

# MINNMB

MINNESOTA'S BIKE RAG

A GLIMPSE INTO  
DULUTH'S BIKE  
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# 'Bike cave' promotes bike use

Duluth News Tribune

By Janna Goerd

By day, Greg Schultz works at the Dorothy Day Loaves and Fishes House in Duluth.

But at night, he retires to the bike cave.

OK, scratch that. Schultz retires to the bike cave whenever he wants, not just in the evenings. Because it's from this small, cool, basement room that Schultz hopes to spark a surge in Duluth's bicycle culture.

"You're so isolated in a car," said Schultz, 21, partly explaining why he prefers two-wheeled transportation. There are others, too: good exercise, good for the planet, fewer parking problems, being more engaged with the community.

All these reasons together are why Schultz and a group of friends have operated a bicycle cooperative out of this basement workshop for the past year or so. The group rescues abandoned bikes, fixes them and sells or gives them away to those in need. Eugene Wearing of Superior received one of those bikes and, though he also owns a car, he often turns back to the bicycle.

"When I'm in a car, I'm closed off from the outside," Wearing said. "But on a bike, I'm connected to the outside world; I can smile at people, be more spontaneous."

Wearing sometimes rides from Superior to Duluth and has been known to take the co-op's unicycle for a spin.

Duluth is slowly growing more bicycle-friendly, said Dennis Sauve, who has co-owned Twin Ports Cyclery since 1975.

Acceptance of bicyclers along city streets "has improved dramatically, and a lot has to do with people's attitudes," Sauve said. The city also has helped by including wide shoulders along some refurbished streets, and so has the Duluth Transit Authority's "Bike and Bus" service of fitting buses



Tyler Durdum splits from the pack to play on a bus stop bench. Photo by Ben Berndt

with bike racks during the riding season. The number of transported bikes has jumped from about 9,000 in 2000 to more than 16,000 in 2007.

There are still barriers to biking Duluth — bone-chilling February cold, bumpy streets and few places to store bikes downtown, Sauve said. But there's also hope.

As entitled, Schultz takes up a full lane of traffic along Duluth's streets as he tows his load of donated food, announcing his turns with arm signals and merging into traffic. Heads do turn, and people do smile.

They smile even more when Schultz or his friends break out the co-op's "silly bikes," including a unicycle and the tall bike with a seat about 6 feet above the ground. That one puts Schultz eyeball-to-eyeball with people driving 4x4 trucks and leaves him looking down on most car drivers. Schultz took a few tumbles while learning to ride it — he built the bike himself — but now he likes the tall bike for the reactions it brings.

"It's hilarious," Schultz said. "It's therapy for me. You can't take yourself seriously on it, and no one else does, either. Everyone you see is smiling and laughing. I like to think those smiles are contagious."

The bike cave is clean and rather quiet for the winter. Schultz is waiting for the riding season to begin again in earnest.

Along one wall is an armada of rescued bicycles, each refurbished and ready for use again. Along another is a small pile of repair manuals, and a collection of tools and parts hangs from the basement walls. Schultz points to one rescue, a shiny 10-speed road bike that looks to be in great condition. When he plucked it from the materials recovery pile at the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, there was just one thing wrong with it: There was no air in the tires.

A few pumps, a bit of polishing, and the bike is as good as new — ready for a new owner and a new life back on the road.

## Bike ride creates 'critical' headache

By Alex Mehlin

On March 28, Duluth saw its first major turnout for the Critical Mass Bike Ride, roughly 70 cyclist meet in Leif Erickson Park at 5 pm and rode the streets en masse.

The first known Critical Mass ride in Duluth took place on August 25, 2006. Since then the ride has gained riders, however the last ride raised the anti.

The 70 some riders flooded the streets resulting in clogged traffic and a police escort. There were no arrests or confrontations, just a number of disgruntled commuters.

Critical Mass started with a group of rag tag bikers, getting together to celebrate urban bike culture. Since its inception it has spread around the world sweeping cities and becoming a large-

monthly event.

The ride looks like a parade of bikes of varying form: choppers, tall bikes (two bike frames welded together to make it extra-tall), garage built single speeds, mountain, road and bmx bikes.

As much as the bikes vary so do the personalities, riders come in neon spandex to cut off jeans and hiking boots.

Duluth is a little late catching on to the ride. Critical mass has been going on around the world for years. The first documented Critical Mass took place on September 25, 1992 in San Francisco. The ride is now represented in around 325 cities around the globe.

Too many Critical Mass is a celebration, however in many respects it is a demonstration. The ride's common philosophy is "we aren't blocking traffic, we are traffic".

Critical Mass has no leadership, set destination and no membership. The only linking factors involved are the meeting spot, bikes, date and time.

"It's a worldwide movement to take back the streets for bikes," Greg Schultz of the Bike Cave said.

