

OP News And Views

Mountain Biking in the Big Sky

Five intrepid cyclist make their way through Montana's cowboy country on metal horses...

On a cool, sunny July morning UO student Josh Knapp and I packed my car for an OP mountain bike trip to Montana. I was thrilled. We arrived in Missoula, 10 hours later and joined forces with three more cyclists: Julie Huck, Jenn Carey, and Karen "I can't stop riding my bike" Lake.

When we arrived in Missoula, it was in its most glorious phase- still green from spring rains, with a warm evening breeze, and the hills around the town were glowing with the setting sun's golden rays. As we sat down for dinner, we reviewed our route following Adventure Cycling Association's Great Divide Mountain Bike Route maps from Dillon to West Yellowstone, Montana. If all went well, four campsites and some 160 riding miles later we'd arrive at the country's oldest national park: Yellowstone.

The next day we packed the van and headed down the road toward our cycling starting point at Bannack State Park. A swarm of mosquitos greeted us at the campsite so we quickly set up our tents and biked to the ghost town that made Bannack such an attractive starting point for our trip. As the site of the Montana Territory's first major gold strike in 1862, Bannack was once home to over 3,000 people.

The well preserved remnants of some 60 buildings hemmed by sturdy boardwalks and sage brush trimmings greeted us. We leaned our metal horses up at the hitching rails and set off to explore the hotels, schools, homes, churches, and jails as the setting sun melted slowly into the surrounding hills. As darkness enveloped the deserted town we made our way back to camp, jumped swiftly into our tents, and drifted off to sleep with the sound of millions of mosquitos humming in the air.

The next morning we were out early. The weather was already warm and dry, but at 7,000 feet there was still a nice cool breeze. Riding along a seldom used ranch road, we encountered just five trucks all day. I soon had my rhythm on the bike and my mind began to drift as I gazed out over the Lupine laden hillsides and lush marsh lands. About 15 miles and 300 head of cattle later, we spotted the first shade of the entire day and stopped for lunch. The day's ride typified the entire route: sun, cows, wildflowers,

quiet-wide open roads, wildlife, and big sky. Again and again, the quiet, swift nature of cycling granted us the luxury of sneaking up on wildlife; snakes, falcons, foxes, rabbits, and eagles became common but thrilling sights. Cruising along quiet waterways we chased Herons up stream, listened to the prehistoric call of Sandhill Cranes, glimpsed beaver swimming in cool, dark waters and found moose tracks along the bank of a lazy stream. By the time we arrived at Red Rock Lake National Wildlife Refuge

we had seen hundreds of birds and other wildlife and were then treated to clear views of the graceful Trumpeter Swan. After dinner we watched for hours as swans, pelicans, eagles, and hawks fished in the glassy lake.

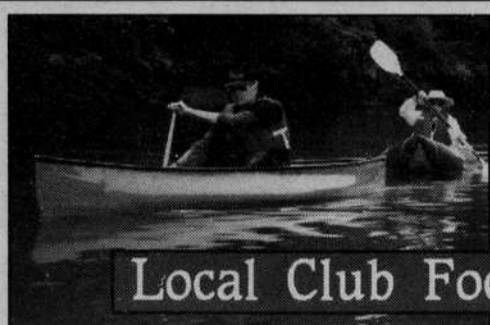
Our last day of riding was different; instead of the wide open country, we now entered dense timber and snaked our way through narrow double track trails. The thrill of the single-track invigorated us and we found ourselves laughing and yipping like kids. Soon afterward we were laughing again as we watched Yellowstone National Park's famous "Old Faithful" geyser erupt into the air. It was a wonderful finish to a magical trip through the Big Sky.



Waldo Lake Update

On August 4th, the Forest Service issued an Environmental Assessment (EA) for managing recreation use on Waldo Lake. Many Waldo Lake enthusiasts were pleased to find that the agency's preferred alternative is based directly on the recommendations of a committee of Forest Service employees and Waldo Lake users. The committee worked for over a year to craft recommendations based on seven Waldo Basin concerns. Alternative III, the preferred alternative, would align the lake surface classification with the surrounding lakeshore, limit camping site expansion and degradation, and restrict additional special use permits during high use seasons. The plan would also maintain snowmobile restrictions, formalize the current no fish stocking policy, maintain the current condition of the Charlton tie-in road, and most importantly, phase out the use of gas motors on the lake. This alternative was designed by the committee to take into account the various recreational users and the delicate ecology of Waldo Lake. The ban on gas engines is the most contentious of the proposed restrictions and lots of public input is expected during the 30-day comment period. The public comment period on the proposed EA ran until September 4th, during which both proponents and opponents of the preferred alternative had a chance to share their concerns. After the public input period, the Forest Service will publish its final decision.

If you are interested in more information on the Waldo Lake management alternatives and Forest Service decision, please contact the Outdoor Program at 541-346-4365 or visit the Outdoor Program office in the basement of the EMU. Your questions and input are welcome and appreciated.



Local Club Focus

The Cascade Canoe Club (CCC) in Eugene is a blessing for paddlers looking for trips and paddling partners. The CCC provides opportunities for its members to explore both flat water and whitewater in local to expedition length trips. Founded in 1994, the group includes beginner to expert paddlers in canoes, kayaks or rafts. The club schedule includes at least, one flat water and one whitewater trip every month. Weekend trip destinations have included Siltcoos Lake, Hosmer Lake and the Klamath and North Umpqua Rivers. The trips are shared excursions without a guide but a trip coordinator shares logistical information with the group and facilitates paddling partners. CCC meetings are the first Tuesday of each month at various boating sites in the summer and at the Episcopalian Church of the Resurrection in the winter. Contact the CCC at 345-5115 or check out the great CCC website at www.efn.org/~canoe/ for upcoming events, water levels, membership information and other helpful links.

Cascade Canoe Club

The Cascade Canoe Club (CCC) in Eugene

Oregon Beach Clean-Up

Join the Outdoor Program for one of our favorite environmental projects! This event, organized by SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism) is an amazing volunteer effort that removes hundreds of bags of trash from our beautiful coast line. Sign-up on the trip sheet in the O.P. Estimated cost: \$5.

Saturday, October 6, 2001