

# Trail Times



[www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org](http://www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org)

Official Publication of the Gold Country Trails Council

GCTC is an organization committed to develop, maintain and advocate for safe integrated trails for equestrians and other non-motorized users.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings everyone,

### What do you have in store for you and your horse in 2024?

**New trails? Longer rides?** More frequent rides? New skills/disciplines? Maybe you always wanted to learn to horsepack and head out into the backcountry. Maybe you want to make sure your horse can handle traffic or a parade. Maybe you want to learn how to jump logs in a more controlled fashion than what I have been doing all these years!

### What do you plan to do with GCTC this year?

More trail rides and work days, more camping, spearheading a clinic or other event for the Club? Your energy is what makes our club a wonderful asset for all of us and the wider community.

**We need people to lead trail rides** to help members check out areas they have not ridden. One of the biggest benefits I got when I first joined was just that-finding out about trailheads and horse camps by coming to trail workdays and horse camping events. What a joy to be out in nature with our horses exploring new areas while contributing to the availability of horse trails for us now and for those coming along after us.

**Whenever you can**, come and contribute to our general meetings. This year we have a great line-up of speakers. I am especially

pleased to let you know that, after being snowed out not once, not twice, but four times last year, Rudy Darling of the Audubon Society has once again agreed to speak this March about birding in Spenceville. I was surprised to learn that the Spenceville campground area is known as a national birding hot spot in springtime.

**I hope whatever you do** in this New Year, it brings you closer to knowing your horse better.

**In closing, I leave you with a poem** from the original People of the Horse- the Native Americans, known as the best horse people ever.

**Helen Crawford**

*Gold Country Trails Council President*

**For the never-ending wild land  
For the wide-open ride  
For our horses' never-ending wild epic  
          hearts ridden by a truly-open mind  
Into every hoof print we leave, may seeds  
          of rich spiritual substance fall  
To sprout a time of hope beyond our own  
For the never-ending wild land  
For the wide-open ride  
For our horses' never-ending wild  
          epic hearts ridden by a truly  
          wide-open mind**



- NEW MEMBERS**
- Barbara Reed
  - Tracy Cordrey
  - Jackie McRae
  - Daniel Nessie
  - Carolyn. Smith
  - Hansen Family
  - Susan Van Steenkiste
  - Gail Ring
  - Patrice Abode
  - Linda Sherman
  - Dupont Family
  - Andrew Heinemann

<http://www.goldcountrytrailsCouncil.org>


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Camp Cook: Debbie Molloy  
 Communications, Web Site and Social Media:  
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 Forest Service Liaison: Mary Johnson  
 GCTC Apparel Manager: Sandrine Nattkemper  
 Historian: **OPEN**  
 Refreshment Manager: Phyllis Fanning  
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 Parades: Linda Lanzoni  
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 Cathy Scott and Judy Hiyamizu  
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 Board Member: Judy Hiyamizu  
 Board Member: Mary McMillan  
 Board Member: Bernie Molloy

**DID YOU KNOW** the names and web addresses which are in blue text and underlined in each newsletter are hyperlinks? No need to copy and paste, just click on the text, for example, [name](#), and it will open to the destination or email address.



**Minutes of the GCTC Board Meetings and the current GCTC Events Calendar can be accessed on the GCTC Website [www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org](http://www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org)**

# Happy New Year! 2024!

## JANUARY

9 Tues

GCTC General Meeting and Special Speaker!  
Chris Enss on her book "Along Came a Cowgirl"  
7pm Golden Empire Grange, GV

