apt to notice.

Such was the case this week

ered computers — were quite enamored with the potential potency of this tempest. The agency's meteorologists rely heavily on these models, and there was enough consistency among them to prompt the Weather Service to issue a plethora of watches and warnings.

On Tuesday, it appeared all but certain that the storm would at a minimum make for difficult driving late in the week.

I could anticipate the inevitable closure of Interstate 84 through the Blue Mountains, something that's more reliable even than weather forecasts.

The storm, as we know, was pretty puny by local standards.

I went to bed Wednesday night, Nov. 30, expecting to be busy with the snow shovel the next morning.

But when I woke up on the first day of December, the temperature was 36 and not a flake had fallen overnight, so far as I could tell. The windshield of our Mazda (we don't have a garage; my knuckles have often borne the wounds from a hasty scraping job) was ice-free for the first morning in more than a week.

See **Weather** / B6

Location	Snow Amount Potential			(% Chance of Seeing More Snow Than							
	Low End	Expected	High End	>=0.1"	>=1"	>=2"	>=4"	>=6"	>=8"	>=12"	>=18"
Boise, ID	0.0"	0.4"	1.9"	77	41	13	0	0	0	0	0
Bogus Basin, ID	8.1"	14.2"	15.5"	100	99	99	97	93	84	50	0
Idaho City, ID	6.8"	9.9"	15.0"	100	100	100	98	93	80	38	4
Fairfield, ID	6.6"	10.4"	13.0"	100	100	99	97	90	73	21	0
Caldwell, ID	0.0"	0.2"	1.1"	65	19	1	0	0	0	0	0
Jerome, ID	0.0"	0.3"	1.5"	66	28	5	0	0	0	0	0
Twin Falls, ID	0.0"	0.1"	0.6"	50	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brundage Mountain, ID	22.8"	34.8"	38.1"	100	100	100	100	100	100	98	94
McCall, ID	15.8"	23.6"	27.9"	100	100	100	100	100	99	95	76
Tamarack Ski, ID	21.7"	32.5"	33.2"	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	92
Baker City, OR	2.9"	5.7"	7.6"	99	97	93	72	36	8	0	0
Burns, OR	1.7"	4.3"	5.3"	96	91	80	40	4	0	0	0
Ontario, OR	0.1"	1.1"	1.9"	88	52	11	0	0	0	0	0

The National Weather Service's forecast for significant snow in Baker City this week didn't pan out.

Nobody expects perfection, obviously — if the temperature tops out at, say, 35 on a day when the National

colder than expected on an afternoon walk.

(Actually, somebody probably has, or will, file such a complaint, what with our society's litigious predilections.)

But occasionally a forecast

when the latest in a series of winter storms moved into Oregon.

Initially, the National Weather Service's forecast models — there are several, each of them based on the calculations of high-pow-



A wintry scene during a previous winter along Brownlee Reservoir in eastern Baker County. Contributed Photo, File

# Bullheads, and remembering good friends we've lost



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I was awakened from deep sleep to hear of Grandpa Harry's passing on a winter dawn so bitter an inch-thick sheet of ice plated my bedroom window. The news that Dad died was delivered a few weeks short of the longest night of the year, when raw sleet pounded frozen pavement. More recently, on a cold, blustery December evening, a dear friend took his last breath. I was getting ready for bed when the phone rang. "Who could be calling this time at night?" I asked Nancy.

I picked up. "Bad news," Ken said. My heart sank and I took a deep breath. "Duane quit breathing and they took him to the hospital where he died."

The news was not unexpected. Duane had battled amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, for over a year. However, a recent visit suggested he would be around for a long time. We split a ham-and-cheese on rye, told jokes via text messaging (he was hooked up to a respirator at the time), and watched the 1974 crime-spreed cult classic, "Big Bad Mama."

Mutual admiration was shared for the state of nature Angie Dickinson displayed in her prime. Duane was par-



Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

Wayne Heinz show off an eater-size brown bullhead caught while jigging for small-mouth bass in a backwater of the Columbia River.

ticularly enamored by scenes of gratuitous nudity that showcased her nubile screen daughters.

It is no surprise to those who know me that my strongest personal connections transcend to the fishing experience. Duane and I worked side-by-side during aquatic monitoring studies of the Hanford Reach and later on advanced turbine design for salmon passage in the Columbia and Snake Rivers. We backpacked to brook trout in the Wallowa Mountains, argued politics (his interest, not mine), and listened to

the blues rock of Hot Tuna and Quick-silver Messenger Service.

Duane also directed me to my first steelhead on the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. "Ringold is a good place to start," he said. "In my humble opinion though, steelhead are a myth."

My previous experience fishing for steelhead had been limited to the Walla Walla and Rogue rivers, where I tossed spinners or dragged a worm along the bottom. Despite Duane's humble opinion, I elected to try for steelhead in the Reach. Approaching a shallow

riffle along the Ringold Springs shoreline, I saw a steelhead roll. Two casts of a nightcrawler and "fish on!" Duane shook his head and scoffed when I told him about my catch.

Although Duane and I seldom fished together in later years, he critiqued most of my fishing stories. "You need to add more sex," he would almost always say.

I have fond memories of a day spent casting cut bait with him and his dad in a shallow backwater pond near the Burbank wildlife refuge. What kind of fish butts heads and rubs chin whiskers with a mate during spawning? Makes a nest burrow in mud banks and hollow logs? Can taste food with its sides? Has meat the color of raw beef said "unsurpassed for gastronomic delight"? If you guessed squaretail, horn pout, creek cat, minister, or brown bullhead, then go to the head of the class.

Bullhead catfish are not native to the Pacific Northwest. According to "Coming of the Pond Fishes" by Ben Hur Lampman, the first planting in Washington State occurred around 1880 in Cowlitz County's Silver Lake. Similar introductions were made to Oregon's Yamhill and Willamette Rivers in a mixed bag of fish transported by rail from the Midwest. Over the last century, bullhead have continued to spread throughout the Pacific Northwest with the assistance of misguided anglers.

Bullhead fishing is often described as a "quiet sport." I suspect the relax-

ing part of the experience appealed to Duane. Similar to my older brother, Daran, Duane preferred to let fish "come to him."

I had occasion to catch several brown bullheads while the shadow of ALS hung over Duane. Knowing how much he liked these smooth-bodied, big-headed, whiskery fish, I delivered one to his home. Preparing bullhead catfish for eating is a challenge. You gut them, make a sharp incision behind the head, break the backbone and pull the head back towards the tail to peel the skin back; all the while avoiding their sharp spines. The red-meat carcass is rolled in a mixture of salt, pepper, flour, and corn meal, and fried in hot oil until crispy. Duane let his fish cool, picked it up with his fingers, and nibbled the tender meat as if it were a juicy chicken thigh.

I think of Grandpa Harry every time I toss flies for wild rainbow trout. I think of Dad on days I cast to surfperch off rugged rock outcrops on the Oregon Coast. Duane enters my thoughts whenever I catch a spiny bullhead catfish. It's unlikely this winter's ice fishing from a nearby reservoir will yield a bullhead. But if it does, I'll fry it up and gnaw on its tender meat like I would from a chicken bone. That way I will surely remember Duane more.

■ Dennis Dauble is a retired fishery scientist, outdoor writer, presenter and educator who lives in Richland, Washington. For more stories about fish and fishing in area waters, see [DennisDaubleBooks.com](http://DennisDaubleBooks.com).