

# ferry county skiing federation

Barstow Dispatch 4.1

Late Winter 2024



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So begins our 4th year of Dispatch'ing. We're trying this size now! And it's in color again. Who the hell knows what's next? Onward!

This little ditty you're holding in your hands has been an exercise in delegation! All the gold...all the good articles have been provided by contributors. Aside from the filler drivel that I've packed around the edges, there are three great ski-related articles that I've wanted to see for at least a year. Matt wrote up an article that describes the Hok ski and associated Boulder Pass Hok community. I asked JD to write about the backcountry skiing he does on KCT. What he provided was so much more – he does a great job of laying out the importance of being avalanche aware as we set off to explore the trails and ridges that seem so familiar from our summer explorations. His article surprised me and is a strong argument to take the winter backcountry seriously. And finally, Tarik has delivered the column I've been pestering him about for a few years. He has put together the definitive approach to sorting out the whole Nordic skiing situation, specifically written for ski-curious cyclists.

We've also got everything there is to say about snow-shoeing. For non-winter content, a new contributor, Will, submitted a cool article on a weird band. And Stine shares his take on Salsa Macha. Make it today to change your life forever. You're welcome.

By the time this Dispatch finally lands in your mailbox, February is mercifully in the past. March means it's time to climb hills. More on that in the next Dispatch.

### Contributors:

Matt Schanz, JD Marshall, Tarik Saleh, Will Robertson, John Speare

### Photos:

By contributor unless noted.

### All visual magic:

Stine Hansen

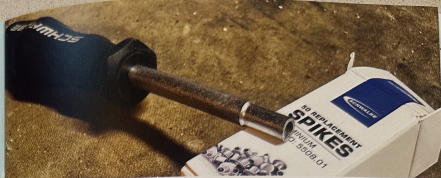
### On the covers

*Front:* Sunrise on KCT. Photo: JD Marshall

*Inside:* Saltese Uplands. Photo: John

*Inside Back:* Lee charges up Raging River trail. Photo by Alex. Or maybe Rory.

*Back:* Jeff Perkins launches over a fire hydrant at the Anacortes skatepark on Feb. 16, 2024. Photo: Jeff Albertson



## (Winter) Tidbits

### Studs!

A couple years ago in Dispatch v1.6, we declared the Schwalbe Ice Spiker as the best tire for trail riding on all manner of ice. After a couple seasons, we are confident in maintaining our recommendation for these tires. They really are incredibly sticky. That stickiness is all about the spikes. The 27.5 version of these tires have 379 individual spikes. That's a lot of spike.

But when you really lean into your pedals to let the spikes dig in, some of them squirm out of the tires.

Since these tires retail for about \$120 each, we were feeling a bit less enthusiastic about them as we started the season this year after noticing that a bunch of the spikes had disappeared. In fact, on the rear tire alone,

there were nearly 50 missing spikes. The tires were otherwise in perfect condition.

As it turns out, Schwalbe sells replacement spikes and a little tool to install them. The tool and 50 spikes sell as a package for about \$20. The spikes are carbide pokey bits that are clad in an aluminum shell. The shell has a round flat base that you cram into the hole in each tire lug. With a bit of spit and an angled shove, getting the hang of seating these spikes into the tire is pretty straight forward. You definitely want to let some air out of the tires to get maximum tire/lug deformation during the procedure. Also – since seating the spike requires a bit of deformation of the rubber, the tires should be room temperature, not freezing.







#### Mountain bike fenders

With the exception of one horribly cold week, this winter has been more wet-muddy than snow-lovely. Maintaining a daily ride is a brute force practice: getting out can be tough when it's pissing rain and nearly freezing. But then keeping clothes, gear, bike situation rideable daily is also a bit of a chore.

Before the days of dropper posts (see Dispatch 3.3 for The Truth about droppers), you could clip on a good enough fender to the seat post and keep a pretty solid amount of slop off your back and arse. But with droppers, those post-mount fenders are no option. Like most good things that combine rain and cycling, the Seattle Bros introduced the Ferry County-ites to yet another anti-wet solution: the Mucky Nutz fender. It's a stupid

name and it's a bit more fussy to attach to the bike than the post method, but your fuss is rewarded with a fender solution that actually works really well, despite the name.

The fender goes on and off with four velcro-y straps and does the job. However, the little velcro-y straps are a bit of a joke after the first mud event. They're not really reusable once soiled. A better solution would be little mini toe-straps. We're on the lookout for a better tie down solution.

For the front, a similarly designed and attached fender is available. We're running the short one, which keeps mud off your face, but doesn't protect the legs. There is a longer version. We're getting it. We'll report back. In general: these fenders are way better than expected, easy to put on, and tend to stay put if you pay attention to putting them on securely.