## FEBRUARY

13 Tues

GCTC Board Meeting 7pm GE Grange, GV

## MARCH

12 Tues

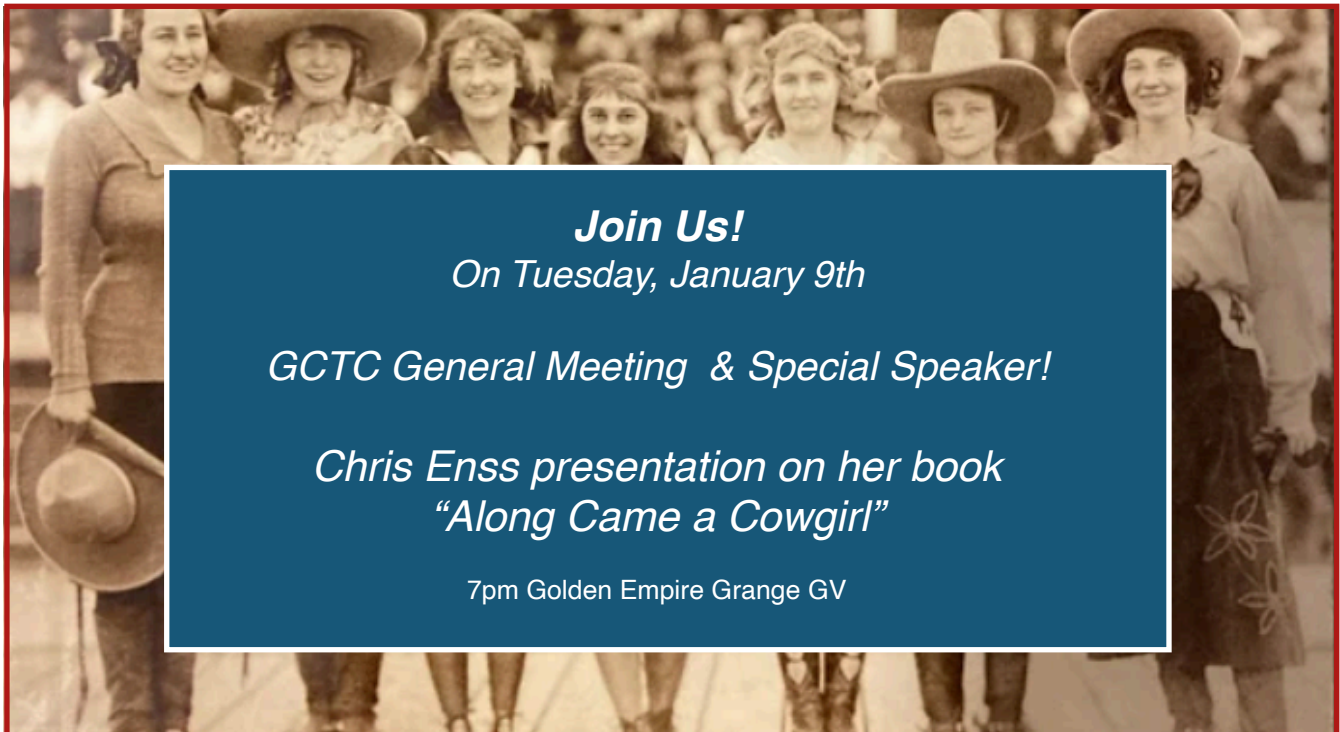
GC General Meeting and Special Speaker!  
Rudy Darling on birding in Spenceville  
7pm GE Grange, GV

## APRIL

9 Tues

GC Board Meeting 7pm GE Grange, GV

**PLEASE NOTE:** Dates and times may change. Changes and an updated calendar is always available on the website. Go to: [www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org](http://www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org), then click on the "Calendar and Events" tab.



**Join Us!**  
*On Tuesday, January 9th*  
**GCTC General Meeting & Special Speaker!**  
*Chris Enss presentation on her book*  
**"Along Came a Cowgirl"**  
7pm Golden Empire Grange GV

## A Big THANK YOU! From H.E.A.R.T.



### to the **GOLD COUNTRY TRAILS COUNCIL!**

At their November meeting they presented a check to Nevada County Sheriff's Office, Animal Control Supervisor, and H.E.A.R.T. founder S. Geckler for \$1,500.00 towards the purchase of a horse training mannequin.

