

Bike thefts aplenty in south coast region

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James T. Henderson awoke the morning of July 12 at his campsite in Florence Keller County Park outside of Crescent City to find that a thief had attempted to steal his two mountain bikes by cutting the main security cable securing them to the rack on the back of his van.

Visiting from Portland, Oregon, he and his daughter were just finishing up a two-week trip to northern California.

“The thief failed, but succeeded in damaging the cable and rendering it useless,” Henderson.

“The rack is locked to the vehicle and the bikes were locked to the rack. The bikes were also covered by a tarp. The tarp was pulled aside, and the thief spent considerable effort attempting to steal the bikes.

“Part of what makes this so unpleasant is that I was asleep in bed with my head approximately 2 feet from the bikes. My daughter also slept nearby, in the upper berth of our camper.”

“Unfortunately, bike thefts are a crime of opportunity during the summer tourist season,” said Crescent City Police Sgt. Edward Wilson, who confirmed that bicycle thefts are one of the most common problems in this area.

He added that Crescent City isn't alone in seeing a considerable number of bike thefts.

At the same time, said Wilson, he doesn't think there has been an increase in bike thefts over previous years, although he didn't have any data to test that theory.

"Most bike theft victims, unfortunately, are tourists," he said, warning that motels are one place where bicycles are frequently stolen from racks attached to vehicles.

He recommends bringing the bikes inside the motel or hotel no matter how small the space available, because "crooks will always find the weak link and defeat the locking mechanism."

A recent change in California law makes bike thefts more attractive to criminals. Unless a bicycle is valued over \$950, it is no longer grand theft, but instead a misdemeanor. Previously, that threshold had been \$450 for grand-theft charges, said Wilson.

Brookings Police Chief Kelby McCrae said the situation in Brookings is similar to Crescent City, with no appreciable increase in the number of bike thefts over previous years.

"I am not aware of any increase over the norm regarding bicycle thefts for 2019," McCrae said.

"Traditionally, the majority of our bicycle thefts are of those left unsecured at Harris Beach State Park," said McCrae, "or the front of a residence, or at a downtown business.

"It is rare that bikes stolen in the Brookings area had any form of chain or lock on them. Making a small investment in some type of bicycle lock greatly increases the chance of your bicycle still being there when you return."