#### Bar mitts. Pogies.

As noted, we had one terrible week of single digit high temps this winter. When it's 4 degrees out, we're good for maybe ½ hour of riding before the fingers freeze solid. We've tried all manner of gloves: lobsters, ski gloves, layers. Mitts might work, but they really limit how you can brake while holding the bars. Generally we find that the fingers are the first to go and once they begin to go, they just keep going until they're painfully frozen. Since we have figured out good enough glove solutions for about an

hour of riding in 20 F or so, we've always resisted the bar mitt-pogie solution. These bar mitts only seem necessary for the coldest rides. And they do feel somewhat constricting, that is, your hands seem sort of trapped in there. In reality, pulling your hands out is easy, it's just a muscle memory you would want to learn to automate. Sort of like clipping in: feels like a bad idea until it's automatic.



Anyway. We tried a couple different mitts. Our buddy Pat loaned us an OG set of Methow Cycle pogies that were huge and amazing and warm. The idea with these is that you would use them for hours on a fat bike as you plod through the groomed trails around Twisp. For that: they're dope. For quick lunch ride, they're still dope,

but they feel a bit over the top. The other pair are 45Nth pogies. Curiously, they're rated 15-32 degrees, which is weird, because our feeling is that you pretty much need bar mitts for single digits. We rode a single-digit day with a Methow Cycle pogie on one side and a 45Nth on the other. Sure enough, the Methow Cycle pogie did the job. 45Nth was good enough, but not "warm." For what it's worth, we wore lobster gloves in the bar mitts.

So the upshot: the 45Nth are good enough to maintain some quick rides in super cold weather. But if you want to be serious about spending time in very cold riding, or if you just have really poor circulation in your fingers, then the big gun Methow Cycle style of pogie is probably the right move.



DENISE HOKS UP SOME DOUBLE TRACK

## Hok'ing Boulder Pass

By Matt Schanz

Stating a painful truth, humans can find themselves fixed in a position. The sound of old school vinyl music vs digital, favorite color red vs blue, fries vs salad, or is it best to watch a sunrise or set. Backcountry pursuits can similarly result in "I'm a this or I'm a that." In talking to a Minnesotan who spends time in the north country, a classic dilemma to confront during the depths of winter is should you be on snowshoes or cross-country skis.

Mix in a few Leinenkugel brews-kis into the debate and things can sprint out of control fast even in the land of Minnesota Nice.

Lucky for us, a good knowledge of history and a beautiful idea gave birth to Altai skis. Inspired by traditional skis used in the Altai Mountain region of Central Asia pre-AD, Altai Ski Company produces the perfect trekking solution for getting into and out of the wild country. Their

Hok skis hit the sweet spot between snowshoes and skis, earning the moniker of ski-shoes.

Short and stout, these wide-platform skis have built-in skins (one-way fabric) and metal edges that allow all-around access into the snowy, beautiful depths of the NE Washington woods. Historically, and with good reason, these types of trekking skis are used in tandem with a long stick (or Tiak if you heard the term in the Altai Mountains) rather than ski poles.

The Kettle Crest is ideal terrain for Hoks. If you are new to them, keep to the Crest Trail and enjoy the ups and the downs. With some experience, try some downhill runs through burned out areas of Boulder or the newly thinned areas of Sherman Pass but keep on moderate slopes. It's easy to spot Hok tracks and look for where others have broken a trail.

Here's some lessons learned or kindly shared by other Altai Hok'ers who frequent the Kettle Crest (particularly that part off Boulder Pass):

The universal bindings are good but to get the full effect of these skis, the three pin bindings and sturdy leather boots make the experience even better.

Embrace your inner Gandalf and use the stick, aka Tiak. Regardless of which terrain you're in, a single long pole works much better than use of

two ski poles. From experience, longer is better with a literal rule of thumb being to raise your hand all the way above your head, and the top of the pole should reach your thumb.

Use the Tiak to help balance and climb and as a rudder going downhill. When heading down, keep the Tiak planted to one side of your body regardless of left or right turns. Keep one hand towards the upper part of Tiak, and the lower hand planted at your hip.

Sometimes Tiaks can break! MacGyver it (and if you get this reference, you are officially old) by carrying a small foldable saw to make your own.



AUTHOR, MATT, GLIDES THROUGH A SECTION OF BURN AROUND BOULDER-SENTINEL BUTTE



Bring a plastic scrapper to dislodge icebergs that can form on the underside of the ski in some snow conditions. An old banged up ice scrapper that haunts your car's trunk works or get one from Altai.

Buy ski wax from Altai and carry it with you on outings. Don't be afraid to use it on both the smooth and skin part of the ski.

Icy crusts? Watch Netflix instead.

Give it time! Being on these skis is intuitive but going downhill takes some practice. Start small and build up to bigger slopes. Wide sweeping turns to help control speed and stability. Watch videos posted at Altai's website.