Past Duluth rides have attracted 10 to 30 riders,

Bigger cities see larger turnouts.

Rides in the Twin Cities have drawn around 350 riders at a time to flood the streets and make drivers take notice. Cities such as San Francisco have reported up to 7,000 riders.

The ride disturbs many motorists but that is the extent of nuisance that the ride promotes.

"Cars don't like it, but we ride within all the bike laws," said Schultz.

Fun



Will have to

Wait



Spirit Mountain, Duluth  
Photos by Ben Berndt

# Soggy trails make for sad mountain bikers

Budgeteer News  
By Alex Mehlin

Your heart is pounding and your legs are burning, a mixture of sweat, blood and mud has caked your body and nothing in the world can wipe the smile off your face.

For Twin Ports mountain bikers, this feeling will have to wait a few more weeks.

Spring is here, but she has brought with her gray skies and precipitation.

These conditions have resulted in trail closures to protect the paths from damage and erosion, a side effect of trail use in wet conditions.

For cycle enthusiasts, it's a time to break out the bikes, brush off the dust, lube the chain, check the drive train, repair breaks and impatiently wait for local trails to dry out.

Ski Hut employees are no exception.

"Mountain biking is all about fun, freedom and adrenaline," the shop's Carson Spohn said while fixing a bike.

"(I feel) lucky and arrogant, because I'm having more fun than anyone else," said Dean Geeze, as he meticulously rebuilds a fork. "Even when it is cold, rainy and miserable, they just don't know what they are missing."

"Keep the rubber side down," says Spohn as he screws in the last pedal.

Once Mother Nature lets up on her relentless spring pounding, Twin Ports cyclists will hit the trails en masse.

This year they have something more to look forward to.

The Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS), in conjunction with the St. Louis County Land Department, will open Piedmont Trail in West

Duluth.

Upon its completion, expected by mid-summer, the bluffs above Wheeler Field will be home to a 12-mile, multi-purpose trail network.

"There are currently only two legal trails for mountain bikers in Duluth," said Adam Sundberg of COGGS. "We have such a scenic and beautiful area, we need more mountain bike trails to accommodate the cyclists of Duluth."

The trails will be challenging due to the natural terrain, which features good elevation change and rocky bluffs. There will be an inner loop designed for beginner to intermediate riders and an outer loop for intermediate to expert bikers.

The trails have been in the works for the past year. After negotiating with the county and mapping the trails, COGGS was given the green light in September 2007 to start building trails.

"It was a good experience to work with the county," Sundberg said. "We hope to work together again to try and open more trails south and west of the Piedmont trails, resulting in nearly 20 miles of single track."

Local riders are excited.

"They are going to be the best trails in town," exclaimed mountain biker and Ski Hut employee Mick Dodds. "The trails are going to give advanced riders much more opportunities."

Currently in the Twin Ports there are three other off-road trails open to public mountain biking: Spirit Mountain, Hartley Nature Center and Pokegama Trail.

Each trail has its own strengths.

The trails that weave around the ski runs at Spirit Mountain are home to an annual race, Powder Monkey. The trails are difficult: steep climbs, tight turns, big drops and technical terrain littered

the trails. The eight miles of trails can be hard to navigate for the Spirit Mountain novice. This is a problem that COGGS is addressing this summer.

Hartley Nature Center offers some easier terrain for the beginner-to-intermediate rider, yet some trails still offer a challenge to veteran riders. Hartley offers a few different loops varying in difficulty, for a total of seven miles of trails.

Pokegama Trail in Superior is an out-and-back trail that offers a surprise with every turn. It boasts four miles of smooth flowing, rolling single track — perfect for a beginner-to-intermediate rider.

For the time being, cyclists will have to stick to the roads. Ski Hut offers group mountain bike rides on Monday nights at 6 p.m. When the trails are dry, group rides will take place on trails around the Twin Ports.

To get involved with COGGS, visit the group's Web site at <http://coggs.upnorthmn.net> or show up for an exclusive group ride at Mont du Lac Ski Area, open only on Tuesday nights for COGGS.

## Mountain bike races in Duluth

- Dirt Spanker Classic  
June 22 @ Mont du Lac

- Powder Monkey  
July 27 @ Spirit Mountain

For more on Minnesota mountain bike racing visit Minnesota State Championship series at [www.mnscs.com](http://www.mnscs.com).

# Bringing the mountain bike to metropolis

The New York Times  
By Sterhen Regenold

Ever since the mountain bikers arrived, the freaky Goth people with vampire teeth don't hang around much anymore.

And the big scary naked men peering out of the woods? Fewer and farther between, said Josh Erdmann, a longtime area rider.

Indeed, at the Theodore Wirth Off-Road Cycling Trail near downtown Minneapolis, where an 18-inch-wide dirt singletrack traces circuitously through the woods, mountain biking has altered the milieu of the place.