As we have mentioned previously, one of our missions is the technical rescue of large animals in Nevada and surrounding Counties. To help us be better prepared, we have been raising funds for the purchase of a specialized life like horse training mannequin. We continue inching closer and closer but are still a few thousand dollars away from the full purchase price!

With generous donations from individuals and groups such as the Gold Country Trails Council, we will get there!

Some of our H.E.A.R.T. instructors, along with some firefighters from the Nevada County Consolidated Fire Department, have recently become certified technicians in Large Animal Rescue and they continue training so we can expand the Large Animal Rescue program in Nevada County. We will be training with El Dorado and Marin Counties, furthering our expertise and learning all we can so we can be there should your large animal need assistance!

Remember, should you chose to contribute, H. E. A. R. T. is a non-profit group under the 501c3 regulations. All donations are tax deductible.

Again, THANK YOU Gold Country Trails Council.

*Posted by Stefanie Geckler, Submitted by Mary Johnson*



## GCTC EQUIPMENT TRAILER

*On November 20, 2023 the much anticipated equipment trailer was picked up in Galt from D2 Trailer Sales. The enclosed cargo trailer is 6 x 12, with dual axles, a rear ramp and a side door for access. It promises to be a great addition for GCTC tools and equipment for storage and transport. Designing and outfitting the interior with an organized storage system is the next step for future use.*

*Submitted by Mary Johnson*



## Top Hand Recipient for 2023

**TOM FLETCHER!**

These comments sent in by GCTC members with their nomination/votes say it all. Congratulations Tom!!

*I nominate Tom Fletcher for top hand 2023. He has been a willing and happy volunteer supporting the trail system. He also finds time to support fellow GCTC members who need help. Tom has a busy family life however always finds the time to show up for work days.*

*We vote for Tom Fletcher for Top Hand this year. Tom has always stepped up when called upon. And he's been very helpful with what needs to be accomplished out on the trails. He's been great to work with.*

*A dedicated GCTC member who is always there on our trail workdays. He is ready and able with a four wheel vehicle and a chainsaw. Thank you, Tom!*

*I nominate/vote for Tom Fletcher. He consistently volunteers to help out with GCTC events, trail work, and offers help to fellow GCTC members when they need a hand. He does all this quietly, without drawing attention to himself. Yet he is one of the "Go To" members that comes to mind whenever we need to get something done.*

*Tom has been showing up at work days and GCTC Camp/work/ride events for years. From putting in posts and corral boards to chain sawing to trail building and clearing, Tom shows up with all the tools needed, a great sense of humor and a great attitude.*

*Tom is an all around amazing man. He gives his all to GCTC.*

*Two votes for Tom Fletcher with the big mustache. Tom is at every work party and brings excellent skills. He also sports a sunny, can-do personality with a great sense of humor. He has been a loyal GCTC member for years and is a pleasure to work with.*

*Tom is an all around nice guy who is willing to help when ever he can. He attends work days, camping work days, fundraisers, rides, and meetings with an "I can help" attitude. He is quite skilled with a chainsaw, carefully taking care of problem trees that block trails. When given a repair task such as a challenging corral repair, he expertly figures the best options and superbly completes the job working in harmony with other volunteers. Tom definitely deserves to have his name on the perpetual top hand award along with all of the great winners that have gone before him.*

*I vote for Tom Fletcher for top hand, over the years Tom has been a dedicated worker at work days, supporting GCTC activities, always with a friendly and positive attitude. Always willing to help when called upon. Tom has gone above and beyond for GCTC and is clearly deserving of the Top Hand Award.*

*Tom - who's always doing lots of work at the work days!*

*He's a great asset to our club. You can count on him to help with any activity the club needs (even if it means spending a few hours away from his wife while they're on vacation, i.e. Little Lasier). His enthusiasm is infectious. His dedication and generosity to the club is admirable.*

*I vote Tom Fletcher for volunteer of the year. I don't know of anyone more generous with their time.*

*I vote for Tom Fletcher, he is an amazingly hard worker at every work day!*



### **2023 GCTC Accomplishments**

**GCTC members attended Nevada County Woods Riders** annual meeting. Miners Foundry, Nevada City. Emphasis on all forest user groups working together. Presentation by/about Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship.