Try them out at demo days or rent them (available at Adventure Peddler in Colville).

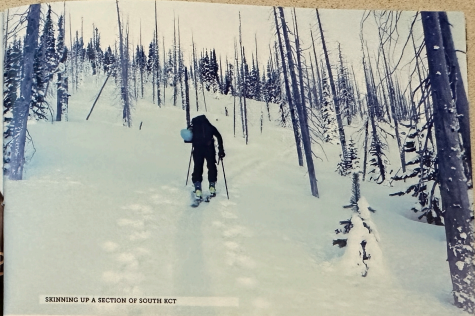
Strike up a conversation with a Hok skier- they're a helpful bunch and willing to share tips of the trade.

Will these perform as well as full-on backcountry gear? The best response to this common question comes with qualifications. If your goal is to skin up and slice your way down the steep stuff, then no. That said, if you want to trek through the woods, follow the ups and downs of a mountain trail (all without having to put on or take off skins), or climb up and glide down moderate-to-slightly steep slopes, these skis will help you do just that.



HOK SKIS. PERMANENT SKIN SECTION IS SHOWN ON THE RIGHT-MOST SKI. PIC FROM ALTAI WEBSITE

*Matt Schanz works for the NE Tri County Health District and lives out in the hills west of Colville with his wife, Denise. Matt and Denise found mountain biking as adults and have embraced the sport fully over the last decade or so. If you ride Colville Mountain and you Strava, you'll ride some segments named for them. That's legit. After an initial introduction at Boulder Pass one winter, where we chatted about Hok'ing, I got to know the Schanz's when they showed up to help with our trail clearing effort on Taylor Ridge last year (see Dispatch v3.2).*



SKINNING UP A SECTION OF SOUTH KCT

## Backcountry KCT

By J.D. Marshall

The dude was a bit of a tool. Not insufferable really, but the sort for whom everything, including a conversation, is a competition. After being around him for nearly a week in the BC backcountry I can only say that I felt extreme indifference when we began to throw snow on him after he crawled into the nearly meter deep hole we had dug in the snow. The idea was that we would dig him out and that this would be good practice for simulating what it might actually be like to rescue a person following an avalanche burial.

It is here that I have to say to never ever repeat this simulation on your own. It is ill-advised at best. With our avalanche instructor watching over our shoulders, having given

our simulated victim an Avalung to help him breath under the snow and access to a probe to pull on to signal that the simulation was getting a bit too real, we began to dig.

Almost immediately we forgot half of what we learned about working as a team to methodically move snow rapidly and efficiently. Two or three minutes in we saw the probe moving up and down, signaling us to dig a bit faster. Frantic digging replaced any semblance of methodical team movements. We worked harder and moved less snow. After four minutes we finally freed our victim. He was fine. We were humbled. Lesson learned. If this is what it is like to rescue a person for whom you feel extreme indifference - in



a simulated avalanche – then you don't ever want to know what it's like to have to dig out a person that you really care about.

The statistics show that your chances of surviving burial in an avalanche are around 96% if you are unburied after 10 minutes. After 35 minutes survival drops to 10% (sierraavalanchecenter.org). The 14% who didn't survive the first 10 minutes probably died from the mass trauma of hitting rocks, trees, and other debris. That means you have to be fast and know what you're doing to have a chance at saving somebody's life in the backcountry. There is no time to go for help. You have to know how to use your beacon, do a systematic and organized search across a large area of avalanche debris, pinpoint the victim using a fine beacon search and probe, and then finally get to

the not-as-easy-as-you-might-think part of digging. By the way, we had six people digging in our simulation. You will probably have less. And we were digging through soft snow. Avalanche debris can be thick like concrete. The bottom line is that there is no room for error. You have to practice and you have to be coached about avalanches if you're going to travel in the backcountry. Small things make a big difference. Minutes save lives. Take an avalanche course. If you don't believe me, Google "Rescue at Cherry Bowl".

I took my avalanche courses in Canada through Kootenay Avalanche Courses based out of Rossland, BC and highly recommend them. Keith Robine, the lead instructor, will teach you what it means to travel wisely in avalanche terrain and to minimize your risk of burial. Taking a course



TOURING THROUGH THE SADDLE ON THE SOUTH REGION OF KCT



SKIING A SLOPE ON THE SOUTH REGION OF KCT

with Keith, or through any other certified program, is your first step on a pretty awesome journey into the backcountry.

The Kettle Crest is full of opportunity for winter backcountry adventures. The Kettle Crest also has classic avalanche terrain and plenty of avalanches every year. Be smart and be prepared if you're going to step out there. Take an avalanche course.

