

Adventure CYCLIST

A publication of ADVENTURE CYCLING ASSOCIATION

\$6.95
FEB 2016
Vol. 43 No. 1

COLORADO IS
CALLING
10

CYCLE
ADIRONDACKS
20

LONG LIVE
COLOMBIA
28

Ready to Ride
TOURS & EVENTS ISSUE



CYCLE ADIRONDACKS

KELLOGG'S
SUGAR SHANNY

STORY BY BERNE BROUDY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY L.E. BASKOW

IT WAS MILE 47 OF A 78-MILE RIDE, and I was sprawled on the grass next to a picnic table devouring a massive sandwich of ham and New York cheddar on fresh ciabatta. A few yards away on the rambling porch of an old farmhouse here in Osceola, New York, half a dozen old-timers from greater Camden, members of the Fiddler's Hall of Fame, picked, plucked, and strummed bluegrass tunes.

As I tapped my foot to the twangy tunes, I looked around — I was one of 160 riders on the inaugural Cycle Adirondacks ride filtering through this lunch spot. It's a four- or seven-day bike tour through New York's six million-acre Adirondack Park and its environs and a fundraiser for Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a nonprofit that does scientific research and supports communities in and around the park and around the world. Riders came from across the U.S. and Canada to ride the Adirondacks' quiet, winding, and dipping roads, and to experience the communities within the park and along the perimeter of the Blue Line — the park's boundary.

It was hard to drag myself away from food and music to finish the ride. Between tunes, I got into a deep conversation with author, ecologist, and WCS's staff naturalist, Jerry Jenkins, who ran me through the mill-town history of the region, and

educated me about the headwaters of the Mohawk River, which we rode past before lunch. That river valley, just a few miles away, is one of three lowland routes through the Appalachians that literally formed the geography of a significant portion of the U.S. and directed this country's settlement by flora, fauna, and humans.

Eventually, I dragged myself away from the music, and soon three Amish children driving a horse and buggy passed me. It's a joy to pedal here — perfect temperatures, swaying fields waiting for the last haying of the season, and millions of acres of forest. Adirondack Park was the quietest public park I've been to anywhere in the U.S., and in three days of riding, I'd rarely seen a car except when we pedaled short stretches of main road — a rare occurrence on the carefully curated route.

The ride from Osceola to Camden might have been the quietest stretch yet — and among the most fun. Massive rollers rise and fall nearly the whole way, and if I powered down the hill at full force, I could almost get to the top of the next one without pedaling. I hopped on a pace line, my quads burning for a short stint, and then fell back to a more mellow pace that better let me take in the sights and sounds. I was riding with new friends Rollin Richman and Mike Dunn, two lightning-fast, Moots-riding 60-something guys from Michigan, friends who had

ridden together for decades yet welcomed me to tag along. I came to Cycle Adirondacks solo but rarely rode alone from the moment I arrived. Rollin, Mike, and I chatted into Camden, stopping for ice cream at Byrne Dairy, before the final stretch into downtown.

On paper Cycle Adirondacks looks like many other group rides. The days started at 6:00AM when the breakfast tent opened — though you could get lattes and mochas starting half an hour earlier from Green Goddess Natural Foods, a Saranac Lake-based espresso and juice bar that followed the ride from town to town. In the food tent, cheery locals spooned freshly scrambled eggs, crispy bacon, fresh fruit, and baked goods onto your plate while their friends and neighbors ferried luggage to the truck so it could be transported to the next camp. Riders left camp from 7:00 AM on, pedaling through farms and forests and reconvening at rest stops. The route directions not only told riders where to turn but indicated points of interest along the route, as well as rest stops where churches and civic groups gathered musette bags of extra gear and dispensed bananas, fluffernutter sandwiches (marshmallow fluff and peanut butter on white bread), and water to riders. The daily mileage ranged from 46 to 78 miles. After a lunch stop where fruit, sandwiches, and baked goods were served,

it was more pedaling to the night's camp. Each night riders rolled in to find luggage waiting as well as your tent — or a shuttle to a nearby hotel. There are showers and bathrooms and, once riders settle in, free yoga, massages, and a beer garden.

The third night we camped on Camden's town green, a little tighter quarters than the school playing fields where we'd set up the previous few nights, but it had a homey feel. As I tucked my tent into the sea of ripstop nylon, a fife and drum band marched through. On the other side of the green, Camden businesses set up their own village of local crafts and artisan foods, information, and a local club raffling off a rifle.

