



Bend's Emily Keddie makes her way along the skin track up Mount Bachelor as part of the Virtual VertFest earlier this month.

## Vertfest

Continued from B1

Like Wicks, Keddie also logged most of her vertical feet at Bachelor, but also ventured to Vista Butte and Tumalo Mountain. Backcountry skiing is at the heart of the event, and both Wicks and Keddie are avid backcountry skiers who love venturing out into the Central Oregon Cascades to earn their turns.

Wicks said he enjoys summitting and skiing vaunted Cascade volcanoes such as Broken Top, Mount Jefferson, Mount Thielsen and Mount McLoughlin, especially in the spring when the snowpack is typically more stable.

"In the springtime, that's when you can really go exploring, getting up in the big mountains and high alpine, where in the winter it's super stormy or super dangerous avalanche conditions," Wicks said. "In spring you can do massive tours. Spring is my favorite time to go touring."

Wicks said he would have preferred to log all his vertical feet for the VertFest in the backcountry, but Bachelor made it much more convenient, as the resort has avalanche controls and a set skin track.

"I didn't have to worry about avalanche hazard or anything skiing at the mountain, so that was pretty sweet," Wicks said. "It was very popular. A lot of people were out there doing it. For me it was just a personal challenge. I really like backcountry skiing and touring. Coming from a cycling background, just being able to go out in the woods and explore and travel around is really appealing to me."



Submitted photos

Bend's Barry Wicks enjoys skiing some backcountry turns on Broken Top recently.

its website as a way of informing backcountry enthusiasts of snow conditions and avalanche risks.

Wicks, whose father was a ski patroller at Timberline, grew up skiing at Mount Hood.

"If you look at the ski industry, backcountry skiing is the fastest-growing segment," Wicks said. "There's huge numbers, this year especially with the pandemic. Backcountry is really having a renaissance moment, and terrain near Bend is just so accessible. There's so much cool skiing you can get to, if you're willing to put in that effort and that physical exertion, there's just sort of endless things to explore."

Keddie moved to Bend 3.5 years ago from Lake Placid, New York. She learned to ski just six years ago and had her first backcountry experience on Whiteface Mountain.

She said she plans to climb and ski Mount Hood, Mount Adams and Mount St. Helens this spring, and she is also training for several ultramar-

athons this coming spring, summer and fall, including the Moab (Utah) 240-Mile Endurance Run in October. Backcountry touring is actually an effective way to train for ultra-running events, Keddie noted.

"Lots of miles, lots of vert and no injuries," Keddie said. "Little impact on the joints, and a great way to build strength in my legs."

Wicks, meanwhile, also plans to continue to enjoy the backcountry with friends.

"The aspect I like about the touring is it's not really about the skiing," Wicks said. "That's kind of a misconception about backcountry skiing. When you're touring you don't actually ski that much. It's a lot of walking around the woods and a little bit of skiing. If you're really into skiing, I don't know if it's best. But if you're just into being outside and going for a long walk with your friends and having really good snacks out in the woods, it's a really great thing to do."

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### Columbia Park access closure

As of July 22, Deschutes River access is closed due to safety concerns and to prevent further erosion to the river bank. The access point will be closed until further notice. For more information visit [bendparksandrec.org](http://bendparksandrec.org)

### Fire restrictions

Fire danger is currently listed as Moderate in the Deschutes National Forest. Fire danger is listed as Low in the Ochoco and Willamette National Forests.

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