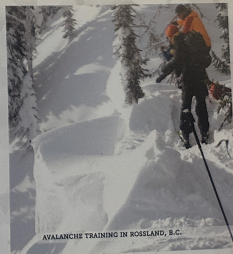
So now you're probably wondering where you should go in the Kettle Crest to be safe. The answer is "it depends". Avalanche terrain is divided into three categories: simple, challenging, and complex. One-hundred percent of the Kettle Crest falls into one of these three categories so everywhere you go you will be in avalanche terrain.

Simple avalanche terrain, like that generally found off of Boulder Pass, is intuitively the most safe, but even within simple

terrain there are areas to avoid in certain conditions. Small slopes, even those less than 20 feet in length, can bury you if an avalanche is triggered. Concave rollovers and terrain traps can make innocuous looking features much more dangerous.

There are many places where you can see an abundance of tracks where people have traveled al-

ready and presumably done so safely. Be careful. This just means they may have gotten away with something that you won't. You can get away with making the wrong decision 99% of the time. This positive feedback loop reinforces incorrect decisions. You never know when that 1% may come back to bite you. It might not ever, or it might get you the first time. That's how statistics work.



AVAILANCHE TRAINING IN ROSSLAND, B.C.

## Nordic Classic Skiing for the Cyclist

By Tarik Saleh

It is winter. It is cold or icy or snowy or maybe all three. You look at your bike with mild dread and then you put on all your clothes and pay special attention to making sure your feet or hands or other parts don't freeze, and then you ride and sweat and freeze again. Six more months to spring you think. There has to be a better way.

I am here to tell you there is a better way, it might be fat biking, or mountain biking. It is not road biking for sure. But your path to winter happiness may very well be on Nordic skis, specifically classic skiing, and maybe more specifically all purpose touring style Nordic classic skiing, where you can just ski if there is snow, and don't need to worry about grooming or too much about waxing or what have you, and you might not have to worry about being that cold ever again.

### First: What's your local scene look like?

There are a couple ways for the curious cyclist to get into Nordic skiing. The easiest by far is if you live near a Nordic skiing area where trails are groomed for skiing and they rent gear. If this is true for you, please stop reading and go there and talk to them, take a lesson or two and have some fun. Groomed areas are fantastic for classic and skate and they are totally vested in helping you get into skiing.

Another easy way is if there are a bunch of Nordic type skiers in your area, they are probably also cyclists,

you probably know them already, if this is the case, stop reading and go talk to them about getting into Nordic skiing. They likely have some skis you can borrow or buy cheaply and maybe even boots to try out, and might be happy to give you some tips on where to go locally and may give you some informal lessons to get you on your way. Even if there are not a bunch of Nordic skiers in your area, there probably are some folks in your area who grew up in Minnesota or Wisconsin or Vermont or Colorado or Alaska who secretly were Nordic skiers growing up and are cyclists, they also are good people to talk to.

### What the hey is Nordic skiing?

If you don't know where to start though, read on. I am talking about Nordic skiing. Not back country or Alpine Touring (AT) or Randonee skiing, or skimo or whatever. I am not talking about skate skiing, although this is closely related. These classic skis will have camber (high spot in the middle) and some sort of area under your foot with either fish scales or crowns or strips of skin embedded in the ski, or even an area where you can apply wax for traction. For the rest of this article, if I say Skins, I mean furry strips or patches embedded in the kick zone (underfoot part) of the ski. NOT full length skins that you stick to your whole ski so you can climb straight



TARIK'S DAUGHTER, AIDA: AN ACCOMPLISHED NORDIC SKIER FROM WAY BACK

up a mountain on your wide mostly camberless skis. Unless you really enjoy gluing tubular tires onto rims, I HIGHLY recommend skipping the waxable classic skis to start. (And unless you are really serious about racing Nordic, or you live where there are really nice groomed trails and it is consistently very cold, maybe skip waxable classic skis permanently.)

Skin skis are at 70-90% of waxables now and the last bits only matter in tracks and at speed. I am not talking about big wide skis that have edges, or require downhill looking boots and fancy multi-position binding, nor ones that are pretty flat and require full length skins to go uphill. I am talking about the type of skiing you see in the

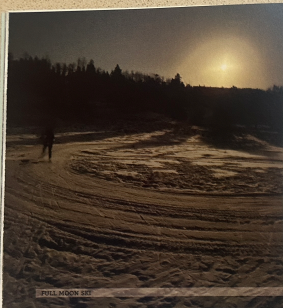
background of the local news during SNOWPOCALYPSE 2024. These are the skis you see on the people gliding by in the background. This is who you want to be. You can ride when it is 50F all winter, but as soon as you get 6" or more of snow you can head to your local park or golf course or trail system and ski around right near where you live. If you get enough snow you can be that person in the background of the newscast skiing right from your house, down the street and on and on to the store or work or around the block.

