



FLMSTA Newsletter | Apr 2025

April 2025 | Volume 19 | Issue 4

Welcome to the **Florida Gator Tale Newsletter** from the Florida Chapter of the MSTA! We've updated the newsletter to make it easy to read on your phone or tablet. However, you can still download a .pdf of this newsletter and archived newsletters from the FLMSTA website [here](#). The **Florida Gator Tale** includes all the news about rides, feature articles, Florida state reports and safety information to keep you current with the Florida MSTA.



Rides

Florida Rides This Month

IMPORTANT NOTE: Always remember to check the and/or your email for updates on scheduled rides. Changes in times, dates, and especially locations are often out of our control and with short notice. Please check the [rides calendar](#) for possible updates.

East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, April 5, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Drifters Riverfront Bar & Grill**, 55716 Front St., **Astor, FL**

(352) 759-2802 ([map](#))

Description: This is the old Blackwater Inn in Astor next to the St Johns River. They have a big menu - about anything you could want. Plenty of paved parking. Reopened since the 2023 floods.

Contact: Tom (321) 794-6147

South Lunch Ride

Saturday, April 12, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Location: **The Boathouse Tiki Bar & Grill**, 17101 SR 31, **Fort Myers, FL** (239) 332-2628 ([map](#))

Description: Always a great time here!! Riverside, huge open dining room and a good vibe!!

Contact: Van, busavanfilmsta@gmail.com or (561) 386-2594

Just For Fun MSTA Rally - North Georgia Classic

Thursday-Sunday, April 17-20

Location: **Mountain Valley Inn Dillard**, 13 Royalty Lane, **Dillard, GA** (706) 746-5373 ([map](#))

Description: The North Georgia Classic 2025 - A Just for Fun MSTA Rally with no rally fees. No meals provided

Coordinator: Chad Barker, c.marion.barker@gmail.com

Contact: [MSTA-North GA Classic](#)

West Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, April 26, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Giovanni's Main Street Kitchen**, 221 West Main St.,
Wauchula, FL (772) 918-8220 ([map](#))

Description: Adding a West Central option that Tom will host.
We switched to a different location...Looks terrific! Indoor/outdoor seating and great menu!!

Contact: Tom (321) 794-6147

Future Florida Rides

Note that the future ride events are included to facilitate longer term planning. The destinations and/or dates may be changed just before the ride dates. Please check the [rides calendar](#) for possible updates.

West Central Brunch Ride

When: **Saturday, May 3, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM**

Location: **Wooden Spoon Restaurant**, 6960 Florida Ave. S.
Imperial Christina Plaza, **Lakeland, FL** (863) 940-2099 ([map](#))

Description: OK, kids, Eve has volunteered to host this West Central BRUNCH ride at the Wooden Spoon Restaurant in Lakeland.

Contact: Van, busavanfilmsta@gmail.com or (561) 386-2594

South Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, May 10, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Lightsey's Seafood Restaurant & Fish Co.**, 1505 S.
Parrott Ave., **Okeechobee, FL** (863) 763-4276 ([map](#))

Description: Always a favorite! Join us to see why!!

Contact: Van, busavanfilmsta@gmail.com or (561) 386-2594

East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, May 17, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Olympic Restaurant**, 504 US-27, **Avon Park**, FL (772) 918-8220 ([map](#))

Description: Greek and American food, pastries and desserts.
Roomy, good for groups and has ample paved parking.

Contact: Tom (321) 794-6147

For additional Florida events and information, [click here](#) to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page.

The Florida MSTA chapter also has a presence on Facebook with upcoming events and past photos: [click here](#)

Feature Article



MSTA North Georgia Classic Greatest Hits

By Tom Blake

[Editor's Note: This article was previously published in the April 2024 and April 2023 issues of the FLMSTA Gator Tale].

[Editor's Request: you have ridden somewhere interesting at any time and would like to share your experiences and some photos from your journey with other riders, please contact editor@flmsta.org to publish an article. Thanks!]