**GCTC members planned and volunteered at many successful trail workdays throughout the year.**

Clearing Lone Grave area trails.

Two workdays at Skillman Campground. One joint workday with the Nevada County Woods Riders cleaning camp, and a second one with GCTC members clearing the Pioneer, Hallelujah, and Dogwood trails.

Little Lasier Meadow camp and workday, cleaning camp, repairing corrals, clearing surrounding trails. Continued successful communication and cooperation with Truckee and Sierraville Ranger Districts regarding GCTC involvement with Little Lasier Meadow Horse Camp.

Loney Meadows camp and workday, well attended with lots of clearing done and a short reroute on the Bull Pen Lake Trail avoiding a very rocky area.

Three person GCTC volunteer crew repaired a section and cut out two large trees on the Pioneer Trail above Lang Crossing.

“Pop up” workday rerouting a short section of the tie trail between the Dascombe and Harmony trails.

GCTC members participated in Grouse Fest with Bicyclists of Nevada County and Tahoe National Forest, clearing along a portion of the Grouse Ridge Trail, and scouting additional sections of trail for needed work.

**Communicated with Ken Taylor of the Pacific Crest Trail Association** about possible improvement work on a narrow section of the PCT near Jackson Meadows Reservoir.

**Very successful fund raiser Poker Ride** with many GCTC volunteers and participants enjoying a beautiful weekend in the Tahoe National Forest.

**Participated in two parades**, Penn Valley Rodeo and Fourth of July, with many riders and walkers representing and promoting GCTC.

**Enjoyed trail rides** at Spenceville, Ananda, to the town of Washington, and a pre-ride at Royal Gorge. Trail rides were hampered by highway work on Highway 20 and I-80.

**GCTC information booths** at the Loomis Basin Equine Health Fair, featuring a test your knowledge wheel for kids, and at the Bear Yuba Land Trust’s Celebration of Trails in Nevada City with pony rides for youngsters.

**GCTC Volunteer Appreciation Ride** staged from the Gold Country Equestrian Trail Head, with marked trails and a delicious lunch following the ride. At a lovely site along the Dascombe Trail, a picnic table was placed for trail users. The table was provided by GCTC and BONC with a plaque: In honor of Sue and Willie Brusin, life members of GCTC, for their unwavering dedication in support of trails for all users to enjoy.

**Provided a portable toilet** at the Loney Meadows camp/workday and the GCTC Volunteer Appreciation Ride at the Gold Country Equestrian Trail Head.

**Online Merchandise Store** was launched on the GCTC web site with a variety of logo items for GCTC members to purchase.

**General Meetings** were held every other month, including updates on GCTC activities, social time, refreshments, and informative speakers. Board meetings were held on opposite months, where the board members discussed and planned pertinent aspects in keeping with the GCTC mission. Non-board members were welcomed with several attending and providing valuable input. Many members participated and enjoyed the November dinner meeting.

**GCTC members were involved with the Hidden Falls Regional Trails Expansion Project**, providing comments and suggestions in support of the new trail head staging area. GCTC purchased and helped install equestrian-friendly gate latches along the trail routes and some GCTC members volunteered as land stewards, and hike/ride docents. The equestrian docent program grew to 40 rides with over 200 riders participating.

**GCTC members met with the new Non-motorized Trail Manager** of the Yuba River Ranger District, John Kenny, fostering continued cooperation in the Tahoe National Forest.

**Donated to The Nevada County Humane Emergency Animal Rescue Team** (H.E.A.R.T.), a non-profit organization associated with the Nevada County Sheriff/Animal Control for their purchase of a specialized life like horse training mannequin.