### What kind of gear do you need?

Let's start with clothing as this is super easy. If you bike in the winter, you already have everything you need. Winter bike jersey, base layer, tights. Great. You are good to go, and the best part of Nordic skiing is that you will be MUCH warmer than you would be on a bike. The secret is layers layers layers and be prepared to take stuff off as you are going to get too hot if you dress like you are going for a bike ride. Don't wear jeans or cotton, but winter running/cycling clothes are perfect. Downhill ski gear is almost certainly too hot. Almost all Nordic skiers are cyclists, so you won't get a second glance if you are wearing winter cycling jerseys on the trail.

Lettuce talk next about boots and bindings. Your boots need to match the binding on the skis. There are really only two viable options here. The older version is the 75mm three pin binding: loosely analogous to clips and straps. The "newer" version is the NNN binding which is analogous to SPDs.





Let's look at skis (and bindings and boots again). There are two schools of thought here. The first is to find some old used three pin skis and boots and poles. If you are lucky you can get fully kitted out for the price of a burrito and a beer and be on the snow the next day. This was a great option a while ago, but the used three pin binding market is getting really old and crappy as most of the skis were made in the nineties at the latest. The old three pin boots probably are now ill fitting and not insulated and falling apart. The old skis that match may have awful bases that no longer glide and stick. It is probably not worth it. You can revisit this path if you know what you are doing and are good at getting bases all glided again (see waxing below). I will suggest you follow the second path.

The second path: Go buy a new classic touring ski package from REI/ New Moon Ski shop/Gear West/Local Nordic shop/Mailorder Nordic shop

of your choice. I would suggest something like Rossignol Evo skis, or similar Fischer or Solomon Nordic skis. Don't get the metal edge ones. These usually are like riding a mountain bike on the road as you are worried about potholes. You want mid-width (less than 70mm wide), not racing skinny, not back country wide, just narrow enough to sit in tracks at a groomed area, just wide enough to give you some all-terrain freedom. Make

sure the boots are comfy. Good NNN boots will be your key to future skis as you want to branch out to in track skiing or more out of track skiing or racing or what have you. If you time things right, you can get a package below \$500 with good boots, good skis and poles. Nordic touring gear comes with either fish scales or skins now. The fish scales are a bit more rugged and easier to keep gliding in all conditions, so preference for those, but don't worry either way. Along with whatever skis you get (used or new), get you some paste wax to keep your skis gliding. An alternative strategy is buy some really comfy NNN boots that you are able to try on somewhere and then figure out skis and poles later.

#### Sizing

Skis are generally sold by weight to match the length/flex in the ski which helps you glide better and kick better. Poles are sold by height, you want classic poles to come up to your

chin/lips or so. Err on the side of larger baskets at first. Boots are sold by shoe size and they are a weird variety of Euro sizing, kind of like bike shoes, so best to try stuff on if you can, or at least work with a good mail order outfit that has good return policy and advice on which boots run narrow or true to size.

#### On waxing

Nordic skiing has done itself a disservice by calling skis with fish scales or skins as waxless skis. This is meant to distinguish between skis that you need to put kick wax on, versus fish scales that don't need kick wax to be used. HOWEVER, you still need to do something to the smooth part of the bases to keep them gliding well. The main reason I am not all-in on used gear is that most people buy waxless skis and never do anything to the bases. The bases then dry out and get little micro or macroscopic hairy features that snow, especially wet snow, just sticks to and the skis suck and sit unused in the closet until they are sold to some unsuspecting newbie at the thrift store. You can probably save the bases if they get hairy, but I recommend just starting with new skis and using some sort of rub on, buff off paste wax to keep them gliding. Usually this comes in a shoe shine tin or a toothpaste tube with a sponge on it, or a deodorant type applicator. You just rub it on, maybe sit it in the sun for a bit or in a warm spot, and then buff it off before you ski. You can get really into glide waxing with hot irons

#### Important note for those of you combing the thrift stores:

*There are a whole bunch of evolutionary dead ends in the clipless type bindings. Avoid SNS classic bindings and any non-NNN boots/bindings that look like they are from the eighties or nineties. Don't buy them if there is a loop of metal coming off the front of the toe, or the boots are low tops, or almost any Adidas boots. There are also wider 3pin and NNN BC (back country) versions that I would recommend steering well clear of. You want maximum compatibility with other skis. I recommend committing to NNN boots for maximum current and future compatibility as well as backwards compatibility for the last 25 years. Ignore the Sirens call of \$5 three pin skis at the garage sales.*

and hard wax, but I don't recommend going down this path unless you already are set up for this. Usually the touring type ski bases don't really absorb hot wax like a race ski will, so it is of limited use.

#### Skiing

OK, so you figured out how to get your skis and poles and boots, now what do you do? There are three styles of classic skiing:

1. Walking around on skis and gliding on the downhill.
2. Shuffling your skis and getting some kick and glide without lifting your skis.



