



The Season of Giving in the White Mountains

By Dan Groebner

It can be a challenge getting that perfect gift for your outdoor enthusiast but, if you keep functionality in mind, maybe you can get away with the wrong color or the gift that is “so last year.”. The following is a list of possibly useful items that you can pick up locally without having to pay for “free” shipping (internet secret: they add the shipping cost onto every item but just don't tell you!).

Bob and Pat DeRosier of Skiers Edge in Pinetop recommend ...Making the wild experience more comfortable with extra layers of warm: 1) socks; 2) liner gloves and 3) base layers for the top and bottom. Socks made from “smartwool” or other non-itch, wicking materials stay the warmest. Stay away from shoes or boots even if you know the size – different manufacturers have different fits so try on footwear for the best fit.

Hondah Outdoor Sports Manager ??? says that ?? is a popular gift this season. Also available in their location on Highway 260 between Pinetop and Hondah Resort and Casino are other items used by many outside:

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| Flashlights | Headlamps | Multi-tool or Swiss army knife | Camp lantern |
| Camp stove | Camp cookware | First aid / survival kit | Whistles |
| Water bottle | Water filter | Sleeping pad | Tent |
| Camp chairs | Folding table | Compass | |

Thermos or water bladder with cleaning kit to make it easier to use

Outdoor Technology:

A global position system (GPS) unit can keep hikers and hunters from getting lost or it can navigate to the next geo-cache (see geocaching.com) and they run just under \$100 to well over \$500 for all the bells and whistles, including detailed maps. Just remember, color touch screens eat up batteries quicker. For that extra sense of security that will provide satellite texting and SOS messages, back-country adventurers will want to look into a personal locator beacon (PLB) like the Garmin inReach or SPOT. Some PLBs require monthly subscription costs so make sure that charge is figured into the actual total price.

With a water- and drop-proof case, many smart phones can be used as a GPS, map and compass, as well as a camera that can store the location of all your videos and photos. Apps are also available to help identify birds, plants and animal tracks. In areas with a weak, or no, cell phone signal that drains batteries surprising quickly, you'll want to switch to airplane mode to turn off your cell phone function but allow the built-in GPS to provide precise location information to one of many mapping apps available (search the app stores for “topo maps”). If you must keep your phone on searching for a cell signal, putting a drain on your battery, a portable “power bank” can be a lifesaver by providing a

convenient, off-the-grid method of re-charging your phone (just remember to bring the right cables!!). Just plug your phone into the power bank, which are all small enough to fit in a shirt pocket, and it automatically charges.

Until you've used a nice set of binoculars fitted properly for your eyes, it's hard to describe why some people spend hundreds and hundreds of dollars on a pair. You can certainly get a quality pair for a little over \$100 but you usually get what you pay for, with much clearer and brighter views with larger and more expensive models. Less expensive models can have their tubes knocked out of alignment, creating a view that makes you dizzy or forces the use of just one eyepiece. Don't forget the tripod and adapter to attach to your new binocs. Steady optics make for a much better viewing experience, even with binoculars.

Many folks have re-discovered the original form of wireless media entertainment, when camping or taking a hiking break, called a book! Pick a good one for a present, sign the inside cover, and you don't have to worry about having an expensive graphics card with lots of memory to render some HD graphics in your gift recipient's imaginative mind. You can find any number of topics including outdoor mysteries, romances and survival skills. A very well-written account of the area, with a little different frame of reference, is local author Tom Jernigan's *Silent Witness: The Untold Story of Arizona's White Mountains*. This would be a great book to take on the White Mountain Trail System to connect with landmarks in Tom's book. Books written by another well-known local, Jo Baeza, *Ranch Wife* and *Images of America – Pinetop-Lakeside*, are excellent first-hand accounts of what it took to settle the area by modern Anglos.

Sometimes you can check off both a human recipient and some Arizona wildlife with the same gift! Bird feeders, wildlife food plants and seeds to create a “pollinator” garden for hummingbirds, bees and butterflies might require a little work to set up but can involve kids and retired folks alike in creating wildlife habitat where critters can be observed all summer long. Bird feeders are designed for specific species sometimes so make sure you get the right feeder and seed source for the kind of birds you want to attract. If you're looking for a DIY gift to make, try printing off a bird feeder or nest box plan from the internet, pick up the lumber and hardware locally and enjoy some quality time creating your own present by yourself or with family members.

If you're not so handy or are lacking the tools, you can always help wildlife with gift memberships to various wildlife organizations, including the “I Support Wildlife” program with Arizona Game and Fish Department, which includes a year-long subscription to the AGFD *Wildlife Views* magazine. There are plenty of local groups to join; some that focus on certain species; some that include all critters and habitats and some dedicated to maintaining our well-developed trail system. Just Google “White Mountains of Arizona organizations,” and the animals that you are interested in. These groups can use your memberships fees as well as your spare time to help get things done for White Mountains' wildlife.

Krissy's Ski Shop owner Krissy ?? thinks ?? will be the most popular gift on the mountain this year. Even though it has been a warm and dry fall, she hasn't seen a winter without snow in the ?? years she has been calling the White Mountains her home. You can never have too many cozy plush socks that keep your toes “just right” so it's hard to go wrong with socks and warm base layers, especially since

they are worn under the “fashionable” layer and don't have to adhere to the latest fashion trends. Everybody knows that having more camping “stuff” will make things more comfortable (or complicated!).

And don't forget about the wild critters and habitats that make the White Mountains so unique. Giving the gift of a bird feeder with a couple months' supply of seed or buying someone a combination fishing and hunting license can each provide a sense of satisfaction that you are doing your part to maintain healthy habitats and wildlife populations. The best part of shopping for your favorite outdoorsperson is that it's convenient with the selection of local businesses - and you don't have to worry where those “free” shipping charges went!