

Sweetwater Preserve trails are ... sweet!

Loops in Tucson system live up to their names

It was March, so we must have been in Arizona, to loosely paraphrase an adage I have used a lot. For the past 20-plus years, Kathy and I have pointed our vehicle south past the Four Corners, over the Mogollon Rim and into the Sonoran Desert as winter begins its slow retreat from western Colorado. Loaded down with a trailer full of gear and provisions, we seek out the warmer climes of southern Arizona.



Outdoors

By Bill Harris

hazards. Another adage comes to mind – everything in the desert either stings, bites or pokes. Saguaro cactus and

cholla head the list of offenders.

Another great trail system not far from the Tucson Mountain Park is the Sweetwater Preserve open space area in the north-

west section of Tucson. I had heard about the Sweetwater Trails from some friends who live in the Tucson. One of those friends is Mark Flint.

If you remember my Arizona article from two years ago, I talked about Mark's trail efforts with the Pima County Parks Department. Well, he's still at it, only part time now. I gave him a call to get all the latest trail news, and he was going to be out on a new Sweetwater trail the next morning.

Bright and early the next morning I showed up at the Sweetwater trail head. Trail head parking is spacious, as the trails are open to equestrian users as well as hikers, bikers and runners. I headed out on the trails, following Mark's directions. The trails were well-marked at each intersection.

Right off, I recognized that Mark had something to do with the trail layout. He has a wonderful knack for following



Not far from Tucson Mountain Park is a system of trails in the Sweetwater Preserve open space area. (Courtesy photo)

contours, using the existing terrain to create a fun flow to the ride. That sort of layout incorporates frequent grade reversals, which helps reduce trail erosion. I rode out on the trail for several miles, looking for Mark. I soon reached a newly constructed section of trail, and Mark was just ahead with a crew putting the finishing touches on the new trail.

We exchanged hardy greetings and talked about the new trail that I was riding. According to Mark, the new trail was being built on a parcel of several hundred acres donated by Linda Ronstadt. She was one of the top female rock singers from the 1970s and had a hit song named

If You Go

Interstate 10, Exit 252. Drive west on El Camino del Cerro, turn left on Tortolita Road. The road ends at the trail head. A map of the Sweetwater Preserve trails is available online. Search Pima County Trail Maps. Click on Recreation, then on "list of parks by location". Scroll down to Sweetwater Preserve, then click to download a trail map. The summertime heat of the Sonoran desert makes riding downright dangerous, but riding the rest of the year is good, depending on the weather, of course.

"Desperado". What better way to recognize her donation then by naming the trail after the song.

Mark had to get back to work with his trail crew,

and I wanted to continue my ride, so we bid each other farewell. I backtracked on Desperado to the trail head, then rode out on the Roller Coaster Trail. The route consisted of a series of woops, but it didn't live up to its name. It soon connected with the Saguaro Vista Trail. Now, that trail lived up to its name. It tightly wound through a thick forest of saguaro cactus as it climbed toward the mountains to the west. The trail surface was rockier than Desperado.

At the intersection with the Sun Circle Loop, I took a breather. A trio of young ladies pulled up and we started to chat. I commented on the nice riding and they enthusiastically

agreed. I told them I was from Montrose, and one of them said she loves Montrose and had a friend who lived here. They agreed to let me take a few photos of them riding for inclusion in this article.

I finished the ride by connecting Lost Arrow (rocky), The Spine (also rocky) and Wildflower Ridge. The loop was certainly more challenging than Desperado, but still a very nice ride – sweet might be the right description, but expect nothing less from the trails of Sweetwater Preserve.

Bill Harris is the author of 'Bicycling the Uncompahgre Plateau'. He has traveled the backcountry of the Colorado Plateau since 1976.

Bug-out bag aids survival in disaster

For a fair amount of my life, I lived in the Florida Keys. During my tenure there we learned all about having to evacuate on a moments notice. Hurricanes were regular visitors in the summer and early fall. They have the ability to destroy just about everything in their path with floods and very high-sustained winds. It was the responsibility of everyone to keep a kit handy, that they could grab in the event of a mandatory evacuation. Immediately after Hurricane

Andrew, my family was blocked from returning home for several weeks. There was not an available motel room for a 500-mile radius. No electricity was working, so items like food or gasoline were unavailable. It is during a time like this that urban survival skills are necessary. Having a cache of supplies is essential also.

In Colorado we have the potential for disasters. Though we likely will not see hurricanes, we could have earthquakes or wildfires. Each could cause destruction and evacuations. There also is the potential for problems that could cause you to "shelter in place," such as blizzards or pandemics like widespread flu.