3. Full on kick and glide where you actually get some kick and weight transfer and you lift your trailing ski as you commit to the gliding one, which sets you up for maximum glide and speed.

Worst case scenario you are walking on skis and gliding down hills. This is not efficient, but it beats hiking or snow-shoeing. Most people sit between 1 and 2 or 2 and 3. Which is just fine. I always recommend that people take formal or informal lessons to figure out how to stand on the skis and figure out weight transfer and maximizing glide, but if you don't start out skiing as a young person you might never really figure out weight transfer, so don't worry about it too much and have fun. In general your weight needs to be forward, not on your heels. Watch some YouTube videos if you are on your own. You can do some simple weight transfer and poling drills in your living room that will help you a bunch when you get on snow. Once on the snow you can do some stepping



and ski agility drills that will go a long way, but again don't worry too much, just go for it.

If you are in rolly terrain you should know how to snowplow to stop and scrub speed. As you get more comfortable you can figure out step turning and such, but mostly I recommend getting out there and trying it and seeing what does not work and then addressing that.

As far as poling, again you can just kind of use your poles as stability or use them well for propulsion or somewhere in between. You should be using your arms and core to get moving, but again, just get out there and work on it as you go.

Anyhow, That is a whole lot of words saying "get some skis and boots and poles and find some snow and try things out". If you send this to your pal and they say I am wrong, feel free to listen to your pal, especially if they are going to take you skiing and give you some pointers. Like I said, defer to your local community, local ski shop, local Nordic area. Just get out there, take a lesson if you can find one, and stop road biking in the winter. Sheesh.

Tarik Saleh is an avid cyclist and oversees the internationally famous Tarik Saleh Bike Club. He avoided Nordic skiing for years as "the last thing he needed was another gear intensive sport," but got a set of classic skis 20 years ago and spends most of his winter Nordic skiing around his home in northern New Mexico. He also has a workshop filled with bikes AND skis now. Dammit.

## The Tragedy of Seals & Crofts

By Will Robertson

When most people are reminded of the 1970s folk-pop duo Seals and Crofts, they think of one song in particular, 1972's ultra-saccharine "Summer Breeze." Initially the band was simply an unremarkable Texan folk duo, but after being stalked by an A&R representative from Warner Brothers Records, things changed - the company saw them as a profitable commodity. The confident Darrell "Dash" Crofts, with his rudimentary vocals, grotesque facial hair, and semi-consistent mandolin playing, was to be the frontman of the duo, while the timid James "Jimmy" Seals was the brains behind the operation due to his songwriting ability.

The tragic nature of Seals and Crofts' story doesn't have to do with their aversion to musical risk, curtailed chart success, or modest creative legacy;

it is that they were treated by the music industry in an industrial capacity yet felt no compulsion to rebel against it. Their chord progressions strike the ultimate balance of melancholia and elation, the basslines are interesting, and the inclusion of a mandolin adds depth, yet when the tempos



CREDIT: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

ease, these positives are reduced to merely being addendums to some of the most irritably bland music ever created. Further problems occur when Crofts or Seals decide to tackle a specific issue and turn their lyric sheet into a misinformed treatise on the problems they see within the contemporary world.

The partnership between Warner Brothers and Seals and Crofts worked well in the beginning. Tracks like the precious "When I Meet Them," sultry "Summer Breeze," and uptempo family appreciation anthem "Diamond Girl" sold in impressive quantities and did well on the Billboard charts. Once the band's novelty wore off, however, things took a depressing turn. To counter their waning popularity, Seals and Crofts decided their best option was to make a calculated turn toward the adult contemporary market. The ensuing music was not created for sustained admiration by a specific fanbase, it was manufactured to take advantage of the worst tendencies of American mass-market consumerism.

Two significant problems for Seals and Crofts were the self-limiting mechanics of the music they created and their unfortunate visual aesthetic. The mandolin, whose originality was a major reason for them signing to Warner Brothers to begin with, did not provide a sound that could fit on pop radio, and as such, what was once a distinctive aspect of their sound became an Achilles heel. As styles such as funk and disco reshaped popular music, Seals and Crofts were stuck in the past, writing lifeless ballads

on topics no one in their right mind wanted to hear their perspective on. The band's vain attempt at a disco crossover, 1978's "You're The Love," was only a minor hit, and signified to the public that if Seals and Crofts were recording disco tracks too, the genre no longer had any sophistication.

