

## SHOOTING THE BREEZE Don't play with fire

The other night my family built a fire to roast some hot dogs. As I stood there looking at the flames, I started to think of all the times I have spent huddled around a fire in some far-off place. Surely, harnessing fire to provide warmth, safety and work must rank as the greatest discovery of all time.

A fire is a wonderful thing in miserable weather. I have never had to spend an unexpected night in the woods, but I have come close. In college some buddies and I decided to pack in for elk, but there weren't enough horses to go around. That was OK with me, I'm not a fan, so I started hiking up the trail while they got the horses ready.

I figured they would catch me easily. It started to snow, then got dark and still no buddies. I built a fire under a tree for shelter and waited, and waited. They finally showed up around midnight. Turns out they weren't the master packers they thought they were, and ended up repacking the horses several times on the trail. A warm fire was awfully nice to have that day.

Last year my family hiked into Aldrich Ponds to do some fishing. It had been rainy all week, but my weather app promised me there would be no rain that day. Halfway there it started to drizzle. By the time we got to the ponds, it was really coming down. We huddled under a tree and built a fire to wait it out. I assured my family that we were having fun, but they weren't buying it. As soon as the rain let up, we headed home.

Those are just two examples of times I was happy I was able to get a



Rod Carpenter/Contributed Photo  
Waiting out the rain by the fire.

fire going to stay warm and wait out the weather. I never head out without at least two ways to start a fire in my gear. My personal favorites are a lighter and a box of wind/waterproof matches. I also carry some form of fire starter. With these, I have never been unsuccessful in getting

a fire going, no matter how bad the weather.

Personally, I don't like to rely on flint and steel or similar friction-type fire starters. They take some practice and skill to be successful. Typically, when I want a fire, I want it right now, and I'm usually cold, tired, and the wind is blowing.

Whatever form of fire starter you decide you like, I strongly recommend you make a habit of always having it with you when you venture into the woods. Life has a way of changing really fast.

What is your go-to fire starter? Let us know at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com.

Rod Carpenter is a husband, father, and a huntin' fool.



Rod Carpenter

## State OKs killing of Union wolves

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has authorized the killing of wolves in Union County's Balloon Tree Pack.

ODFW announced the lethal removal authorization Thursday, Sept. 6, after non-lethal measures failed to stop depredations. The department is allowing USDA Wildlife Services to take up to two wolves on private land pastures where the depredations occurred. The permission is valid until Oct. 15.

The pack is known to roam north of Elgin. In late 2019, OR63 dispersed from the Noregaard Pack and became a resident in the southern portion of the Wenaha Wildlife Management Unit. OR63

was documented with another wolf in early 2020. The breeding pair produced three pups in 2021 that survived to the end of the year, and the family group became known as the Balloon Tree Pack.

Currently, there are at least six wolves in the pack, two of which are juveniles born this year, according to ODFW. Two of the wolves in this pack currently have a working GPS collar.

The producer requested lethal removal of wolves after ODFW confirmed four depredation events on a private land grazing allotment in September, resulting in the death of four sheep. An additional depredation was confirmed in July resulting in three dead goats belonging to a different livestock owner and private land pasture.

"That level of depredation meets the definition of chronic livestock depredation under Wolf Plan Rules (minimum of two confirmed depredations in nine months)," according to the fish and wildlife department, which can authorize the killing of wolves in chronic depredation situations when there is significant continued risk to livestock present in the area and nonlethal preventative measures were used prior to depredations.

The state said the producer uses human presence and livestock protection dogs to protect his sheep and has employed extra herders, moved camps more frequently to move away from where wolves had depredated previously, and also used foxlights, airhorns and gunshots in an attempt to scare wolves away.

## Sampling central Oregon's trout waters

By DENNIS DAUBLE

Dawn breaks with dew heavy on new-mown grass. I sit on the deck of a rental condo at Eagle Crest Resort and stare at the Deschutes River while our 14-year-old corgi licks my breakfast plate clean of crumbs. A sky filled with smoky haze turns the sunrise into a glowing orange ball.