**Purchased the much-anticipated cargo trailer** for storing and transporting GCTC tools and equipment.

**Continued to stay active with the proposed Pines to Mines trail route**, emphasizing concerns about approval of e-bike usage on the trail through the comment period and meeting with Tahoe National Forest Service staff for discussion.


**Trail Patrol** continued their rides and hikes as ambassadors on the trails of Tahoe National Forest, logging in 436 volunteer hours. In addition, GCTC trail workers logged in 796 hours for a total of 1,259 volunteer hours, which were reported to the Yuba River Ranger District.

*Be sure to shop with our GCTC member advertisers!*



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## GCTC ONLINE LOGO MERCHANDISE STORE!



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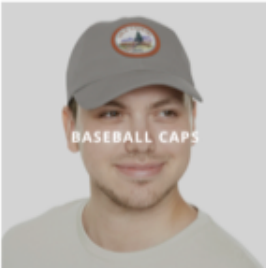
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## Why Good Saddle Fit for the Horse Matters



*By ZsuZsu Illes'- MSFC qualified and certified master saddle fitting consultant and bit fitter, Barefoot Trimmer, Rehab Specialist, Classical Trainer/Instructor*

**It seems that as we look around us** we see riders trekking, jumping, galloping, sliding, piaffing.... all without a worry in the world about how their saddle fits. The horses look like they're performing. The riders look happy and carefree. So where does saddle fit come into all this?

**Good saddle fit is important** if we want to keep our horses healthy, happy and pain free. If we take a step back and take a good look at our

horses' bodies, what we see is a spine with a large barrel underneath it. What this tells us is that the horse's back; i.e. it's spine, spinal processes, ligaments and tendons, and muscles; are made to have weight hang down from it, *not* to have a weight on top of it. That large pendulous barrel, with all the organs within and the mass of belly muscle, can hang down from the horse's back without creating any stress to its structure whatsoever. But put a rider on top of a horse's back and the problems begin. So how to translate that to saddle fit since the saddle and rider do *indeed* sit on top of the horse's back?

**Well, the first step is to understand the basics** of horse anatomy and biomechanics. The large muscles of the horse's back are for locomotion, not to carry weight. In other words the horse needs the large back muscles in order to move. If those large back muscles are impinged the horse will begin to travel in a physically dysfunctional way and as such damage itself. Not only will their movement not be correct but what can follow is muscle atrophy, back pain and lameness to name

just a few side effects of bad saddle fit. This scenario can then lead to chronic lameness, back and/or neck pain and physiological breakdowns. Many people suffer from the same problem when their initial knee problem becomes a hip problem or the other way around. Often a knee or hip replacement is followed by another joint replacement since the secondary joint was damaged due to incorrect movement compensating for the pain from the initial damaged joint.

**Taking a closer look at the horse's structure** as it applies to riding, we can see that the comparison to make is to a suspension bridge.





In fact the horse's structure is actually 2 suspension bridges; the main one being from the withers to the The ligaments along the back, such as the all-important nuchal ligament, hold up the back. The muscles below the bridge stretch these ligaments so that they hold the back up passively. Because the muscles along the back have more of a leverage effect on the spinal column, these muscles must be allowed to work passively so that they do not inhibit the back-lifting job of the abdominal grid. Impinging on any of the back or shoulder muscles, ligaments or bones will create the opposite effect. The large back muscles will contract in pain and thereby

cancel out any effort by the lower abdominal grid to lift. The horse's head will fly up and pelvis and hind legs will trail behind. Any attempt to correct this by pulling the head down will not affect the back positively as the spinal process is not rigid like a pole but flexible more like a toy train set.

**Translating this to training and performance**, we see that correct back and abdominal grid action has the horse reaching under his center of gravity (and yours) with each step, which then has him moving athletically and efficiently. Using his back freely and correctly also allows the horse to maintain his balance while keeping the correct rhythm of the gait he is in. Quite often what we may believe to be training or disobedience issues with our horses are instead saddle fit issues. This can then create a cycle of frustration and misunderstandings between horse and rider.