As a ride, Cycle Adirondacks is familiar ... but different. It was modeled after Cycle Greater Yellowstone (CGY), a fundraiser ride for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (see the February 2014 *Adventure Cyclist*). A WCS board member who participated in that ride recognized the potential for something similar in the Adirondacks. WCS hired Jim Moore, who helped run CGY, as event director to make sure the first year of Cycle Adirondacks was as good as CGY and not a typical seat-of-the-pants first-year ride.

"This ride is about bringing people to a place you want to protect so that they can ride for a week and develop a personal relationship with that place," Moore said. "Most of the riders here didn't come because they're big supporters of WCS but because they're looking for a great ride in a new place, and that's what we have a reputation for providing."

Everything that's best about the tour is place-based. An evening concert series

— open to the public — featured exceptional local acts. The food was sourced with Taste New York, a state initiative to promote homegrown food. It was local whenever possible, from the veggies in the pasta primavera to the barbecue brisket, blackened catfish, couscous-stuffed fire-roasted peppers, corn salad, corn bread, and apple and blueberry cobbler — and each night there are Adirondacks microbrews to sample. The staff was local too. At each camp, a Boy Scout troop, hospital volunteers, or the children's choir was serving dinner, busing tables, welcoming riders, and more. In Star Lake, we got lei'd (with Hawaiian flower necklaces) after being cheered in by locals grilling and drinking beer in the driveway of the local fire department. Its tower truck ladder was fully extended with a flag majestically draped from its peak in salute as we rode into town.

The region is as unique as the ride. Adirondack Park is home to hundreds of small rural communities surrounded by protected wildlands. At six million acres, it's larger than Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier, and the

Everglades national parks combined, with around 130,000 full-time residents. It's a unique model — people living with wildlife inside a conservation area. In fact, Adirondack Park is often described as a great conservation experiment, one that WCS strives to support.

As we rode into camp in Boonville, one of the cyclists I was riding with remarked that he was surprised that we



Top: The ride began in Saranac Lake, one of the many charming small towns dotting the massive Adirondack Park.

Bottom: A familiar end-of-day sight in camp.

Opposite: The forest along quiet upstate roads occasionally opens to display historic buildings.



were leaving the park.

"We call the park perimeter the Blue Line," said Zoe Smith, WCS's Adirondacks Landscape Coordinator and Cycle Adirondacks Director. "But it's not like there's a gate. The success and health of the park is directly related to the communities that surround it."

For example Tug Hill isn't in the park, but it is in a priority wildlife corridor that's part of a larger northeastern Adirondacks and Canada initiative. WCS is actively involved with Tug Hill landowners on issues of open space protection. "Often it's more important to get involved in communities outside the park where there is unchecked development than communities inside," Smith said.

WCS is working with the residents of Old Forge on human-wildlife conflict — teaching locals why it's important to keep black bears around, and best practices for coexisting with them. In Long Lake, where tourism has waned in the past decades, WCS is promoting the unique habitat. In Saranac Lake, where WCS is based, it's working on loon conserva-

CYCLE ADIRONDACKS

The 2016 event takes place August 20-27, and costs \$1,495 per rider. Travel to the area is easiest from nearby Burlington, Vermont, just 60 miles east. New York City is roughly 300 miles south. For more information visit cycleadirondacks.com.

tion — surveying more than 200 lakes and ponds in and around town. And in Camden, the biggest city in the area and a wildlife corridor itself, WCS is running a "Make Home for Wildlife" campaign.

In Fort Drum, WCS is working with a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense to educate troops on illegal wildlife products. They've created an app for soldiers to record and report illegal wildlife trade they see when they're in Afghanistan and Iraq, where wildlife products are being smuggled along with guns. "The idea is to curtail illegal activity abroad through an organization at home — to bring global conservation back to our area," said Heidi Kretser, who conceived

and spearheads the project.

"If community values coincide with wildlife, people will take action," said Smith. "We're conducting science, and people are using it. We use community to solve conservation issues. A lot of decisions are made purely by emotion or as a result of political opinion. We need science to help our communities make good decisions."

And that's part of why WCS routed us through these towns. Grow wildlife-and recreation-based tourism here and it will incentivize communities to protect the park. "I want the Adirondacks to have caché," Smith said. "We want to contribute to its renaissance as a region, as a destination. There are 100 communities inside the park — and countless more around its edges. The Adirondacks is not a preserve."

Most of the cities and towns around the Blue Line have seen better days. In the late 1800s, artists, writers, and adventurers paraded to upstate New York, as did those seeking clean air and relief from ailments like tuberculosis. A hundred

years ago, the region was teeming with sawmills and paper mills fueled by the local forestlands that were the backbone of local economy. The mills are gone, and modern travel means New Yorkers now go to Arizona or the Caribbean more often than they go upstate.

