

TRACKS TRAIL CREW (TC)

By Jerry Good

The trail crew was pleased with the work we were able to get done last year. It was very difficult and just hard work but much was accomplished. The crew carried on and just plain got it done. We have a wonderful and very hard-working crew who deserve much thanks for all they accomplished. Thank you trail crew! As for 2023, we hope to start the 1st Monday in April if weather permits. Hope to see everyone then. 🎉

WHITE MOUNTAIN NATURE CENTER (WMNC)

The WMNC is open Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10am – 12pm each week and holds special programs throughout the summer.

Jan 7 6pm Bird Presentation Rob Bettaso, John Glitos, Brenda Strosnider
Jan 21 6pm Black Bears Lorna McNeil-Cox
Jan 26 5pm Land on Sky Enrichment Meeting
Feb 23 5pm Land on Sky Enrichment Meeting
Mar 23 5pm Land on Sky Enrichment Meeting

SAVE THE DATE: Annual Benefit Dinner
Saturday July 23 5:00 HonDah Casino

Note: All events are held at the Nature Center on Woodland Lake Road. Please contact the WMNC to confirm events.

The WMNC is a non-profit organization and donations are also gratefully accepted. We are currently looking for volunteers to help with our center and programs and for board members! Please contact us if you are interested at: (928) 358-3069. For more information, please visit our website

<https://whitemountainnaturecenter.org/> or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WhiteMountainNatureCenter/> 🎉

SPOTLIGHT

By Nick Lund

Great news: Our White Mountains Trail System has been chosen to be the 2023 Spotlight Program by the Leave No Trace Foundation. The program will be June 2-5, 2023. Lynn Krigbaum, TRACKS vice president, and Arlene Nelson, TRACKS Board member, have volunteered to serve on a committee to plan the event. Please contact Lynn (gemma.krigbaum@yahoo.com) if you would like to serve on the committee. Your help will be greatly appreciated. 🎉

UPDATE ON GRANTS

By Nick Lund

TRACKS was granted almost \$60,000 by the Arizona State Parks and Trails for installation of 43 ramp gates on the 200+ mile non-motorized White Mountains Trail System. The first ramp gates will hopefully be installed in December, depending on weather conditions. Our contractor said that they should not be installed when the ground is wet or frozen. He has started to construct the next 6 gates.

The USFS Lakeside Ranger District included a NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) study as a priority for the short cut route that TRACKS proposed for the Blue Ridge trail. As one of our steeper and rockier trails, TRACKS will use a contractor to rough out the trail followed by grooming and signing by our trail crew. This \$40,000 grant is through Navajo County.

The Save the Buena Vista Foundation vice president and TRACKS member Jason Moore secured funding to perform the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) for the proposed changes to the Buena Vista trail. A proposed scope of work has been submitted to the USFS for approval. 🎉

TRACKS BIKING*By Nick Lund*

Enjoy the winter and see you in the spring. 🐾

Winter White Mountain Happenings

Jan 7, 6 to 7pm	For the Birds!
Jan 4	Audubon Society Meeting
Jan 14 – 15, 4-8pm	Night Skiing/Snowboarding Sunrise Ski Resort
Feb 1	Audubon Society Meeting
Feb 18 – 19, 4-8pm	Night Skiing/Snowboarding Sunrise Ski Resort
Mar 1	Audubon Society Meeting

For more information on the above events and other events that are happening in the White Mountains, please visit the respective website and/or Visitor Center for more information:

Pinetop/Lakeside

<https://www.VisitPinetoplakeside.com>

Show Low Chamber of Commerce:

www.showlowchamber.com/

Snowflake/Taylor Chamber of Commerce:

<https://snowflaketaylorchamber.org/calendar/>

White Mountain Audubon Society:

<http://www.whitemountainaudubon.org/>

White Mountain Apache Tribe:

<http://whitemountainapache.org/>

Sunrise Ski Resort: <https://www.sunriseskipark.com/>**UP THE HILL GANG (UTHG)***By Susan High*

The “Up the Hill Gang” Wednesday morning hiking group will meet in March to plan the 2023 Spring/Summer Hiking schedule. Spring hikes usually are relatively short (approx. 3 – 4 miles) with little elevation gain so people have a chance to adjust or re-adjust to our elevation. In the meantime, we wish you Merry Christmas or happy holidays, whatever you are celebrating!

Hiking distances are approximate, and the difficulty rating is subjective. Please know your limitations, bring extra water, snacks, and other supplies as needed for your safety and enjoyment.

