

Teen surfer dies at water park

By MICHAEL KOHN
The Bulletin

BEND — The surfer who died after he was trapped underwater for several minutes at the Bend Whitewater Park on Saturday was 17-year-old Ben Murphy of Bend, according to a family statement posted on social media.

Murphy spent six minutes underwater at the standing wave as friends and other surfers flung themselves into the water in an attempt to free him from the underwater panels that make the wave.

Murphy was pulled from the water downstream, given CPR and rushed to St. Charles Bend, where he died, according to the statement posted on Facebook.

“I want to thank everyone for their prayers and support over the last two days. Knowing that we were covered in prayer gave us great peace and comfort as we navigated what no parent is equipped for,” according to the statement posted by the youth’s father, Patrick Murphy.

The Whitewater Park is manipulated in real time by adjusting 26 air bladders which are permanently affixed to the riverbed. The park, operated by Bend Park & Recreation District, has been closed to surfers since the accident.

In his post, Patrick Murphy said his son was pronounced dead by hospital staff after one hour of CPR and cardiac shock treatment. After a faint heartbeat was detected, Ben Murphy was moved to the intensive care unit for treatment.

“The St. Charles staff was more than amazing and worked to keep Ben comfortable and his vitals slowly improved for the first eight hours,” Patrick Murphy stated in the post. “He was



Brenna Visser/The Bulletin

Flowers and candles sit on the rocks and a bench at the Bend Whitewater Park, where 17-year-old Ben Murphy was trapped underwater Saturday, April 30, 2022. He was later pronounced dead at St. Charles Bend.

on oxygen, tons of medication and was sedated to keep him comfortable.”

Patrick Murphy said despite considerable effort by doctors to keep the his son alive, his son’s organs eventually started to fail and he was pronounced dead by St. Charles staff.

The park felt eerily still on Monday, aside from the intermittent chirps from birds and the white noise of the water. On the rocky steps leading to the wave sat bouquets of sunflowers, baby’s breath and carnations as a memorial. On a bench that sits on a strip of land in the middle of river, a note secured by a small rock, flapped in the wind.

Candles were delicately placed on top of some of the rocks close to shore.

Stetson Talley, a 21-year-old Bend resident, was one of the many surfers who tried to save Ben Murphy. Talley said he was at the front of the line when he saw Murphy fall and get his foot stuck in a gate that helps operate the wave.

He recalls everyone at the park panicking, trying to fig-

ure out how to respond. After a minute, Talley saw Murphy come back up to take a breath of air before going back down into the water.

“It was pretty obvious to me and everyone else there that he was unable to help himself,” said Talley.

At that point, other surfers began jumping in to try to help Murphy, he said. Talley, who has worked as a lifeguard for four years, said he jumped in six or seven times in an attempt to save Murphy. Many others did, too.

Video of the events showed surfers at one point trying to form a human link to walk and swim into the river to save him. Others dove in with their surfboards as a way to reach Murphy.

At one point, Talley recalled holding Murphy’s board and leash, which was still attached to Murphy’s leg.

Eventually the wave was shut off and Talley helped pull Murphy out of the river downstream so others could begin CPR.

“There was nothing we

could do and it was a helpless situation,” he said. “It was terrifying.”

Talley, who said he has been surfing on and off at the wave for the last three years, said he and other surfers he knows have also caught their feet in the crack between the gates that operate the wave. When those incidents occurred he was able to dislodge his foot in time before getting sucked under.

Talley said he doesn’t believe it is anyone’s fault and that this event could not have been foreseen, but said the park district should add more safety measures before the wave opens again.

Bend Police Department communications manager Sheila Miller said there is no evidence of a crime and the incident is not under investigation.

District spokesperson Julie Brown said safety features to prevent drownings have been “discussed in the past” and will be revisited as part of an immediate evaluation of the park’s bladder and gate system. Safety features could include an emergency shut-off and equipment such as rings and ropes, she said.

There were no river conditions on Saturday that would have heightened risk, according to a statement from the district.

The incident is the first fatality at the Bend Whitewater Park, which opened in 2015. At least six fatalities have been reported at standing wave features on other rivers in the U.S. and Canada in recent years, according to data compiled by Surf Anywhere, a firm that designs river waves.

Cubicle Surf, which makes river surfboards in Bend, is accepting gifts, flowers and cards on behalf of the Murphy family.

SHOOTING THE BREEZE Double the barrels and double the fun

Over and under or side by side, double-barreled guns are simply just fun.

One of my first experiences, mentioned here in an older column, involved a Stevens side-by-side 20 gauge and two grouse, taken each with a single round. On my first outing of shooting clay pigeons, the shotguns we had were a single-shot .410, which was missing the bead, and a well-used side-by-side 16 gauge. I shot well for a young first-timer and have enjoyed double guns ever since.