An advertisement headlining a tourist rag on the breakfast table reads, "What is a Harmonic Egg?" Choosing not to spend the day in an egg-shaped chamber that uses the power of sound, light, and sacred geometry to "realign your energies," I ponder choices. For me, wellness is best achieved with a fly rod in hand.

Just last year I fished the nearby Metolius, a crystal-clear stream gushing a constant 50,000 gallons a minute from two springs that emerge at the base of Black Butte. A well-trodden trail the width of a county road, stately cabins, and public campgrounds run parallel to much of its forested banks. Securing a place to cast a fly between other eager anglers is not easy, but I managed to land a nice trout on a No. 16 Purple Haze after trying a dozen patterns. If nothing else the day taught that purchasing a proven pattern from a local fly shop increases your chances of success.

However, been there, done that. What other choices exist in this Central Oregon trout mecca?

It's less than an hour down the road to Prineville. The once bustling mill town where our daughter was born almost 50 years to the day. (My, how time flies!) At the time, I worked as a seasonal fish checker for

the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Spare hours were spent drifting a Tied-Down Caddis below a single split shot when the sun was high, switching to a PED when canyon walls shaded deep runs. Nostalgia calls me back to wet a line, but hot weather, drought, and low flow threatens a trout population that deserves a break.

That leaves the Deschutes River, "le Riviere des Chutes." The lower 100 miles attracts the most anglers, particularly during the summer salmon fly hatch. Half a dozen float trips taught me to fish early, fish late, and save the midday for napping. Time being of the essence, I don my fly vest, grab a 5-weight rod and hike down an engineered trail to the river. The sharp, resinous scent of juniper penetrates my nostrils. A gray-haired woman with a Doberman on leash and a bearded man wearing polyester running tights nod polite hellos as they pass. The golden bloom of rabbitbrush lends a festive look to an otherwise subdued, high desert landscape. The shadow of a turkey vulture soaring high over the narrow canyon passes over me. Hopefully, not an omen. It's peaceful in the narrow canyon with only the sound of rushing water and the thought of rising trout to consider.

Forcing my way through a snarl of wild rose, red osier dogwood, and brush willow, I wade out to where swift current swirls around a volcanic boulder the size of a pool table. Ten minutes later a pan-size rainbow trout straightens the curl in my fly line. A No. 10 Golden Stimulator proves to be the ticket.

Navigating the tricky shoreline requires grabbing onto overhanging branches and

avoiding drop-offs in the stream bottom. Several missed strikes later, I tie on the same tiny purple fly that fooled a Metolius River trout and validate the experience with a foot-long native "redside" trout.

A flock of two-striped grasshoppers up to 2 inches long struggle to avoid me in their bed of reed canary grass. I toss one into slow-moving transition water and watch it float out of sight with nary the sign of a hungry trout. Later that evening, at my book signing in nearby Sisters, a local flycaster shares, "Not many people fish that part of the Deschutes, but attractor patterns generally work well."

The scenic route home follows Ochoco Creek to its headwaters, past meadows lush with field grass, and winds over three mountain passes. A circus-like gathering of Cycle Oregon bikers greets us at Mitchell, many wearing "Painted Hills" T-shirts.

Three bikers taking a roadside break inform they are halfway through a testing 70-mile loop. "Too much first gear pedaling on steep hills for me," I tell them. We stop for lunch at Service Creek where the John Day River meanders below muffin-shaped hills and basalt-rimmed buttes. Long languid pools and ankle-deep riffles are in evidence following the 2019 flood. I am tempted to cast a fly, but don't string up my rod because the native rainbow trout population has been replaced with invasive smallmouth bass.

It's been a good road trip, but familiar Blue Mountain waters and the October cadidly hatch are now on my mind.

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).



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