**Most riders** are not only looking for a mount that will perform but are also looking for a partner. Horse owners love their horses but often are frustrated in their attempt at creating a partnership. Oftentimes, this partnership can be hampered by bad saddle fit. A horse that is in pain may find it difficult to be mentally present at all and a horse that is in pain every time it is ridden will always at some level be in a "fight or flight" mode since instinctually it has to take care of itself. Worse case scenarios can play out such as a "bad" horse that bucks, rears, bites, kicks out. Some milder signs of bad saddle fit can manifest at the tacking stage. Horses that swish their tails, bare their teeth, are girthy or "cold-backed" oftentimes have developed a negative association with tacking, saddles and riding.

**Let's create partnerships with our horses** and help them to be balanced, happy and pain-free under us. How do we do this? Make sure their teeth are balanced, their hooves are balanced and their pelvis is balanced. Saddle fit is an important component to this whol-istic picture.

[www.ReBalanceExpert.com](http://www.ReBalanceExpert.com)

## Riding Safely: Equipping Yourself for a Secure Equestrian Experience

As members of our beloved horse club, our passion for riding and spending time with our equine companions is paramount. While we revel in the joy of horseback riding, it's equally important to prioritize safety on and off the saddle. In this article, we'll explore the significance of preparedness and the tools available to enhance our safety during equestrian activities.

Preparedness is not about succumbing to fear but rather empowering ourselves with the knowledge and tools to handle unforeseen situations effectively. Just as we instinctively buckle up when driving, it's crucial to adopt a safety-first mindset while riding. Our commitment to safety is a reflection of our dedication to the well-being of both ourselves and our cherished horses.

### Equipping Yourself for Safety:

**Pepper Spray for Personal Defense:** One essential tool in my safety arsenal is a pepper spray with an impressive 16-22 foot range. This non-lethal option can act as a deterrent in the face of aggressive animals or potential threats. Having encountered a vicious dog, I experienced the value of quick-access pepper spray. Thankfully, the situation resolved verbally, but the spray provided a necessary sense of security.

**UV Dye and Replacement Warranty:** All our pepper sprays are equipped with a UV dye that remains on the body for 6-8 days. In the event of self-defense use, a police officer can use a black light to reveal the dye, aiding in the identification of the assailant. Our commitment to your safety extends beyond just the initial purchase; we offer a replacement warranty if our products are used in the line of self-defense. It's important to note that pepper spray has an expiration date, typically lasting one to two years. For continued effectiveness, we recommend replacing it within this timeframe. [Pepper Spray and Breakaway Kubaton](#)

**A Breakaway and Kubaton for Quick Release:** serves as a striking tool, ready for use if someone were to get too close. Placing it within easy reach while riding ensures a swift response in case of an emergency.

The breakaway design allows for a quick release, enhancing its accessibility and effectiveness.

**"Sticky" Spray for Windy Conditions:** Recognizing the challenges of windy conditions, I've incorporated a "sticky" spray into my safety repertoire. This innovative solution minimizes the risk of blowback, ensuring the spray reaches its intended target without compromising your safety. [Sticky Spray](#)

**Vehicle Safety for Every Journey:** Our commitment to safety extends beyond horseback riding to include the vehicles that transport us. Explore our Road Trip Flashlight, a versatile tool with a window breaker, seat belt cutter, 200 lumens of brightness, a dimmer, SOS light, strobe light, and an attention-grabbing alarm. Its magnetic capabilities allow for easy attachment to the top or side of your vehicle, ensuring visibility and attracting attention in times of need. For those who want to be fully equipped for any roadside situation, our Junk in the Trunk kit includes jumper cables, space blankets, tools, and more, providing a comprehensive solution for on-the-go safety. Explore these essential items for your vehicle [here](#), and embark on every journey with confidence, knowing you are well-prepared for whatever the road may bring.