The MSTA North Georgia Classic is coming up April 17 through 20. There's no registration. You don't even need to be an MSTA member. It's one of the best Thursday-thru-Sunday get-togethers

going in one of the best riding areas in the southeast. I encourage you to go. You can even take non-MSTA friends along.

I take my time getting up there and start getting into the rhythm of the mountains. For the North Georgia Classic in Helen, I typically arrive late on Thursday afternoon, a day ahead of the rally's start. Unlike in Florida, there are excellent ride options in almost every direction. But, given the short duration of the event, I've whittled down a long list of possibilities to what I consider the top tier of rides to recommend along with some to and from options. My list includes **1) Wayah Rd to the Nantahala Gorge and lunch at the River's End Restaurant at the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC); 2) the Cherohala Skyway; 3) Tail of the Dragon; 4) US 60 between Morganton and Suches; 5) GA 180; 6) US 129 over Blood Mountain; and 7) the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway.**



NOC via Wayah Rd. Always at the top of my list is lunch at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in NC and going by way of Wayah Rd promises a good challenge. I like to include US 76 over to Clayton early on. It's curvy but not overly challenging. It's a good road to begin re-adjusting your mind and muscle memory on for mountain riding... getting the rhythm of the mountains at moderate speed. The quickest way to 76 is to take GA 17 north over the mountain from Helen. It's plenty twisty and steep with its share of tar snakes so you may want to



take it easy the first time over. A more laid back alternative is to turn right on GA 356 from just north of Helen. Ride past Unicoi State Park and go left on GA 197 past picturesque Lake Burton to 76. Either way, I begin thinking about safe corner entry speed and lane position, pondering what the optimum track through the corner to the exit should be and trying to hit it precisely, keeping the engine in its power band and applying throttle and braking inputs smoothly. It's an iterative process of mistakes and refinement that continues the whole time I'm up there. It's all about technique and precision, not outright speed. Wayah is a good workout with plenty of second gear switchbacks, dips, climbs and twists. Downstream of the lake, it also has some abrupt turns onto bridges that come into view suddenly – not a time to be carrying too much speed. And not all the pavement is in the greatest condition. It's not, by any means, a dangerous ride, but it is prudent to ride a bit conservatively and stay alert. By contrast, the ride along the Nantahala River in

the gorge is utterly relaxing as you meander along the river's rapids.

[Read More](#)

Safety Talk



Wildlife! by Doug Westly

IMPORTANT NOTICES:

Ultimately, the safety of motorcycle riders and their passengers is their own responsibility. Nothing presented in the column supersedes, negates or relieves a motorcyclist and/or passenger from assumption of personal responsibility for their actions and safety.

[Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the May 2016 edition of the FLMSTA Gator Tale.]

No, we are not talking about all-night bar runs by packs of V-twin riders. This is the real wildlife, those critters that find their way into your path of travel. Here are some thoughts and possible courses of action.

First off, deciding what to do about the wildlife that has suddenly appeared in lane pretty much depends on the animal. Different sizes, types and attitudes demand different responses. You don't

respond to a squirrel that can't make up its mind the same way you react to the deer which appears on the road.

There are a few rules to follow:

- **Rule #1 - Squirrels.** Do not try to swerve for them. They don't know where they're going either and you're just as likely to swerve into one as it dodges at the last moment.
- **Rule #2 - Turtles.** DEFINITELY swerve. They don't have a passing gear, and hitting one of those hard shells can almost guarantee an upset in your trajectory. As an aside, if you can and it is safe, please try to stop and either scoop up or escort the little fellow across the road. They are just trying to stay alive, too. Turtle rescues are good karma!
- **Rule #3 - Vultures.** These are usually on the road in flocks, enjoying a fresh meal of the squirrel that couldn't make up its mind. Slowing down and blowing the horn will usually scatter them before you get there. Just remember to miss the squirrel...
- **Rule #4 - Deer.** You never know when one will bound across the road in front of you. Try your best to avoid and remember - where there is one, there is probably another right behind the first. Don't believe the old "dusk and dawn" danger times. Deer are out at all hours of the day and night.
- **Rule #5 - Skunks.** Just don't. You'll probably survive, but wish you hadn't...for several days.
- **Rule #6 - Possums, raccoons, rabbits, etc.** The general rule is that if the animal is small (and not a hard-shell turtle or even an armadillo), your bike will probably have enough mass and momentum to carry you through the impact upright. A firm grip on the bars before the moment of contact, to keep the steering centered will help.

