

exploring

Short Drive, New Trails Glenwood Open Space Neil Wiley

My grandfather had a saying: “She puts new life on old paths.” The City of Scotts Valley, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and many volunteers have transformed a confusing series of old paths into an interconnected network of easy-to-follow, great-to-enjoy trails just north of Scotts Valley High School. The result is a satisfying experience for local hikers, dog-walkers, and cyclists.

I hiked the West Glenwood Open Space Preserve on a winter day sandwiched between rainstorms. It was clear, but the big, beautiful clouds were changing from white to dark with the promise of rain. It was the perfect day for a hike and pictures.

At the corner of Glenwood Drive and K Street, I found the trailhead sign, complete with a large map displaying five color-coded loop trails. I climbed the entrance trail uphill to reach the Blue Loop. The short climb from 200 to 800 feet provided beautiful views of Scotts Valley.

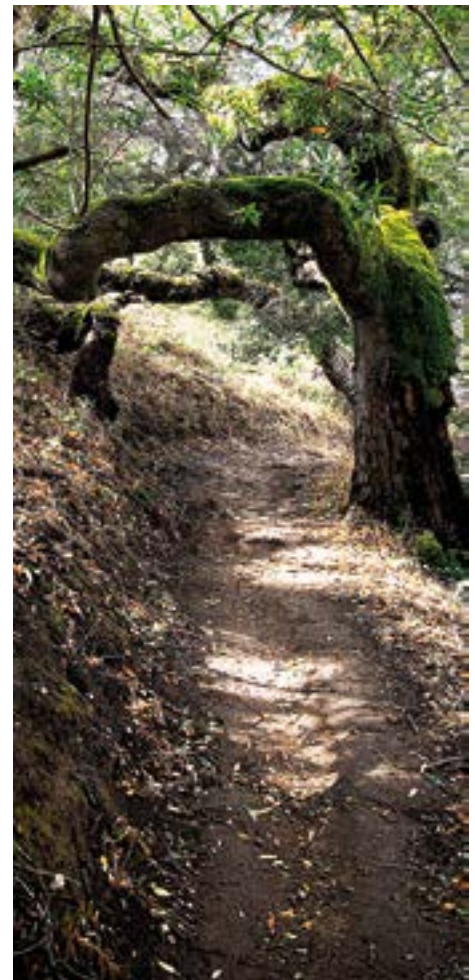
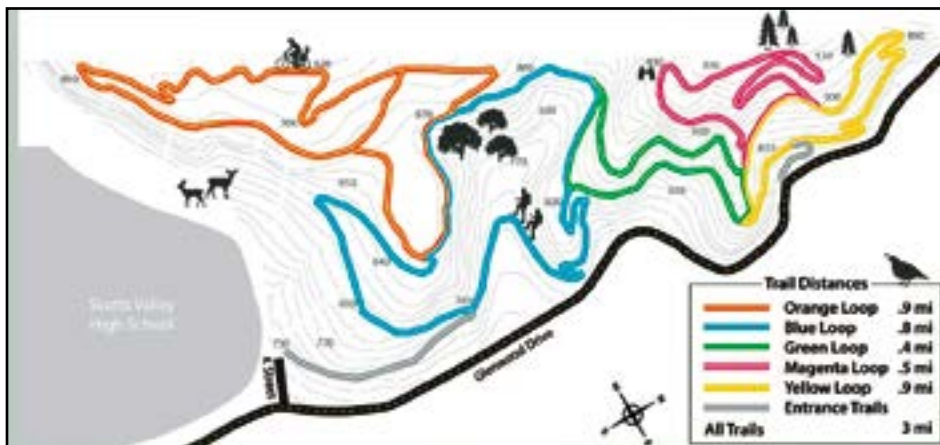
Further along the Blue Loop, the single-track trail took me from big open space to the shade of a mixed forest. All the trails



are interconnected. At each intersection, color-coded signs indicate the trail name and direction. None of the trails are more than a mile in length. Ups and downs are moderate, varying only by 100 feet or less from a 800-foot elevation. Two exceptions

are the Orange Loop that goes up to 920 feet, and the Magenta Loop that climbs up to 970 feet, with a nice scenic view at 930 feet.

The footing is good on all the trails. Most are well-compressed soil. The forest trails are leaf-covered. Some of the wetter low spots use pavers to protect the trail and your boots. It's a big improvement from wooden





decking or mud.

The new trails of the West Glenwood Preserve are well worth the short drive. Take Highway 17 south to the Granite Creek overpass to Scotts Valley. Turn right on Scotts Valley Drive, and then a quick left on Glenwood Drive. Watch for a dirt parking lot on the right. From there, walk up Glenwood Drive, past the entrance to Scotts Valley High School, and a short walk to K Street on the left for the entrance to the West Glenwood Preserve.

If you enjoy driving back roads, try a pleasant two-lane alternative to Highway 17. Instead of driving to the Granite Creek exit on Highway 17, turn right to Glenwood Drive or Glenwood Cutoff. The drive will be slower but prettier.

When you come back, use the Granite Creek overpass instead. Crossing two lanes across Highway 17 via either Glenwood alternative is risky.

Here's more good news. An East Glenwood Preserve should be open soon. It will add five more miles of trail on the east side of the 170-acre preserve. These trails took longer to build, because they must avoid sensitive habitat and required building five bridges over creeks and wetlands.

