The relatively easy hike to Strawberry Lake offers a spectacular introduction to the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

## CROWD PLEASER

## Strawberry Lake showcases the best of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness

By STEVEN MITCHELL Blue Mountain Eagle

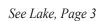
RAIRIE CITY — For those strapped for time, a quick hike to Strawberry Lake is a great way to take in the snow-capped peaks, alpine lakes and waterfalls that highlight the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

The mountain and nearby Strawberry Creek were named by homesteader Nathan Willis Fisk "because there were abundant wild strawberries."

The mountain was initially named "Strawberry Butte," but everyday use changed it to Strawberry Mountain, which now appears on official maps.

In 1984, the Oregon Wilderness Act more than doubled the original area of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness to its current total of 68,700 acres, according to the U.S. Forest Service

Strawberry Lake formed during the ice age, when massive landslides dammed the gorge. A thousand years ago a glacier filled the valley from both sides until the ice melted and the unsupported cliffs on both sides collapsed.





Bennett Hall/Blue Mountain Eagle A bridge crosses a small creek at the head of Strawberry Lake.

## **GETTING THERE**

To reach the Strawberry BasinTrail, take Highway 26 to Prairie City.Turn south onto South Main Street, crossing the John Day River and passing the Sumpter Valley Railway Depot and Dewitt Museum on the left.

Turn left on Southwest Bridge Street, and, after a short distance, turn right on South Bridge Street at a sign for Strawberry Campground, 11 miles away. Continue south on County Road 60, which turns to gravel after a few miles. The road is well-maintained for all but the last mile or so, when it becomes steeper and rougher. The road ends at Strawberry Camp, the trailhead for Strawberry Basin Trail. There is no parking fee, and no permits are required for hiking in the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