Another limitation the band faced was a lack of singing aptitude in Dash Crofts. From the late 1960s to 1974, the band's folk instrumentation and snug harmonies obscured this issue, but when they moved to an adult contemporary sound, tracks like "One More Time" (off 1978's *Takin' It Easy*) and "If and Any Love" (from 1980's *The Longest Road*), made the limitations of Croft's nasal sneer very obvious. On the former, we find him forcing a vibrato so incessantly that it makes his voice come across paper-thin. The fact that it is a ballad only makes the problem worse, since the slow tempo and luxurious instrumentation give more room in the mix for his overdramatic vocal runs, during which we can hear Croft's lack of proper breath control. On the latter, "If and Any Love," the verse and chorus shapes only validate the notion that Crofts has no soul in his tenor. It isn't that he has an irredeemably terrible voice, it's just that the sound of it is unsuited to the high-budget perfection of the instrumentation.

The band's other problem was visual. Their lack of aesthetic comprehension is seen in press photos taken of the band and their gaudy choice of album art. In press photos, we always see the band members standing next to each other and leaning at the camera. Their facial

hair is frenzied, the clothing dated, and the background is unexceptional. In terms of their album covers, all are unflattering. The collage used on *I'll Play for You* shows the duo with their respective instruments surrounded by a suspiciously-fartlike blue cloud, backed by a close-up shot of their faces superimposed above. It is a ghastly image.

Their discography is, more than anything, a monument to the devastation that occurs when profit motives intersect with the personal convictions of fraught artists trying to ensure their own survival. There is, however, a kind of appeal that exists in what they were able to create. Even on early songs, the melodies are catchy, the vocal harmonies are done with care, and the instrumentation has profane clarity. The track "Year of Sunday," despite having cringeworthy lines about how "God made a pact with Abraham, Abraham gathered his family, and brought his people home," even includes a short mandolin solo (at 0:51) that could be seen as a precursor to New York City's early 2000s post-punk-revival scene. These moments of greatness are why it can be periodically rewarding to return to the Seals and Crofts discography, as they hint at a potential unrealized by the band.

Will became enamored with Northeast Washington and Ferry County in particular during a pandemic-induced hiatus from college. He writes about music, landscapes, and people, and is based in Spokane.







LIZA GLIDES OVER SHERMAN CREEK WILDLIFE AREA ON A BRILLIANT WINTER DAY

## Low land off-tracking

As an addendum to Tarik's excellent advice about finding good-enough Nordic skis, it's worth noting that if you do find some old metal-edge skis that fit your boots, they might be worth getting. Thrift stores and garage sales in this region always seem to have some old cross country/Nordic gear in a barrel somewhere. The metal edge cross country skis are not a requirement for off-track skiing, but they do make cutting into turns easier if you run into steeper sections. These skis tend to be a tad wider too, so they offer a bit more stability for hack skiers, which is a perfectly acceptable level of skill for off-track pissing around.

Ferry County and the surrounding area has all sorts of cool areas for exploring off track. If it's not clear, 'off track' means not groomed. When you ski off track you're just busting

through snow where you feel like going! We highly recommend finding some low, mostly flat land for this sort of skiing.



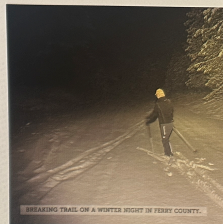
LIZA SKIS OFF TRACK IN BARSTOW AREA

Low and flat discards the whole avalanche potential completely out of hand. There are unlimited areas to go flat landing off track in Ferry County. A few to consider:

Kettle River Rail Trail on the east side of KCT. Actually, sections of this trail are groom periodically.

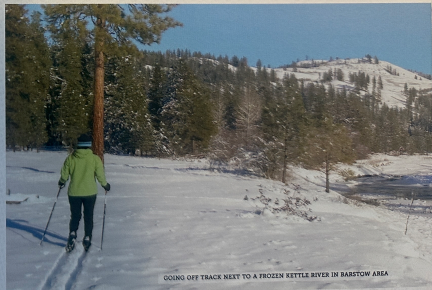
Kettle River on west side of KCT. Check out the section of deprecated Old Highway 3 (395) in Barstow. Follows the Kettle River towards Napoleon Bridge for 3 mile out-n-back.

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. There's a couple sections here, but search internet for 'Sherman Creek Point Loop Trail.' This area is probably the best day trip around for off-track skiing. Huge views of the Columbia river and potential for miles of exploration.



BREAKING TRAIL ON A WINTER NIGHT IN FERRY COUNTY

For Steven's County, the Colville golf course is a popular spot for early morning loops before work. And of course the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge is a huge space with lots of off track options.



