

EXPLORERS: Kids enjoy riding, nature observation and art

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not much incline, with many observation — aka resting — points.

Heather provides journals for the participants to draw in and make observations and trail maps. Every other week the group rides the trails and wildlife habitat to Suttle Lake to cool off, swim, and do art. The other weeks they return to Camp Sherman in the afternoons to work on art projects with treasures found from nature, and from scraps found on their explorations.

Last week, the ecobikers went through the forest to Suttle Lake from the north entrance of the Deschutes Land Trust's Metolius Preserve.

"It was a fresh summer morning and the cool breeze was a huge relief to the previous two weeks' blazing sunshine. On this particular morning I made a couple extra stops and bought some orange juices for the kids and even some donuts! I'm a bit against donuts, so this was a rare moment for me!" Walden reported.

"I drove up to our end destination at Suttle Lake and dropped off our art supplies, then headed to Jack Lake Road that we would cross midway. I pulled off the road, grabbed my little ice cooler, and hiked up the trail to a spot to hide the cooler behind some bushes, just off the trail.

I got back into my car and drove down to the entrance of the (Deschutes Land Trust's) Metolius Preserve.

"I had picked up a bike that I found on Craigslist for only \$50. A few of the new kids had been riding with us on single-speed BMX bikes! And although our group is more about exploring our ecology etc., we do like to have fun while riding our bikes, too!"

The Central Oregon mountain-biking community is large, and kids out-grow bikes and gear quickly, so Walden has an easy time finding equipment for her charges.

On the Suttle Lake trip, she provided a safety briefing.

"As the kids got on their bikes and ready to go, we decided to wait another 15 minutes as a couple kids had not arrived and we usually depart at 10 a.m. for our ride," Walden said. "So I sat on the tailgate of my truck and noticed the current article in the issue of *The Nugget*,

about the bears and cougars. So, we spent the 15 minutes reading the article to continue that conversation about safety and I even had the kids do a sample shout real loud and raise their arms up in the air and use their bikes as shields.

"We made a quick call to find out that our missing companions were not going to make it today. So, off we went on the trail. I assigned the lead to one of the kids returning from last year, and we quickly reviewed what it meant to be the leader. The leader makes sure the caboose isn't too far behind, and stops to wait if necessary. The leader might shout out an upcoming obstacle like a log or rock etc. The leader keeps a steady pace, not too fast. The leader stops at every junction to make sure we are all on the same path. We always talk about why we need to stay together as a group and look out for one another. The group rides single file and we all pair up and have a partner. It was still a beautiful

morning, the sun wasn't too hot, and it felt good to be in the shade of the trees."

The kids caught crayfish in the creek and observed bees.

"We rode down to the lake and wow, the kids were sweaty and ready to cool off and swim in the lake!" Walden said. "We do lake days every other week. What better way to spend your summer, biking and swimming in the lake with your friends.

"As we had lunch, I read them a book, I found recently called 'Winnie the Pooh on Problem Solving.' It's a fun book and actually easy for kids to follow. One of the kids asked, when are we going to do art today? Just as I was about to look at my clock, our art director Aleshia showed up! So, she went to set up our art supplies and I started guiding kids to dry off and pack up their gear.

"We made boats out of

natural items and ... we are going to race our boats in the creek in Camp Sherman. The kids gathered sticks and logs from the forest and we drilled holes to put the sticks into the logs. Tied twine and reeds around the sticks to hold it all together. They made some amazing creations, and were all excited for next week to race them in the creek."

Walden takes great pleasure in her work.

"I enjoy every minute with the kids," she said. "I hope that this program will grow for our community! I'm simply the founder of the program, and in high hopes that others like me would come and participate in donating time to the program. So, if you're a biker and enjoy a slow-pace ride with kids, or you're into exploring nature, or enjoy art, or especially art from scraps, then come join the fun!"

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EAST PORTAL: Area has seen substantial vandalism

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Sgt. Vander Kamp reports that law enforcement presence has reduced the calls for service. That may be a positive development, but it didn't do anything to fix the mess already made.

On Tuesday, July 31, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Deputies and Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District Firefighters came together and collected trash from the kiosk shelter with soap, brushes, and a fire hose.

"The site is open to the public and we encourage the public to report any future suspicious activities," Sgt. Vander Kamp said.

The sheriff's office is working with the USFS Sisters Ranger District to improve the security, with improved lighting and increased patrols.



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