One of the most enjoyable shooting events you could ever engage in is cowboy action shooting. The necessary hardware typically consists of two sixguns, a lever-action repeater and a period-correct shotgun. Of course, you can use an 1897 Winchester pump-action but you’re limited to two shells to keep the playing field level, so you’d just as well go with a double-barreled shotgun!

Ringin’ steel is music to the ears no matter what you’re shooting, but doing so with a side-by-side double-barreled shotgun is especially ticklish. Don’t get so into it that you give the target both barrels simultaneously, however — that experience is not a tickle. Don’t ask me how I know.

In the gentlemanly sport of wingshooting, especially so among upland game bird hunters, the double-barreled shotgun is more and more frequently seen. Thanks to improvements in ammunition with bismuth and tungsten core shot, traditionally small-bore shotguns like the 20 and 28 gauge are more useful than ever. Even larger birds like turkeys are increasingly

brought down with these impressive loads.

Who, when conjuring images of Hemingway, Roosevelt or any of another score of celebrated African hunters,

could overlook the fine craftsmanship of the double rifles they carried? Especially in the application of hunting dangerous game, a fast-handling double rifle chambered in some ponderous Nitro

Express round offers two shots as quickly as one can pull the triggers.

I have even felt that such a gun chambered in something a bit less earth-shaking — like a .45-70, for example — could be just as useful in thick brush such as one might encounter in Western Oregon.

Even today, double rifles and combination guns are still very common in Europe. Many countries do not allow the luxury of owning multiple firearms we are afforded here in the land of the free, home of the brave. A combination gun could have two, three or even four barrels of various calibers and gauges to provide such a necessarily utilitarian firearm for our European brethren thusly restricted.

If your current collection remains bereft of some sort of double gun, I, as your friendly gun mentor, suggest you remedy that forthwith. While you could probably get by in life just fine without one, why rob yourself of the fun and enjoyment of carrying and, of course, shooting a double gun? They simply are that much fun!

Are you into double-barreled firearms? Write to us at shootingthebreeze@me.com and check us out on Facebook!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.



Dale Valade

Bark beetles expected to be busy this year

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SALEM — Drought last year means more bark beetle activity this year.

More tree mortalities are expected due to Western pine beetle, Douglas fir beetle and ips, or pine engraver beetle.

“It stems from a lot of our forests being overstocked to begin with, which leads to moisture stress among trees,” said Chris Schnepf, University of Idaho Extension forestry educator. “Drought certainly exacerbates that, and the beetles are just taking advantage of that.”

Many Douglas fir trees fell during the winter of 2020-2021, making easy pickings for beetles. Douglas fir beetles are also attacking standing groups of trees, Schnepf said.

Root diseases make trees more likely to fall in winter storms, Schnepf said. Fallen, large, green Douglas firs create the breeding ground for the beetles.

Pine engraver beetles tend to attack smaller trees. Roughly 90% of beetles breeding in forest slash, or debris, are pine engraver beetles, Schnepf said.

“Historically, we have had two generations per year in North Idaho,” he said. “In recent years, increasingly, we’re seeing three generations a year because of the longer growing season.”

All the beetles are native to the region.

“When conditions are right, their populations can explode and you start seeing more tree mortality,” Schnepf said.

He’s seeing the worst pine beetle activity on stands south of Coeur d’Alene. He expects more Douglas fir beetle activity in spring and summer throughout the Idaho panhandle.

Moisture can strengthen the trees against the beetles. Rain, cooler conditions and longer snow periods are positives this year, Schnepf said.

“But it depends — last year we had a really good snowpack in the winter, but then the faucet just got turned off in the first part of the summer,” he said. “We didn’t get any precip until fall.”

However, when beetle populations are high, the insect pests can attack forests even in relatively moist conditions, especially if trees are overstocked.

Schnepf recommends for-

est owners monitor their land to see if they are developing any problems. They should reduce density, favoring the best trees for a given site.

Video leads to arrest for animal abuse

By GARRETT ANDREWS
The Bulletin

SISTERS — A Sisters man accused of intentionally driving into an injured deer was caught after posting a video of it to Snapchat.

Jaden Harvey Wiles, 18, is charged in Deschutes County Circuit Court with first-degree animal abuse and failing to perform the duties of a driver, in addition to two wildlife violations for an incident that allegedly took place Feb. 2 in Sisters.

Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel said Wiles was caught after someone reported viewing a disturbing video filmed and posted by Wiles.

The clip in question reportedly shows Wiles driving on N. Locust Street as a deer limped in the road.

“Are you struggling?” he reportedly said. “Here let me help ... you look like you’re struggling. Let me help you out.”

Wiles then ran over the deer in the road and said, “You ain’t f-----g struggling anymore.”

He posted this video to Snapchat and shared it with a friend, Hummel said.

He was cited by the Oregon State Police and charged last week in Circuit Court.

A voicemail left for

Wiles was not returned. He is not currently represented by an attorney, according to

court records. He’s scheduled to be arraigned May 25.

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