I once (unfortunately) hit a dog that ran out at the last second to chase my bike. I was traveling about 45 mph and couldn't really slow down, as close as he was. He ran right in front of me, weight around 12-15 lbs. and maybe 8-10 inches tall. All I had time to do

was instinctively roll off the throttle. My front tire hit him dead center, he bounced off the skid plate of my ADV bike, and then the rear tire got him. While it was a couple of good hard bumps, the bike never wavered in its trajectory. Unfortunately, the dog didn't fare as well, and I still carry a guilty conscious about it, even though after replaying it over and over, there just wasn't anything I could have done. The bottom line is that your bike carries a lot of energy in its mass and momentum, and most small animals just don't carry enough mass to deflect that energy. Your conscious, however, tends to suffer mightily, so I guess you can call that karma as well.

The bottom line is to be prepared. Running through possible wildlife collision scenarios in your mind can help you with that preparation, so if the time ever comes, you'll have trained yourself mentally to respond to the possible threat.

Ride Safe! Doug Westly

Florida News



Florida News

Just another month of wonderful riding weather...

At least in our sunny part of the country! My apologies for the tardiness of this Gator Tale.

After each day on the ski slopes of Bald Mountain in Sun Valley, Idaho, I just couldn't shift gears into MSTA mode..

WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR WEST AREA AND NORTH AREA REP(S) FOR 2025 AND BEYOND. (Good News: Two members stepped up, so we have the

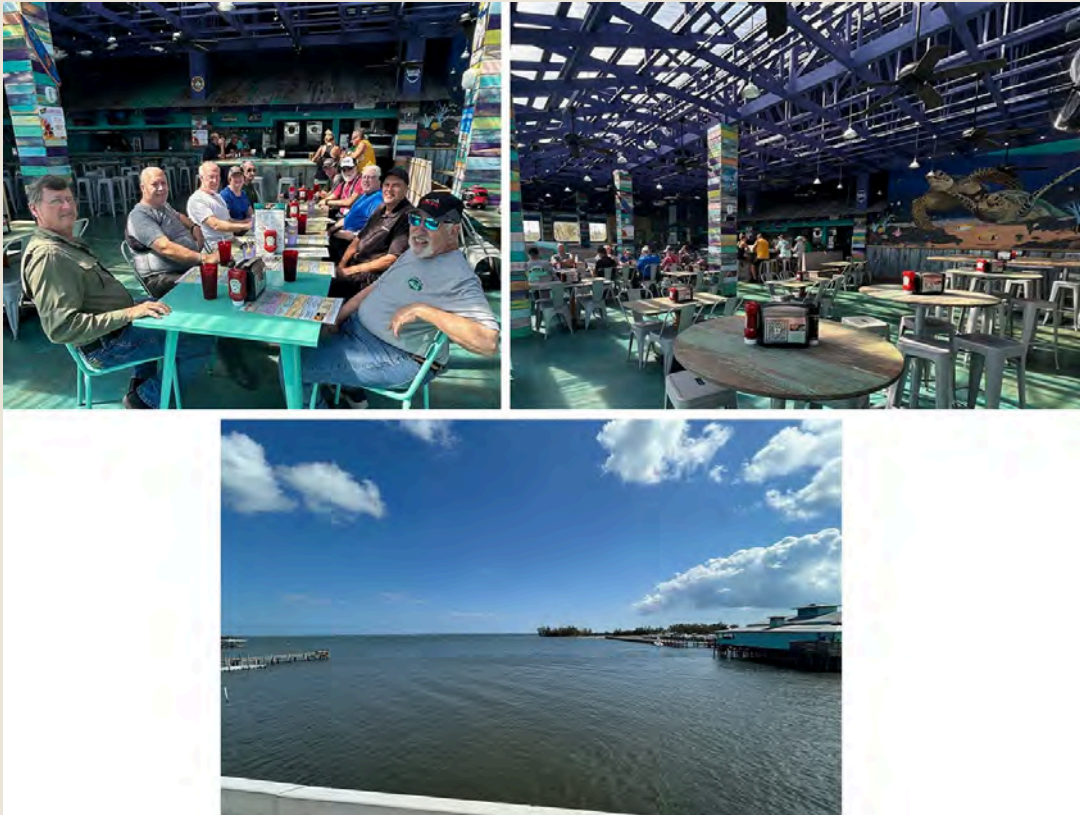
West Area Brunch / Breakfast Rides covered, but come October, we're back to square one.) Contact Van for details. We can entertain a flexible schedule(ing) where 1-4 different members could organize events throughout the year.

