

Bicycle thefts continue to be big problem on campus

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Contributor

With bicycles an ever-popular means of transportation for University students, bike thefts on campus are always a problem. And that problem is getting worse.

During the 1990-91 school year, the number of stolen bikes soared up 26 percent, from 109 bikes in 1989-1990 to last year's 148. Few of those bikes are ever recovered. From January to June this year, though Campus Security caught six people in the act of stealing a bike, only two out of all the stolen bikes were recovered.

According to the Office of Public Safety, there are anywhere from 5,500 to 7,500 bikes on campus with \$300 being the average value.

"The bike theft situation is not looking good," admitted Carey Drayton, OPS director. "Though it may be a common problem faced by other campuses in this country, I think it is particularly acute here because of the number of bikes at the University and the fact that many students aren't purchasing the more theft-proof U-locks."

The make and quality of a bike can be the motivating factors for a thief to strike. Mountain bikes are a prime target, more so than the more ordinary 10-speed or commuter bikes, but most thefts occur with bikes that present themselves as easy opportunities; especially when the owners don't bother to secure them well.

"There are many students out there who think that if they beat up their bikes and make them look real ugly, they won't get stolen even if they're not locked up," said Drayton. "Sometimes this strategy works, sometimes it doesn't. It's no guarantee."

To step up accommodations for the throngs of bikes on campus, OPS has added 53 more bike racks around the University, and a pilot project which began last spring saw more than 10 bike lockers installed next to Oregon Hall as an added security measure. Bikes can be secured and placed in the locker for double protection.

Unfortunately, the lockers have not proved to be very popular, said Drayton. Most students tend to ride from class to class and don't like to lock their bikes in one inconvenient place and spend the day walk-

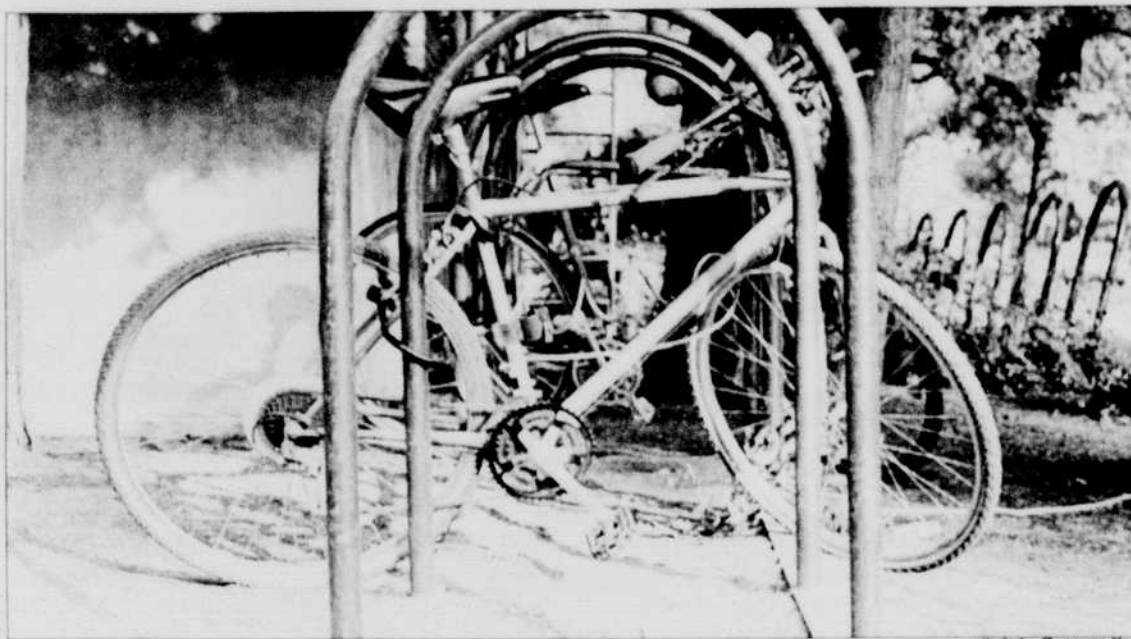


Photo by Cameron Yee

Locking your bike isn't a guarantee that it won't be stolen, but with campus bike theft on the rise, it's the best precaution you can take. To meet the needs of bike riders, OPS added 53 more bike racks to the University this year.

ing around.

However, Curt Jensen, co-owner of Second Nature Bicycles, a bike specialist store on E. 13th Ave., vouches for bike lockers. "It doesn't take up much space, at the same time it weatherproofs your bike, but more importantly a sealed box like a locker makes it hard for a thief to tell if it's holding a bike or not."

At \$25 a year for students and \$50 for faculty and staff, people can rent the lockers from OPS.

But at a much lower cost, a

simple investment in a good lock can go a long way in deterring theft, said Drayton. Just securing a bike with a cable or a chain lock is not good enough when it can be cut or frozen to break it, and all within a few seconds.

A high-level u-shaped lock of hardened steel attaching the bike frame to a sturdy, immovable object (one that makes it difficult for the bike to be lifted and slipped through), plus a cable around the seat post and wheels are the safest bets, Jensen said.

Merely removing a bike part like the wheels or seat, might prevent a bike from being ridden away, but if it's not properly secured, it still doesn't mean that the bike can't be stolen, Jensen said, adding that missing parts can be easily replaced.

U-shaped locks come in a variety of models ranging in price from \$21 to \$60 depending on the kind of security features they include.

To encourage and reward people for taking the time and effort to secure their bikes, OPS offers those who register their

bikes with them a type of u-shaped lock that comes with \$1,000 theft insurance. On top of that, the Office also offers what they call a "sleeve" to registered owners. It sits on the bottom bar of the bike and slides over the top bar, acting as a reinforcement to the u-shaped locks, making breakage or theft all the more difficult.

Aside from a good lock, a little common sense on the part of bike owners can significantly lessen the risk of theft.

A bike parked in a well-lit and heavily trafficked area reduce its chance of being stolen, Drayton said.

The Eugene Police Department recommends writing down the serial number, make and model of your bike to ensure easy identification.

"It helps even more if you have your driver's license number engraved on your bike," suggested Tim Birr, EPD public information officer. On campus, OPS frequently patrols the area to look out for anyone loitering around bikes.

But that alone won't work if the bike owners themselves don't bother about protecting their bikes.

"Even if it's just for a brief stop at the convenience store or the University Bookstore, it's never too much of a hassle to see that your bike is safe and secured," said Birr. "Theft can occur anywhere and at anytime the opportunity presents itself."

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