**Stun Devices for Personal Safety:** In addition to our pepper sprays and safety kits, we offer stun devices designed for personal safety. While I recommend carrying a stun gun in your daily endeavors and having one in your vehicle, it's important to exercise caution when using them around horses. Unless your horse is trained not to spook at the sound, it's advisable to avoid deploying stun devices in their proximity. [Link to Stun Devices](#)

With 35 years of teaching experience in the NJUHS District and a background in Search and Rescue for mounted units, I bring a wealth of knowledge to our community. Serving on both mounted and k9 units has provided me with insights into preparedness and safety, which I'm passionate about sharing.

For the past decade, I've been dedicated to educating individuals on safety and preparedness.

Through safety classes, I impart valuable lessons on situational awareness and the effective use of tools and tactics, ensuring that our community is well-equipped to handle various scenarios. To book your own Empower Hour safety class, where we delve into personalized safety strategies and empower you with the knowledge to navigate any situation confidently, feel free to [email me](#). Let's work together to enhance your safety skills and promote a secure environment for our entire horse club community. Our horse club is not just a community of riders but a family that values the safety and well-being of each member. By embracing a proactive approach to safety and equipping ourselves with the right tools and knowledge, we can continue to enjoy our passion for horseback riding with confidence and peace of mind. Let's ride safely, prepared, and united as a community that prioritizes the welfare of both riders and horses alike.

*Safe travels!*





**Incoming 2024 Gold Country Trails Council Board of Directors**

Bernard Molloy, Board member; Judy Hiyamizu, Board member;  
Jamie Cannon, 2023 President; Helen Crawford, 2024 President;  
Tracey Cunningham, Secretary; Corrie Silva, Treasurer;  
Mary McMillan, Board member; Cathy Scott, Vice President.  
Photo taken December 12, 2023, Board of Directors meeting

**MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ADVERTISE THEIR BUSINESS IN THE GCTC NEWSLETTER**

Hey GCTC Members, you may place your business card as advertisement in GCTC publications for just \$5 per issue, or \$25 for the entire calendar year (6 issues). The Newsletter is distributed to all GCTC members, affiliate members, and appears on the GCTC website.

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***Dear GCTC Members,***

***If you haven't yet, renew your GCTC membership for 2024!***

**The Gold Country Trails Council (GCTC) offers members a Community Organization.** Together we maintain trails, organize horse camping trips, join in day rides, Poker Rides, pot lucks, sponsor trails advocacy, and enjoy meeting interesting speakers and more. There is something for every trail enthusiast who joins GCTC. Check out the calendar on our website for upcoming events.

**Members make the difference at the Gold Country Trails Council (GCTC).** Our members' involvement continue to make GCTC the largest equestrian trails group in Northern California. GCTC maintains over 100 miles of trails and three horse camps, including the famous **Skillman Horse Camp!**

**Please take a moment to renew. It's easy!**

Just Go to <https://www.GoldcountrytrailsCouncil.org/join-us.html>

The annual membership fee is still \$25. The secure online form accepts PayPal or debit and credit cards. Join now and your membership is active until **January 1, 2025!**

So don't put it off, Join the fun and sign-up today. Click on the **JOIN US** tab.

[www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org](http://www.GoldCountryTrailsCouncil.org)

*We appreciate your participation.*

*Thank you, Suzanne Barry GCTC Membership*





- Attend the January meeting with guest speaker Chris Enss!*
- Prepare for winter storms!*
- Volunteer with GCTC!*
- Renew your GCTC membership!*
- Ride your horse!*
- Stay warm!*



### **DEADLINE!**



Just a reminder: before you love your valentine, please keep in mind articles, letters, and photos are due by the 15th of the month before the newsletter issue to the Editor!

**The next newsletter deadline: February 15**



*Stay warm!*