THIS IS YOUR CLUB, MAKE IT INTO WHAT YOU WANT IT TO BE!!

Tom was a busy Area Rep again in March!! The man gets around!! Catch his reports and photos below!!

The West Central Lunch Ride landed at a new-to-us location, the Broadway Diner in Bartow. Our ride up was more direct than hoped. Van continues to be thwarted by his XT. A potential solution has arrived, so we can hope the April rides go more smoothly. The diner was gracious and set our group of nine up in a side room, where we were served handsomely and allowed to carry on just as we wished! It was here that Eve and Bob S. were *tortured... coerced... I mean persuaded* into volunteer service on behalf of the West Central members to host the summer breakfast/brunch rides. Stay tuned! By the way, our ride home was much more fun, as my memory actually worked in our favor!

The South Lunch Ride also landed at a new-to-us location in Sebastian. River Deck at Squid Lips is a new large outdoor covered dining space literally over the river! Our group of 11 set up right in the middle of the space, and enjoyed a wonderful breeze, great grub and LOTS of gab!! Though the restaurant worked out better than expected, the ride up for the Southies has become laborious. The roads that skirt the Indian River from Hobe Sound to Sebastian have been built up, and the speed limits lowered to 25 mph for most of the way. What used to be a casual, fun ride has turned into a bore fest. We will rethink our options next year.



South Ride to Squid Lips in Sebastien

As for our 50/50 raffles, the East Central Ride netted \$33. The Daytona Lunch Ride netted \$60! The West Central Ride netted \$16. And, the South Lunch Ride netted \$33, for a monthly total of \$142!! We started March with \$1006. We end with \$1148! Congrats to the winners!! As always, a **BIG THANKS** to all who participate!!

What's Next?

On April 5th, we'll head to Drifters Riverfront Bar & Grill in Astor. Van will head up the South Lunch Ride to the Boathouse Tiki Bar & Grill on the river in Fort Myers on April 12th. And, Tom will host the West Central Lunch Ride to Giovanni's Main Street Kitchen in Wauchula on April 26th. Please join us, one and all!!

We have inserted an email response "button" to our announcements to assist our coordinators with the reservation headcount. Click on the green "button", then hit the send arrow. The pre-loaded email will be on its way!! Easy peasey!!



Membership News!!

If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. I believe I'm up to date...

After years and years and years of dedicated service to the MSTA as the Membership Director, and then as DB Manager, a key part of the Membership Team, Don has finally been able to retire to Member Status!! His tenacious computer skills dating back to decades-ago training saved our Club's butt since he first took over the role. He then quietly endured the "transition period" to an online alternative that took years longer than anybody could have ever imagined. Blessedly, his continued patience has been rewarded with a solid new online system and a new administrator, past President Pat Mogavero. **THANK YOU DON!!**

FLMSTA added a new member this month: Roy Wileman of Pensacola - Welcome!

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

- **Samuel Beloff**
- **Eve Blazur**
- **Larry Gonzalez**
- **Joy Melton**
- **Dianne Park**
- **Jim Park**
- **Larry Solomon**
- **David Sumner**
- **Carlyle Swofford**

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and continue supporting their MSTA. If you have a question about when your membership expires, please contact the membership committee at membership@ridemsta.com. Renewing or joining can be done

quickly and securely online at PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew or PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden, 11484 Waterwood Dr., Tyler, TX 75703**, and not to the address of any prior membership director.

