



## *Loop routes in Mt. Washington Valley* View the scenery from your bicycle

By Peter Minnich

*Mountain Ear Cycling Columnist*

**BASICALLY, CYCLISTS ARE** limited to two types of rides: out-and-backs and loops.

Loops have always held greater appeal, owing perhaps to the elegance of circumnavigation. Finding a way around is more fun than simply retracing your track. New England geography lends itself to loop discovery. Old roads, new roads, by-passes all combine to offer interesting combinations of ways to get back home. With this in mind, here are two of the favorite local road loops.

Traditional loop rides achieve their status because they offer the characteristics riders want — scenery, challenge, legacy. No loop ride I know of offers more of these qualities than Bear Notch Loop.

Local riders love to debate the advantages of doing Bear Notch in one direction rather than the other. Most written descriptions do it counter-clockwise. I personally prefer clockwise for several reasons:

first, I like to finish a ride with a downhill run; second, I hate riding up Conway's West Side Road in the dying light; and third, I like the steady, gradual uphill pace of Passaconaway and the Kancamagus Highway (U.S. Route 112) because it gives me more time to scope out the scenery (like the setting sun glinting off the Swift River) and spot the wildlife (like the bull moose I saw near Champney Brook last summer). Try it both ways, then decide for yourself which direction you favor.

Bear Notch Loop, clockwise, consists of five sections: south on West Side Road from Route 302 in Bartlett to Allen's Siding Road (12 miles), Dugway/Passaconaway Road to the Albany Covered Bridge (6.5 miles), the Kanc west to Bear Notch Road (6.5 miles), Bear Notch Road to Bartlett Village (9 miles), return to Glen (6 miles) for a total loop distance of approximately 40 miles, depending on where you start. Drinking water can be found at the Dugway picnic

area and at the Covered Bridge Campground.

The climbing in either direction is moderate, with about a 1600-foot gain overall. Some riders, preferring to get the climb out of the way when they're fresh, park and start in Bartlett Village and climb the 1000 feet in five miles to Bear Notch right away. Other places to park and start along the loop are numerous: Red Jersey Cyclery, at Andes Ski & Sports Shop and Patch's Market in Bartlett, Echo Lake State Park, behind the Post Office in Conway, by Albany Covered Bridge, or how about at Cliffside Restaurant, and finish the day with a buffet. Anywhere you start, either way you ride it, Bear Notch Loop is a classic.

An equally classic ride of about half the distance is the Tamworth/Wonalancet Loop on the southern edge of the White Mountains. For this ride I park at the Brett School on Route 113 in South Tamworth, across from Chequer's Villa Restaurant. Ride south on 113 a

short distance, cross a bridge, and turn right at the Whittier Cash Market. Follow Old Route 25 out to Route 25, turn right, and ride three miles to Bennett Corner. Turn right, back onto Route 113, which you ride for four miles to the

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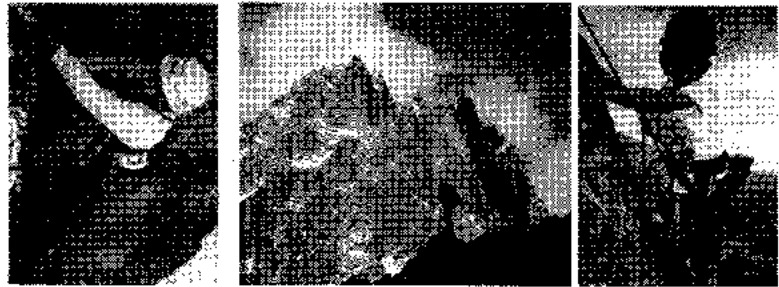
junction with Route 113A in North Sandwich. Turn right again onto 113A and ride rolling terrain, seven miles north to Wonalancet, then east to the height of land and a pleasant descent along the Swift River (another Swift River) back to Tamworth Village in 6 miles. Go straight at the four-way stop to return in two miles to the Brett School. Total loop distance is about 22 miles, with an elevation gain of around a 1000 feet. There's a great swimming hole in the Cold River at Whiteface, two miles north of the 113/113A junction. Excellent drinking water can be had at the stone tub spring on the right just past Wayside Farm on 113A at about the half-way mark.

I often add seven miles of level riding to this loop by turning left on Depot Road, about a mile south of Tamworth Village. Ride Depot Road 3.5 miles east to Route 16 in West Ossipee, turn right and ride about 200 yards, then right again just before the Whittier House restaurant. Cross the barricaded covered bridge. Turn right onto Route 25, then right again onto Old Route 25 and return to 113 in 3.5 miles. It's a nice extension that takes half an hour. ▲

**Editor's note:** Peter Minnich is the author of the "Mountain Bike Map of the Mount Washington Valley." His column appears weekly in *The Mountain Ear*. Also be sure to consult Marty Basch's guidebook, "White Mountain Ride Guide," (Top of the World Communications, P.O. Box 731, Intervale, N.H. 03845)

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