Saranac Lake, where we started our ride, is a good example of how things can turn around. It's seen an influx of young people, new energy, and new businesses centered on arts and recreation. There's a community-owned store — the town has kept Walmart out (twice) — and a dynamic jeans-clad mayor, Clyde Rabideau, who sees the opportunity tourism brings to the region. Rabideau created the Saranac Lake Sixers, a target list for hikers of six peaks around Saranac Lake, and a play off the Adirondack 46ers, the Holy Grail of hiking for many enthusiasts. Complete the Saranac Lake Sixers, a much more manageable task than the 46ers, and you get an "Ultra Sixer" patch and certificate.

Rabideau gets the significance of the Cycle Adirondacks ride. "We have people from 29 states and two Canadian provinces on this ride," he said. "There are 60 million people within a day's drive of this route — but 80 percent of the Cycle Adirondacks riders have never been to the region. I'm glad we're changing that."

The ride is bringing possible return visitors to the area and generating media inside and outside the region. But it's also leaving cash in communities. In each town where riders camp, local nonprofits are getting cash grants in return for the hard work of volunteers. In the end, it totaled \$45,000 spread among 30 nonprofits. And entrepreneurial groups like the Senior Citizens Club of Star Lake



Who needs a boat when you've got a boat dock? Star Lake residents' unique motorized docks bypass the boat part altogether and give a new twist to the term "party barge."

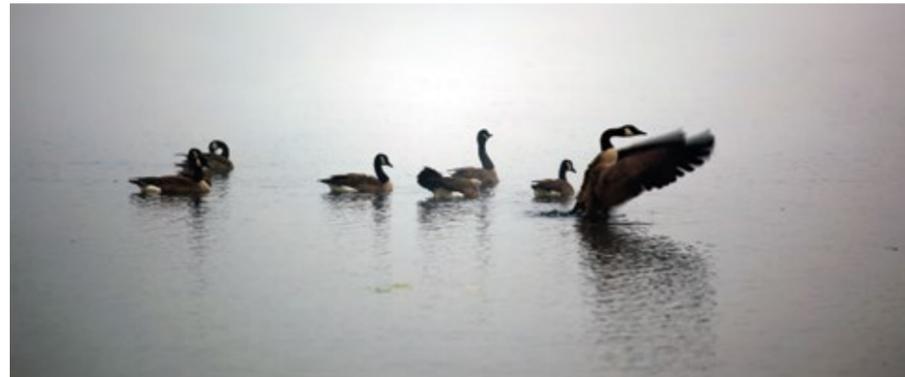
aren't shy about taking advantage of the influx of visitors to do their own fundraising. At dinner on the second night of the ride, a cheery octogenarian with a handful of raffle tickets cornered me between mouthfuls of dessert. I gave her \$10 to buy raffle tickets for a hand-woven basket of Adirondack goodies from wine to maple syrup. The money will go to rent a bus for the club's next casino trip.

In Star Lake, after I set up my tent and showered off the day's sweat, Rollin, Mike, and I shuttled five minutes to the shore and boarded one of Star Lake's locally famous motorized docks. Vido and Pam Testone were our hosts — we boarded their outboard-powered dock and Vido fired up the 9.8-horsepower motor for a tour of Star Lake.

Each dock is different, and the lake has 50 registered craft. Some are dou-

ble-decker, others are outfitted with grills and coolers. Ours had an umbrella, bar stools, and lounge chairs. After circumnavigating the lake, we motored to "the sandbar" and beached alongside other docks whose captains were critiquing Vido's driving. Docks were lined up so you could walk between them — and soon we were invited to another raft for a beer. A game of Frisbee started up in the shallow water, and I plopped down in a partially submerged plastic chair and cooled my feet while munching on carrot sticks and cheese curd, hors d'oeuvres courtesy of Pam. We were welcomed like old friends and stayed for hours before finally motoring back for dinner at camp.

"We know the scenery is great in the park," said Smith. "We're confident the organization of the ride is good. But the magic happens in the communities. We



Wildlife, wildland, and uncrowded roads hemmed in by thick forests and shrouded in morning fog are common sights throughout Adirondack Park. The six-million-acre park has more than 100,000 residents, but open space isn't hard to find.

CYCLE THE TRANS-EUROPA
St. Petersburg to Lisbon
July - Sept. 2016

+1 416-364-8255
tdaglobalcycling.com

WHEELWORKS

Bicycling
100 BEST BILE SHOPS

'16 Specialized AWOL Elite
with reflective tires!