During a disaster, the first responders will be responding to the actual emergency and helping those in the most serious need. This will include entrapment and medical victims. By having yourself and family properly prepared, you can play a big part assisting responders by taking care of your own family, friends and neighbors. The 72-hour kit comes into play here.

You should have an emergency kit prepared to take care of you and your family. We call this the bug-out bag. This kit will contain the necessary



Keeping supplies at hand, both in your bug-out bag and around the home, is a great idea. You can start by adding a few things each time you go to the grocery store. (Courtesy photo by Pete Kowalski)

supplies to sustain life for you for 72 hours and can be grabbed very easily if you have to evacuate for a fire or flood. It should be easily carried and placed in a designated place in the event you have to leave your home very quickly. Be certain that all members of the household know exactly where the kit is. The container can be a tote, duffel bag, backpack or any similar item. Having one that protects the contents from the elements and is durable is advisable.

It is wise to keep a bug out bag in your vehicle in the event you cannot get back home. You might be at work when a disaster strikes and it may not be safe to return home. Having the ready kit in your vehicle would help. Many people who live a long way from their workplace might consider a kit kept at work. Planning ahead is the key here.

On the home front you should be prepared to shelter in place. Something like a blizzard or pandemic could cause you to not be able to leave your home. Consider storing extra food items, paper goods, drinking water and necessary medications at home. Foods that are canned or dehydrated, survival foods, are best in the event power is lost. These types of foods can also include a selection of MREs, or Meals Ready to Eat. These are the foods that our soldiers eat while in the field. While they may not be gourmet, they certainly are enough to sustain life.

Here is a list to get you started on your Bug Out Bag. You may want to customize it to your own families needs.

- Water: allow a gallon per person a day.
- Food, non-perishable – high-protein foods such as energy bars, MREs

or items that require no cooking or refrigeration.

- Flashlight, with extra batteries.
- First-aid kit, which includes prescription medicines.
- Cellphone and portable radio.
- Basic tools such as screwdrivers, pliers, wrench, hammer, knife, tarp, garbage bags etc.
- Extra change of clothes and some warm clothes for everyone.
- Personal items such as eyeglasses, contact lenses, important papers, insurance information, passport.
- Sanitary items such as toilet paper, feminine hygiene supplies, soap, etc.
- Money and credit cards.
- Contact information, including numbers and email addresses of family members.
- Special items such as infant formula, toys, needed items for kids and pets.

Your family and friends should have a prearranged meeting place in case everyone is not in the same place when a disaster strikes. Have the action plan in place and be certain everyone understands it.

In a future column, we will discuss a plan for livestock and your pets. More information can be found at a website: readycolorado.com

Hopefully, we will never need to use a bug-out bag, but being prepared could make a disaster easier to handle, and being able to care for you and yours is an important step. Until next time, see you on the trail.

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State parks opening facilities for season

Crawford, Sweitzer Lake slated for opening April 6

Crawford State Park and Sweitzer Lake State Park will open for business for the summer season on April 6, when both ramps at both locations will open.

Camping facilities at Crawford opened Wednesday.

Crawford State Park and Sweitzer Lake State Park open for business for the summer season on April 6 when the boat ramps at both parks will open.

Boaters are reminded that they must have their boats inspected for aquatic nuisance species before entering the water. Inspection stations at both parks are open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day until fall.

Hours for inspections will be extended from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Boats should arrive at the inspection stations clean, drained and dry. Make sure mud and dirt is removed from all parts of the boat, the engine and trailer. The inspection process will go faster for those with clean boats.

Boats can be launched without an inspection, so long as the owners can present a receipt and a seal that proves the boat was inspected at a lake or reservoir that is not suspected of containing nuisance species.

Boaters are reminded that properly fitting life jackets must be on board for everyone who will be on the boat. All children 13 and younger must wear life jackets at all times, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife strongly recommends that all passengers in a boat wear a life jacket at all times.

Life jacket regulations apply to all watercraft, including paddle boards, sail boats, kayaks and windsurfers.

All boats also must carry a noise-producing device such as a horn or a whistle.

Boaters should also be sure to update their watercraft registration.

Crawford State Park is located just south of the town of Crawford on Colorado Highway 92. Sweitzer Lake State Park is located just south of Delta on U.S. Highway 50.

For more information about the parks, call (970) 921-5721.

For more information about Colorado's state parks, go to: <http://cpw.state.co.us>.