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## Enjoying the best of both worlds

### Dual-sport riding takes motorcyclists from the streets to the trails

By Clay Light / *For The Bulletin*



[Photo submitted by Dave Wachs](#)

Wide open spaces: Jeff Moe of Redmond kicks up some dust while riding his Honda XR 650R motorcycle on a remote dirt track in southeast Oregon.



One of the best-kept secrets in motorcycling, dual-sport riding combines the best of both worlds for two-wheel enthusiasts: where street meets dirt, and the trails seemingly never end.

While not yet as popular as motocross, dual sport is attracting rapidly rising numbers of participants - enough that earlier this year, Bend resident Brad Cockman took notice and sought to form a Bend-based Central Oregon dual-sport club.

Cockman's dream of forming a local dual-sport club for street-legal dirt bikes didn't take long to become reality, as a multitude of riders responded to his posting on a popular off-road motorcycling Web site and, after a short period of time, the club came to life.

"I think that most people get the impression that there are only two types of motorcycles, dirt or street," Cockman says. "Whenever I ride my Suzuki DRZ400 to work (he travels the Northwest as a chiropractor) and tell people of my riding the streets to get to my off-road destinations, they have trouble comprehending that fact. They feel that I should be riding my

[Photo submitted by Jim Allyn](#)

Nature ride: Brad Cockman of Bend rides his motorcycle through a wooded area near Bend.

motorcycle on a motocross track after they've seen what I am riding!"

With its added lighting and muffled exhaust, the dual-sport motorcycle is notably different from a motocross

motorcycle. But the two bikes do share many similarities, including the ability to travel over rough terrain at a high rate of speed. That's something not feasible on a full-blown street motorcycle with lesser suspension travel and, in most cases, down-swept exhaust, a dangerous combination for the treacherous high-desert country of Central and Eastern Oregon and northern Nevada, and other popular dual-sport sites in the region.

Cockman, 42, and five other Bend-area riders in late October met up with a group of Portland riders to ride the Gifford Pinchot National Forest area of southwestern Washington, just across the Columbia River from Hood River.

"We trailered the bikes in, instead of riding several hours on pavement," Cockman says. "It was a very beautiful, scenic ride. It was pretty challenging, and a lot different than what we are used to in Central Oregon. It was damp, and on top of that it was frosty and slippery. Our average speed that day was around 7> miles per hour, where some of the other rides we average around 45 mph."

Some rides, with equally breathtaking scenery, don't go as well.

"We had a ride late last summer to Waldo Lake and had 11 riders," Cockman recalls. "The trip got cut a bit short after one rider fell and broke some ribs and had to be hauled out. Other riders were plagued by more typical things, like flat tires and other mechanical problems. So instead of a two-day, 200-mile ride, it ended up being just short of 70 miles."

"For the majority of riding I do, my Suzuki is a good a fit for me," Cockman says. "It doesn't hold as much fuel as most dual-sport motorcycles do (with a 120-mile fuel range). There weren't many rides I've done this past summer, except for one particular ride to Wagontire in Eastern Oregon, where I had to carry extra fuel. We like to keep the rides on the short side."

Perhaps one of the more storied of the club's participants is Dave Wachs. For the past 30 years, Wachs has ridden all aspects of motorcycling - scrambles and motocross competition, and virtually all forms of off-road recreation and street biking - and is one of the more traveled of the Bend-area riders.

Wachs has logged thousands of miles this past summer aboard his 640cc Austrian-built KTM, including a recent seven-day trek throughout Eastern Oregon and Nevada. From his Tumalo garage, Wachs and two other riders this past June rode 1,500 miles - 105 miles of pavement and 1,400 miles of desert and mountainous terrain - and braved a variety of elements, including some cold, blustery weather.

Wachs' weeklong journey was not without a bit of adversity, as a variety of problems - including brake failure in treacherous, rocky conditions, and a close encounter with a rattlesnake - made that particular trek a memorable one for the 49-year-old.

"I saw this snake in the middle of a trail and thought I'd just ride around it," Wachs recalls. "But as I approached it, the snake quickly coiled up and sprung out at me. I had already anticipated that and swung my foot out of the way. Luckily, I had thick riding boots on and all the snake got was a piece of my boot!"

Many of those trips - of several thousand miles or more - have been solo efforts on Wachs' part. He prefers to travel alone or in small groups, rather than in larger rider packs.

Wachs uses a map, a compass and a small pair of binoculars as navigational devices.

"I've been riding that particular part of (Eastern Oregon and Nevada) for about 15 years now, and have gone through several motorcycles in that time in trying to figure out those routes," Wachs said. "But I still get turned around from time to time."

Clay Light is a freelance writer. He can be reached at 503-734-6406 or at [cdalight@worldnet.att.net](mailto:cdalight@worldnet.att.net).