GOING OFF TRACK NEXT TO A FROZEN KETTLE RIVER IN BARSTOW AREA



# 5 TIME'S GOT YER SALSA MACHA

RIGHT HERE

ADAPTED FROM ALL THE RECIPES, ALL THE PLACES  
YIELD: ABOUT 6 CUPS

## INGREDIENTES

4 CUPS OLIVE AND AVOCADO OIL  
8 DRIED ANCHO CHILES ... STEMS AND SEEDS REMOVED, CHOPPED  
8 DRIED CHILE NEGRO ... SAME  
8 DRIED MORTA CHILES ... SAME  
3 DRIED CASCABEL CHILES ... UH-HUH  
1 DRIED GUAJILLO ... ONE LAST TIME  
10-16 GARLIC CLOVES, PEELLED AND HALVED  
1.33 CUPS ROASTED PEANUTS AND/OR HAZELNUTS  
4 TABLESPOONS WHITE SESAME SEEDS  
2 TABLESPOONS SHERRY VINEGAR  
2 TEASPOONS LIGHT BROWN SUGAR  
SEA SALT, TO TASTE

## STEP 1

IN A GOOD-SIZED HEAVY BOTTOMED SAUCEPAN, HEAT UP THE OIL OVER MEDIUM THEN DROP DOWN TO LOW. ADD THE GARLIC TO THE OIL AND COOK, STIRRING OFTEN, UNTIL A VERY LIGHT GOLDEN BROWN AND AROMATIC, ABOUT 5-10 MINUTES LOW & SLOW IS BEST.

## STEP 2

ADD ALL THE CHILES. BUMP THE HEAT UP A WEE BIT, AND FRY STIRRING OFTEN UNTIL THE CHILES PUFF UP AND THE INSIDES START TO LIGHTEN. YOU'LL SMELL THEM.

## STEP 3

ADD THE NUTS AND SESAME SEEDS TO THE OIL MIXTURE AND FRY UNTIL SEEDS SMELL TOASTY AND LIGHTLY BROWNED. ADD THE VINEGAR AND SUGAR, AND COOK UNTIL THE DRAMA OF THE VINEGAR EVAPORATES FULLY, ABOUT 1 MINUTE.

## STEP 4

REMOVE FROM THE HEAT, AND LET IT ALL COOL IN THE PAN, ABOUT 15 MINUTES.

## STEP 5

ONCE MOSTLY COOLED, TRANSFER THE MIXTURE TO A FOOD PROCESSOR IN BATCHES. PULSE/BLEND UNTIL THE NUTS AND CHILES ARE FINELY CHOPPED, BUT STOP BEFORE IT STARTS TO BECOME A PASTE. RESERVE SOME OF THE NUTS TO PULSE COARSELY AT THE END. FINALLY, SEASON TO TASTE WITH SEA SALT.

SPOON/POUR INTO JARS AND USE IMMEDIATELY, OR KEEP REFRIGERATED FOR A COUPLE MONTHS, BUT PROBABLY NOT. CUZ TER GONNA EAT IT.



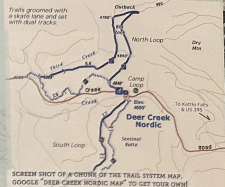
# Boulder Pass: Nordic skiing

By John Speare

"Boulder Pass" is how everyone refers to what is officially the top of "Deer Creek - Boulder Creek Highway 602." When you ski at the top of Boulder Pass, you're at the "Deer Creek Sno Park." The "sno park" part of that means that the Forest Service actually grooms a set of trails for Nordic and skate skiing. Given how far flung Boulder is from any significant population center, it's a great place to go skiing. And, frankly, it's sort of surprising that it's groomed at all.

That said, it's not an extensive trail system. It's mainly a couple out-n-backs on each side of the road.

On the north side, the groomed trail is on the Taylor Ridge trailhead road that runs parallel to the KCT. That's about 1.5 miles. It's a nice gentle climb out and a pleasant glide back down.



SCREEN SHOT OF A CHUNK OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM MAP, GOOGLE "DEER CREEK NORDIC MAP" TO GET YOUR OWN!

As noted in the Hok article earlier in this issue, the KCT here is a popular spot to play on Hok skis around the sides of Sentinel Butte peak. If you skin up the KCT side you'll see all sorts of Hok tracks going in all directions. Mind the avalanche smarts J.D. wrote about earlier as you explore the routes.

The south side of the groomed trails climb up the other side of the road. I think this side is a better Nordic trip than the north side. It's about 3 miles of out and back, but includes some

nice climbs and gentle descents for both directions. And if you're feeling strong, at the terminus, you can loop it by taking an ungroomed trail back up to the trailhead.

This little spot on top of Boulder Pass is totally worth checking out if you're in the neighborhood during the winter. And just like riding the KCT, unless you go on a Saturday morning, it's unlikely that you'll see anyone else on these trails.



HOKING POOR DAVE TO THE SNEJONGING OUTFIT. IT'S LAX AN EINK! SO EASY. ALTHOUGH THE PICTURE DOES NOT ILLUSTRATE THIS, DAVE TOTALLY UNDERSTOOD THE WHOLE PROGRAM AS SOON AS WE HOOKED HER INTO THE HARNESS

MEMBER



Tarik Saleh

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2. Try not to be an ass

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