

# bike

EXCLUSIVE : 2010 FORKS FROM FOX  
: MARZOCCHI/ROCKSHO

UNDISCOVERED AMERICA

## SECRET STASHES

**6** Hidden destinations  
with incredible trails

PROFILE

**ROSS  
SCHNELL**  
ALL-AMERICAN  
BAD@SS

CHEAP THRILLS

**OREGON'S**  
revolutionary freeride park

PL  
US

822670  
2072

Shimano

Components Ever

KIRY VOREIS, BLACK ROCK, OREGON.  
JULY 2009 > VOLUME 16 NO. 4 U.S. \$4.99/CAN. \$5.99



A SOURCE INTERLINK MEDIA PUBLICATION

**USA, USA! HOMEGROWN BIKES FROM CANNONDALE, EWR, MOOTS & TITUS**

# CONTENTS

ISSUE 16.4 > JULY 2009

## features

### 063 America's Secret Stashes

*Moab, Fruita, Whistler, Pisgah.* It's a familiar litany of popular destinations. But what about the *unlikely* suspects? What about the trails on the *other* side of Downieville? What about the brown ice of Brevard, North Carolina, and the limestone labyrinths of Terlingua, Texas? We offer the inside dirt on six of America's hidden gems.

### 074 Black Rock: The Great Experiment

Five hundred acres of jumps, drops, doubles and berms litter the old-growth forests of Black Rock, Oregon. The place's very existence is a minor miracle—the result of unprecedented cooperation between trail builders and land managers. But this isn't any ordinary freeride park—the trails are open to the public, and they're attracting riders from around the country. Cam McCaul and Kirt Voreis stopped by to see what all the fuss was about.

### 082 Rad Ross

Ross Schnell may be the best rider you've never heard of. The winner of last year's Downieville races could even be the best all-around rider the sport has seen in years. What's more, he's a throwback to the sport's gritty beginning—when riders raced for fun, not fame, on hard, adventurous courses. Afraid mountain biking has lost its soul? Relax. Rad Ross has it all under control.

Cover: Kirt Voreis killing it at Black Rock, Oregon, during a shoot for NWD. Photo: Scott Markewitz/NWD

## GRAEAGLE, CALIFORNIA

### Downieville's Sunny Shadow

The tiny Sierra foothill town of Downieville has carved out a mountain bike paradise reputation much larger than most 300-population towns could ever expect. Riders shuttle up to Packer Saddle, where the spine of the Sierras vectors north, and then descend westward down a now-legendary network of trails and drainages. Few riders ever cast their eyes east before dropping in.

That's too bad. Because for every mile of well-known, well-traveled trail that drops toward Downieville, there is a corresponding distance and vertical drop toward the town of Graeagle, a quiet community of 825 people on the floor of the Sierra Valley to the



SUNNY SIDE: ARIEL LINDSLEY ROCKS ONE OF GRAEAGLE'S TECHNICAL DESCENTS

GRAEAGLE

east of the range (about 18 miles as the crow flies from Downieville, but a good 45 minutes of twisty road mayhem in a car).

Whereas the west-side trails are fast and dusty, those dropping east serve up a much more technical diet of rocks and roughage. Instead of railing down river drainages, the trails clamber over granite slabs and thread down boulder-strewn chutes into the Lakes Basin. The riding is slower, more technically demanding singletrack-finessing, with some high-consequence opportunities for speed thrown into the mix.

The Lakes Basin consists of some three-dozen alpine lakes, presided over south to north by the slopes of the Sierra Buttes (8,591 feet), Mount

Elwell (7,818 feet) and Eureka Peak (7,447 feet). Graeagle, on the valley floor, is 4,300 feet above sea level. Tracing lines between the peaks, through the basin and down into Graeagle, is a network of 40-plus miles of singletrack. From the top of Elwell, 9 miles of steep, narrow trail drops 3,500 feet between the peak and town. A couple of miles further north along the Deer Lake OHV trail, the Jamison Creek trail sheds 2,200 feet in a riotous 4.8-mile descent from the spine of the Sierras to Plumas Eureka State Park.

One of Downieville's key mountain bike agitators has been shifting his focus toward Graeagle and the Lakes Basin for several years now. Greg Williams, founder of both the Downieville Classic and the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship (SBTS), lives just south of Graeagle and has been chipping away at trail projects in the basin for the past few seasons. To date, 15 miles of trail have been restored, capped by the completion of the Smith Lake trail in 2008.

Graeagle itself has the all the trappings of a small mountain vacation town: golf courses, a market and gas station and an assortment of touristy bead- and trinket-type stores. For breakfast, head to the Café Mohawk (530-836-0901) and for



downright lethal post-ride margaritas and decent dinners shoot for the Coyote Grill (530-836-2002). The Lakes Basin is festooned with easily accessible campgrounds and lodges (River Pines Resort, riverpines.com, 530-836-2552; Gray Eagle Lodge, grayeaglelodge.com, 800-635-8778), and in summer it offers the perfect post-ride elixir—choose-your-temperature lake bathing.

The only things not on the menu here, and the key reasons for the area's under-the-radar status, are a bike shop and a dedicated shuttle service to Packer Saddle. You'll have

to figure your own way up to the high country from town, and be prepared to ride self-sufficiently. Nut up for that, and the rewards are guaranteed to be plentiful.

—MIKE FERRENTINO

## MUST-RIDE

### MOUNT ELWELL PEAK TRAIL

To seek out the crown jewel of Lakes Basin riding, you'd best be prepared to climb your brains out. Option A: From Graeagle, have someone drive you up to Plumas Eureka State Park, then through the park along a dirt road to the A-Tree. From there, suffer a thousand small deaths heading south by bike along the Deer Lake OHV trail for about five miles until it intersects with the Mount Elwell Peak trail just south of where the PCT crosses the OHV trail. Cinch up bootstraps and bite down on your stem for the next thousand or so feet of climbing to the summit. Option B: Catch a ride from Graeagle up the Gold Lake Highway to the Sierra County line and get dropped off in the Gold Lake Lodge parking lot. From there, pick your way through the Lakes Basin via Bear Lake trail, Mud Lake trail, Silver Lake trail and then a dash of Long Lake trail before accessing the Mount Elwell Peak trail. This will hurt just as much or more than Option A, and you'll need a map. But if you like technical, rocky singletrack climbing, you'll have come to the right place.