In compliance with ASNF policy, dogs are allowed as long as they remain leashed. Leashes must be 6 feet or shorter, and hikers with dogs will be asked to walk at the back of the group to avoid tripping and other hazards. Please put your phone in silent mode prior to the hike. 🐾

TUESDAY TREKKERS*By Jim Meeker*

The Tuesday Trekkers encourage individuals to plan hikes with their friends during the winter. As an example, three Tuesday Trekkers hiked three miles in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve recently in a hike arranged by telephone. We will have a plan for next summer’s weekly hikes ready for the next edition of the newsletter. 🐾

APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST Lakeside Ranger District News

It's true! Arizona does get snow! The high country on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests receives ample snow each year for various types of snow play. The only question is when that snow arrives.

During most winters, skiing and snowmobiling can first occur around Christmas but sometimes the snow simply doesn't show up until January. Popular winter activities include snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, tubing, and ice fishing.

Although there are few designated snowmobile trails, roads that are inaccessible to other vehicles at this time of year offer many miles of ready-made trails. One recommended snowmobile route, however, is from the Williams Valley area west of Alpine on FR 249 to Big Lake.

There are four areas that are recommended for cross-country skiing although there are endless other routes that could be selected: Hannagan Meadow south of Alpine, Williams Valley west of Alpine, Pole Knoll and Greer west of Springerville, and Forest Lakes west of Heber.

Some of the finest downhill skiing in the entire Southwest can be found at Sunrise Park Ski Area between Eagar and Pinetop-Lakeside. Sunrise is a modern facility and can provide the visitor with everything from lodging to babysitting.

Winter camping is available in the backcountry and some campgrounds that are open year-round. Snowshoeing opportunities exist throughout the Forests but can be particularly fun when combined with ice fishing at Woods Canyon, Willow Springs, or Luna lakes.

It will take snowmobiles to access the other good ice fishing lakes such as Big Lake, Crescent Lake, Chevelon Canyon Lake, and Bear Canyon Lake. Ice fishing is most convenient at Nelson Reservoir since its accessible by automobile.

There is an area in Williams Valley west of Alpine that is very popular for tubing. Here you can sled, toboggan, or tube down the slope. Additionally, forest users often venture out to their own favorite locations.

Road and driving conditions can be hazardous in the winter so please be prepared. We recommend that all vehicles, even 4-wheel drives, have a set of tire chains. Bring extra food, water, warm clothes, and tell somebody where you are going so that searchers can more easily find you should you become stranded.

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Fire Management webpage <https://www.fs.usda.gov/asnf> and <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/asnf/fire> ❗

GAME & FISH (AZGF) NEWS

By Aaron Hartzell

As winter settles in it is a great time to stay active and enjoy all that the White Mountains has to offer. During this season wildlife can often be found in large groups in their winter range, which includes those areas on the northern edge of the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest. This is particularly true for elk and pronghorn herds. Seeing these groups of wildlife can be exciting and can provide for great photo opportunities. Often these herds can be seen from the roadway, but you may also be able to go to them by hiking, snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing. The Department encourages people to take advantage of these opportunities but do so from a distance.

Winter can be a stressful time of year for wildlife as they work to conserve resources. If you get out there and find herds, please do not chase them, or get them worked up which can cause them to burn more energy than necessary. If you stay quiet and maintain a good distance from them, you will be able to enjoy them longer and observe their natural behavior. These experiences can lead to a lifetime of memories so get out there and enjoy our awesome natural resources. ❗

TRACKS WINTER SCHEDULE

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION / DETAILS
Trail Crew: No official schedule. Work will be done depending on weather and trail needs.	Trail Crew (TC): Beautify the Trails <i>Weather permitting</i>	To volunteer, visit our website www.trackswitemountains.org/subscribe , and tick the checkbox for Trail Crew, or email Nick Lund at: nplundaz@gmail.com . See page one of this newsletter for information about Trail Crew news.
Biking: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday.	Biking <i>Weather permitting</i>	To receive biking information visit www.trackswitemountains.org/subscribe and tick the checkbox for Biking or email Nick Lund at nplundaz@gmail.com . See page two of this newsletter for more biking news.
UP THE HILL GANG Look for schedule in next TRACKS newsletter.	Up the Hill Gang (UTHG) and Tuesday Trekkers hiking: <i>Weather permitting</i> See page two for specific hiking schedule information.	To get UTHG WEDNESDAY information please check box on the website for “Hiking” on “Join” form and/or email Susan High at shigh118@gmail.com . For maps, newsletters, and additional information, please see the Tracks website: https://trackswitemountains.org/
BOARD MEETING: Thursdays before the General Meeting at 1:00 January 12, February 9, March 9	TRACKS Board Meeting Members and visitors welcome	White Mountain Nature Center (WMNC) 425 Woodland Lake Rd, Lakeside
GENERAL MEETING Second Saturday of the month January 14, February 11, March 11	TRACKS General Meeting (visitors welcome)	Summer meetings are potlucks held at the big ramada at Woodland Lake. Fall and winter meetings held at Darbi’s; come at 7:30 to order breakfast.