If you only want to update your phone, email, bikes, or other details, you can do so quickly via PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate.

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please pass along one of our brand-new ! For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle touring package drawing at our next STAR event**. Any new or current member who joins or renews as a Sustaining Member will likewise receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for each year of the new membership term.

Random Ramblings

You've registered for STAR '25 by now, right??

Keep on coming out to enjoy all the rides we have planned this year and bring a friend!

As more destinations recover from the combined couple of years, we will continue to support our local, small business restaurants. Please send your recommendations to any of the ride coordinators.

Hoping you're living the life you love, and loving the life you live...

When you can...

Join one of our monthly rides!!

And invite a friend to ride along!!

Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!!

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Director



East Central Ride
Cowpoke's Watering
Hole, Sebring
Bike Week Lunch Ride
RiverGrille on the
Tomoka, Ormond
Beach
Tom Blake

Our East-Central lunch at ***Cowpoke's Watering Hole*** in Sebring was a good one. The place was spacious and impressive. Eighteen showed up from both coasts and down south. The weather was so nice, we opted for the palm thatch roofed, open-air patio. They had no trouble seating us all together at four tables along one side. The food was excellent – that's a consensus opinion – I asked around.

The 50/50 grossed \$66, and Ellen's riding companion, Rob, had the winning ticket. I believe everyone enjoyed the restaurant selection, the beautiful spring-like day of riding and, of course, the great FL MSTa camaraderie.



18 riders from both coasts showed up at Cowpoke's in Sebring for the East Central Lunch Ride.

That was March 1st. On the 6th, 4 out-of-state and 17 Florida riders attended our **Bike Week Luncheon** at the **RiverGrille on the Tomoka** in Ormond Beach. Two of the visitors were from Ohio, one was from Georgia and one from Texas. We took over the better part of the large back room. That worked out well since outside the cool north wind would have been uncomfortable. Everyone was very pleased to meet there again and, man, was the food ever good. They specialize in Cajun/Creole-inspired dishes, and my chicken and sausage gumbo was spiced and cooked to absolute perfection. Our servers did a really good job as well.

LD rider Mike C from the Tampa area arrived late. Ask him about I-4 during the work week! Dennis V bagged the 50/50 netting him \$60. My thanks to Dale H for his help in selling and separating tickets. And thanks to all who rode in to make the luncheon so enjoyable.



17 Florida and 4 out-of-state riders came together at RiverGrille in Ormond Beach for our Bike Week Lunch Ride.

Up next: On April 5th, East-Central is heading to **Drifter's Riverfront Bar & Grill** in Astor (previously the Blackwater Inn). And then on the 26th, I'll be at the West-Central gathering at **Giovanni's**

Main Street Kitchen in Wauchula. Everyone's invited of course. See the Rides section here and online for details.

And if you're on Van's list - look for the announcements in your inbox about a week prior. Your "Yes, I'll be there" responses help us assure enough seating. Thank you for using this feature.

Florida MSTA Apparel



Florida MSTA Apparel

As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to mstaflorida.qbstores.com. We have made arrangements with the supplier for our National Gearbox to allow our State membership to buy shirts, hats, etc. with our State logos directly from the source!!! No muss, no fuss!! Order yours today!! They offer both embroidery and digital print options. Click onto the Embroidered Apparel or Shop By Logo for each option. Don't hesitate to contact Queensboro directly with any and all questions. They are very customer friendly. They also offer Polo shirts and T-shirts with pockets!! Shopping finds online...We found some

fun motorcycle t-shirts you can order online. Click the image for this particular t-shirt. There are other fun motorcycle t-shirts online at <https://teespring.com/shop/motorcycle-tshirts>.

Classified Ads

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to editor@flmsta.org. Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!

Contact Information

These MSTA websites have extensive event information:

National MSTA: RideMSTA.com

SE Regional MSTA: MSTA-SE.com

Florida MSTA: FLMSTA.org

We're also on **Facebook:** facebook.com/FLMSTA/

More contact information:

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