"That creepy nude beach down the hill hardly comes to mind anymore," Mr. Erdmann said.

Across the country, in cities from Philadelphia to Santa Fe, mountain biking is gaining as a viable urban activity. Extensive trail networks designated for the knobby-tire crowd, some many miles in length, now wind through parks like Theodore Wirth in Minneapolis and Powhite Park in Richmond, Va., or under freeway viaducts in places like Seattle.

About 15 major metropolitan areas have legitimized mountain biking in urban parks or on municipal land, including Pittsburgh; Austin, Tex.; Louisville, Ky.; Tucson; Salt Lake City; suburban Los Angeles; and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Chris Bernhardt, a consultant with the International Mountain Bicycling Association from Hood River, Ore., said the face of the sport is changing, with urban terrain receiving more attention than traditional wilderness trails in some areas.

"It's great to take a weeklong bike trip to Moab or Colorado, but people want trails closer to home for riding on weekends or after work," said Mr. Bernhardt, who works with bike clubs, park managers and municipalities in metropolitan areas to prepare plans and build trails.

The increasing desire to suit up, clip in and ride a mountain bike from home to nearby trails is prompting recreation managers to reassess a sport long outlawed in city parks.

Resistance to the sport, which opponents cite as a dangerous and trail-damaging activity, was widespread for years, with hiking clubs, equestrians, birders, environmentalists and other groups regularly lobbying against mountain biking within city limits. Park boards and city governments are often preoccupied with liability and insurance concerns, Mr. Bernhardt said.

But sustainable trail-building guidelines, now widely used to limit erosion, and standards promoted by IMBA -- never scare animals, leave no trace, always yield -- have helped validate the sport.

An aging cycling demographic, with many mountain bikers in their 30s or 40s, gives riders more voice, accord-



Micheal Watts tears down the trails at Spirit Mountain in Duluth, Minnesota. Photo by Ben Berndt

ing to Lou Mazzante, editor of Bike Magazine in San Juan Capistrano, Calif. "Mountain biking has matured, and many riders who've been at it for 15 or 20 years are now in positions of power," he said.

In Minneapolis, it was the mayor, R. T. Rybak, an avid cyclist, and John Erwin, a former parks commissioner, who spurred development of the city's first recognized urban singletrack. Mr. Rybak noted his desire for the city's park board to work with local cyclists at a meeting in 2003.

Today, the Theodore Wirth Off-Road Cycling Trail, which had its grand opening in June 2005, includes 4.36 miles of twisting singletrack with jumps, stunts and banked turns. Up to 200 riders might pedal there on a busy Saturday, according to Shawn

Sheely, president of Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Advocates, an organization that worked with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to create the trails.

On a Saturday earlier this month, amid the white noise of a nearby highway, Mr. Sheely met up with a half-dozen riding friends for a lap at Theodore Wirth, which is the largest park in Minneapolis. The bikers, some dressed in jeans, others in cycling shorts, pedaled on roads or paved paths from their homes in the city to gather at the park's entrance.

"First time out this year," said Jonathan Beale, a 36-year-old college professor, who stood adjusting a helmet strap.

A golf cart tootled by on the lawn behind the bikers, motoring uphill



Jim Barrows taps a feature at Spirit Mountain. Photo by Ben Berndt

toward the park's par-3 course.

"Let's ride," Mr. Sheely shouted.

At Wirth, where wooded little hills hide lakes and boardwalk-equipped bogs, the deep urban forest is infamous for its ability to attract recluses, weirdos or worse.

"That's the old Satanic altar," said Mr. Erdmann, a 29-year-old film producer, only half-joking as he pointed to a decrepit, mossy table secluded in the woods.

Biking has dispersed much of the riffraff, Mr. Sheely said. He believes the simple presence of more people using the park for cycling makes it safer. "It's an interesting side benefit," he said. "Some people didn't feel safe back here before."

Five minutes of pedaling brought the cyclists to Wirth's first obstacle, a 30-foot-long incline of rocks just uphill from an old garbage dump. Railroad tracks and an industrial building were just visible through the trees below.

In the crisscrossing shadow of a rusty fence, Hurl Everstone, 39, a bike shop owner, spun through the rocky ramp, his front tire bouncing and weaving on the climb.

Up next, April Bergman, a 35-year-old assistant at an ad agency, downshifted to pedal through. "Crank it," someone yelled.

Gears clicked, tires spun, but Ms. Bergman sputtered, grabbing her brakes, plopping a foot down for balance.

"Dang, no luck," she said, pushing her bike uphill before jumping back on to ride.

Winding away into the woods, the trail continued for three miles, climbing hills, dipping in and out of little ravines, banking corners on berms. The riders drifted quietly off, standing up on their pedals, twisting through trees still leaf-bare in the early spring sun.