BELMONT WHEELWORKS
480 Trapelo Road
Belmont, MA 02478
tel: 617-489-3577

ACE WHEELWORKS
145 Elm Street
Somerville, MA 02144
tel: 617-776-2100

wheelworks.com

live in a place where people do things from the heart. Driving through this region in a car, you just won't have the same experience as you will on this ride."

I can't argue. On Day One, I had planned to blast past a snack stop, but two teenagers waved me in. Adirondack Community Church in Newton Falls had set up what looked like a bake sale with cookies, brownies, banana bread, and a solid spread of gluten-free treats, all compliments of the church. Congregation members had set up a display table with 160 wooden ornaments they had cut and decorated — gifts from the community to the riders. The pastor picked one out for me with a black loon on a blue lake and an orange and yellow sunset behind it. "We didn't know they were doing this," said Moore. "But it's good neighbor stuff, a win-win."

I later learned from naturalist Jenkins that the church occupies the former paper mill offices. In 2000, the mill closed and the finance company that owned it couldn't find a buyer. For six years, locals snuck into the mill to lube machines and turn the drums so the machinery would be in top working condition for new buyers when they finally came. Eventually, a Canadian company bought the mill and employed 100 locals for four more years before it closed for good in 2012. It's a hard-luck story that's part of the fabric of this region, but one that shows the town's mettle and its residents' big hearts.

This year, the route passed through Newton Falls and Star Lake, but in 2016 it might not. WCS plans to move the ride each year to spread the love among as many communities as they can. "We have a six-million-acre park," Smith said. "Why would you do the same ride again?" That will also give riders a reason to make Cycle Adirondacks an annual event. "We'll choose communities based on the relationships we have, the story we want to tell, the variety of habitats, and the energy the communities are putting into promoting themselves," she said.

Although organizers had originally hoped for 350 riders, having 160 on the inaugural ride allowed Cycle Adirondacks to work out the kinks, though there were few visible to participants. WCS plans to grow the ride in order to create a community fund that will give back to the people of the region, but they recognize that they



COURTESY CYCLE ADIRONDACKS

need to do it smartly and sustainably. "We want this to be thought of as the best-run tour in America," said Moore.

It's certainly off on the right foot thanks to details like the *Cycle Adirondacks Field Guide*, a 14-page book of maps and route highlights I picked up at a water stop. It has elevation profiles and mileages, and notes points of interest and water stops. It also gives history, context, and tidbits of information that grounded me in my surroundings. I knew Jenkins had written it because I could hear his dry sense of

humor and enjoyment of irony in the copy.

I loved Jenkins's editorializing — it was another highlight of my ride. Conservation is a personal passion, but other riders are just psyched about the quiet, rolling roads. They love to ride, and they appreciate being able to do it with a group, fully immersed, with every need taken care of. There are Cycle Greater Yellowstone veterans who came for that quality of ride in a new location, and many who have ridden the cross-Iowa RAGBRAI. I rode with a trio of New Apostolic Church ministers: Eric Haase, Peter Wagner, and Randy Bauer. They've been friends since they were 16 — more than 30 years. This was their first big bike tour and "man-cation." For them the ride is about time together, and the conservation angle isn't first and foremost. "We love and respect God's creation," says Haase. "But we skipped the conservation stops," he confessed. In the next breath, all three were raving about their experiences in the communities along the route.

Smith smiled when she heard this, pointing out that in this region, conserva-

tion and community are one and the same.

"Our goal was to give guests the opportunity to discover the Adirondack Park," said Smith. "We want to inspire people to visit and appreciate the region. We know that conservation can't be effective without local residents and leaders. Bringing hundreds of cyclists to our region for a week of pedaling through this spectacular landscape is one example of how WCS provides opportunities for communities to benefit from their surrounding natural assets. This event provides an economic boost to our partner towns and helps showcase this spectacular landscape."

I can pedal through the Adirondacks anytime — the park is just a couple of hours from my home — but I'll make it a priority to ride Cycle Adirondacks again next year, for the community, for conservation, and for the camaraderie, concerts, and cocktails wherever they're served by the citizens of the Adirondacks.

Berne Broudy is a Vermont-based writer and photographer. Find her on twitter @berneab and on instagram @bernebroudy.

LIGHT IT UP!

The Blaze 650 XLR, Blaze 500 XLR and the Blaze 180 are the brightest lights we've ever made. Super bright, watertight and rechargeable.

planet bike

Blaze 180 Blaze 500 XLR Blaze 650 XLR

Better Bicycle Products for a Better World
25% of profits go to bicycle advocacy

FREEWHEELING Adventures

Small Group Guided & Self-Guided Cycling
800-672-0775 | freewheeling.ca

Come bike Nova Scotia's Cabot Trail with us in 2016!