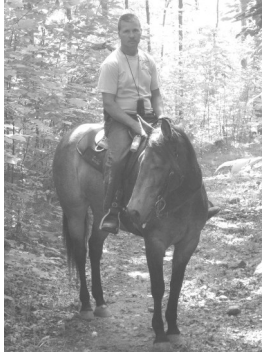


## RIDE WISCONSIN-Underdown Recreational Area

Patty Wisneski

Underdown Horse Trails were developed in cooperation with the Lincoln County Department of Forestry and Parks. The trails



are located about 10 miles from Merrill. To reach the trailhead from Merrill, take Highway K North for 8.5 miles. Turn right (East) onto Highway H, and then turn right (East) again onto Copper Lake Road. The Underdown Trailhead parking area will be on the right-hand side of the road.

There are 20 miles of horse trails on this 44,600-acre Underdown Recreation Area. The Underdown is open to horseback riders during the summer. The horseback riding trail network is made up of 20, 18, 12, 10 and 3.5 mile loops, which are marked and maintained. There are trails for mountain biking that cross the horse trails, so beware of possible cyclist. The first time I rode at Underdown being unfamiliar with the trails, I stopped to get something out of my saddlebags only to find I had stopped directly in the path

of the bike trail. My experience with the mountain bikers has been that they are considerate and accommodating. Since it is such a work out for my horse in many areas, I am impressed that mountain bikers actually ride the trails.

The trails are beautiful, but can also be rugged and challenging. Riding my Rocky Mountain mare, I do not need shoes, but for horses with tender feet, you should know the terrain might be hard on their feet. The trails are very well marked and it was



particularly clever to color code the same trail with different color when going in the opposite direction. It is pretty hard to get lost on these trails. The Underdown Horse Club maintains the trails.

The Underdown Horse Club was formed in 1982 and chartered with the State of Wisconsin in 1983 as a non-profit organization. Under the laws of the Charter all funds and efforts of the Underdown Horse Club must benefit the Underdown Horse Trail

system and Horsemen's Park and cannot be used for any other purpose. The sole purpose of the group is to assist Lincoln County in the development and maintenance of a Horsemen's Park and trail system in that part of Lincoln County known as "The Underdown".

The Underdown Horse Club has contributed over \$35,000 in cash and materials during its existence, paying for projects such as: well, toilets, campsites, parking lot expansions, tie-rails, and most recently a storage shed for trail maintenance materials (posts, signs, hardware and tools).



The cash contributions are incredible but pale in comparison to the thousands of man and woman hours donated each year by the Underdown Horse Club's dedicated volunteers. Since 1982, the Underdown Horse Club volunteers have done all of the regular maintenance on the horse trails, spending hours clearing brush and windfalls, marking all of the different trails with signs paid for by the club and replacing markers when necessary. The club members average 300-400 hours of volunteer labor yearly so that the Underdown Horse Trail can be the best of the best. It is their efforts and commitment that make this trail system one of the finest in the state of Wisconsin. The Underdown has been the recipient of Wisconsin Horse Council trail grant money in the past and has put it to very wise use.

*Continued.....*

*Continued*

## **Underdown**

In addition to the wonderful trails, The Underdown offers overnight camping for \$15.00 per night. The Recreation Area Trail Head & Campground consists of one large parking area with year round hand pump well and wayside style pit toilets. If you are looking for an upper body workout the pump will certainly provide that. It is always a good idea to come prepared to carry water, but you will need to carry the water a fair distance back to the campsites.

There is a smaller parking area with new high line tie rails for horses and group camping, as well as ten individual campsites designed for horse trailers up to 40ft tri-axle size. The campsites will easily handle motor homes as well. Campsites are on a “first come – first serve” basis.

The Underdown has become a popular destination for horseback riders so the sites in the wooded area may be taken, but additional camping is available at the trailhead.

***Underdown Horse Trails open May 1st - weather permitting. Trail passes are needed but can be purchased on site. User fees for 2014 are \$5.00 for Day Passes and \$15.00 for a Season Pass. I make it a point of supporting each trail system by purchasing a season pass whether I intend to return or not.***



I make a point of spending at least one weekend at Underdown every year. I thoroughly enjoy the trails and appreciate the hard work that is put into maintaining them by the Underdown Horse Club. With the different loops in the trail system you can take a short ride or make a day of it. It may be difficult to find water on the trail for the horses, so I encourage you to carry a portable bucket if you are going out for the day. There are plenty of spots to stop for pictures or to have lunch along the way and even on the busiest of weekends it is uncommon to cross paths with either horse riders or mountain bikers.

Given the beauty of the area and the excellent trail system, I recommend that you make The Underdown one of your riding destinations.

**“Horses - if God made anything more beautiful, he kept it for himself.”**

**Author Unknown**

Until next time – Happy Trails!