

Who are you calling an Idaho Redneck?

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

The comic Jeff Foxworthy has built his career around the redneck schtick.

As in, "you know you're a redneck if ..." and fill in the blank.

Foxworthy has gone to the next level. You know you're an Idahoan - he says - "if the driving is better in winter because the potholes are filled with snow. ..."

But what do you get when combine the two?

Earlier this week, Idaho political historian Randy Stapilus flagged the latest derivative of the trend. Roadsnacks.net came up with a list of Idaho's most redneck towns. Ranked in order, they are:

- Salmon.
- Burley.
- St. Maries.
- Ponderay.
- Jerome.
- Kamiah.
- Homedale.
- Victor.
- Challis.
- Weiser.

Elsewhere throughout north central Idaho, Orofino comes in at 15.

Grangeville is No. 35. Plummer is 39th. Genesee is 60th.

Now, let's stipulate a few of those towns belong on that list.

Salmon? Probably.

Kamiah? Maybe.

Challis? Without question.

But Jerome? How does a town growing with the Magic Valley's dairy industry - which supports one of the state's most diverse populations - get labeled redneck?

Victor? It's nestled in Idaho's Teton County, which is practically a Democratic enclave.

Homedale? It's more like a bedroom community for Nampa-Caldwell.

Consider where other communities rank.

Sun Valley is No. 11.

Ketchum is right behind at No. 12.

Redneck? The People's Republic of Blaine County?

When did this bastion of Democratic voters who motor around in their Mercedes and SUVs when they're not occupied biking up to Galena Summit - become overrun with rednecks?

Tied at No. 64 are the communities of McCall and Ammon.

McCall has a curling team.

Ammon only reluctantly opened a state liquor store.

How can they be tied?

Finally, look at what towns are missing.

Where's Bruneau or Grandview?

How can you compile a list of Idaho rednecks without considering Riggins, Cottonwood, Culdesac, Elk River or Kooskia?

What are we?

Chopped liver?

The answer, of course, is Roadsnacks' use of redneck as a pejorative. Citing the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it conjures up rednecks as white people living in small towns or the country - often in the South - who hold working-class jobs, are considered uneducated and whose opinions and attitudes offend others.

"Plus," the website offers, "we thought why not add in a few stereotypes. Cause, you know, rednecks like to hunt, fish, drink, smoke and shoot things. And shop at Walmart."

Aha! The perfect matrix. Don't delve into telltale signs such as pickup truck ownership or the use of chewing tobacco,

Roadsnacks goes after dismal high school graduation rates. It seeks out who has lots of mobile home parks. The more bars, the better. Ditto for stores that sell tobacco and fishing tackle. It counts up the number of guns and ammunition per city.

Finally, the site inventories the number of Walmarts, bass pro shops and dollar stores within the vicinity.

Voila.

Translated into Redneckese, it means "Look, ya'll."

So Salmon has "almost more bars per capita than anywhere else in the state. Nothing's more redneck than sitting around the bar all afternoon, talking about when rut's gonna hit."

St. Maries has "more trailer, mobile home and RV parks ... than anywhere else. Rednecks love nothing more than sitting out by the fire, plugging rounds into the bug zapper."

People in Kamiah "figured goin' to class was a bore, too. But don't make fun of their education. See, they have some gun stores in the area, and you can be sure they know how to use them."

Clever, huh?

Rural Idaho is suffering with stagnant economies and underfunded schools. Nothing like kicking people when they're down, right?

On the other hand, insular Idaho isn't shy about making sweeping generalizations about outsiders, strangers or people holding contrarian views. Talk about tasting your own bitter medicine.

Just the same, what do you call a person who belittles people he knows nothing about?

Maybe Foxworthy can come up with a catchy name for that, too. - M.T.