

# BUCKWALLOW CYCLING CENTRE

## Even Better than Before

Allison Dawes ~ Ecclestone Cycle

Welcome back to summer in Muskoka and to this, the third article in a series of eleven devoted to riding in cottage country. This week's article will take you on a journey through the Buckwallow Cycling Centre; unquestionably Muskoka's most diverse and well maintained riding destination. If you're a long time fan of Buckwallow you will know exactly what I'm talking about...but if you've never ridden the Buckwallow Cycling Centre, you are in for a real treat! For all you folks hoping to learn more about superb road riding routes around Muskoka, be sure tune in next week when we explore great cottage road routes such as the Walker's Point area, and Acton Island.

But back to the trails...The Buckwallow Cycling Centre is fabulous! Not only are the trails extraordinarily well marked (complete with descriptors), they are absolutely fabulously maintained, and the trail system offers mountain biking adventures for all skill levels. From beginner to expert, Buckwallow has a route for you.

Buckwallow boasts approximately 11.5 kilometres of double track (fairly wide, smooth trail), and over 10 kilometres of single track (twisting trail, running through the heart of the bush). All the single track is clearly marked with the trail name, as well as the difficulty of the trail, and a small blurb stating what the trail has in store.

If you are heading out for your first trail riding escapade I would recommend following the main trails, and ducking into Border Run, Pine Pitch, Eager Beaver and Bad Pit for the single track experience.

For those of you looking for the most challenging single track Buckwallow offers, be sure to ride Bear Bluff (long and full of climbs), the Do Drop In (complete with drop), West D'Nile, Toad Twister (a personal favourite, with rock drop), Spur Line, and the Weasel (the most difficult of the lot).

Two new sections of single track opened late last season, adding over an extra kilometre of single track to the roster, so don't miss Stumpy (with an optional log crossing), and Frankly My Deer (yielding unending twisty fun).

If you are like the majority of riders, just out to enjoy the sport, and brave your own skills, don't miss Missing Link; its rolling hills and winding route allow for great speed and even bigger smiles. I honestly recommend the whole park, and if you've ridden it all, try it all again backwards, you'd be amazed at how different the trails feel in reverse!

Buckwallow is very accessible and very easily found. Located between Gravenhurst and Bracebridge off of the Gravenhurst Parkway, simply follow the signs to the "KOA". The KOA signage will lead you directly to Buckwallow's doorstep. You'll know you've reached the trail head when you see the signs featuring a deer (buck to be exact) riding a bicycle.

Once you reach the famed Buckwallow, you will most likely be greeted in the parking lot by the trail creator himself, Mike McLaughlin. Mike is truly the driving force behind the cycling centre. It is through uncountable hours of Mike's arduous work that Buckwallow has gained provincial wide recognition as one of Ontario's premiere trail systems. Not only is Mike the guy who builds, rakes, and repairs the trails, he is also a great resource of local natural and geographic history.

Trail passes at Buckwallow are quite a bargain. Day passes are \$6.00 per person (despite what the map says), and seasons passes are a mere \$35.00 or \$70.00 for the whole family. (Absolute steal for unlimited riding.) Buckwallow features the cleanest privies I've ever seen, a bicycle wash station, and beverages all located at the trail head.

Beyond great trails, and clean trail head services, be sure to participate in one of the many events taking place at Buckwallow this summer. Take in the fun race night every Thursday evening at 7:00pm (be sure to arrive early to register).

Do not miss the Ontario Cup Provincial Race being held at Buckwallow August 7th. Race in the provincials or just come and watch as about 600 racers take to our local trails to compete for provincial titles. This is the second season Buckwallow will play host this prestigious event, and can boast a course which is quickly becoming a favourite on the Ontario race circuit.

In closing, visit Buckwallow this summer, then visit it again, again. I'm sure Buckwallow will become one of your favourite Muskoka destinations. Even in the heat of this beautiful summer, you'll find tonnes of shade zipping through these awesome trails. And hey, what's more exhilarating than creating your own breeze?

Left your bicycle in the city, or have guests you'd like to take trail riding? No problem, stop by our purple bicycle shop in Bracebridge for a rental bicycle and friendly advice about the trails you'll enjoy (705) 645-1166. Want to talk to the trail creator directly? Call Mike McLaughlin at (705) 687-8858. Enjoy riding in Muskoka & Happy Spins!