

Rascal Creek– 7 mile route (round trip)

Rascal Creek bike path provides an East-West bike route through North Merced. This delightful, curving path is nearly devoid of altitude changes and provides many scenic turnouts in conjunction with city parks.

Except in flood season, Rascal Creek seeps its way through north Merced. Bear Creek, by comparison, is a wonder of clear, rushing, cascading water. Yet Rascal carries just enough of a promise (or threat) of rushing waters in its meanderings that ample right-of-way is given for the proverbial once-in-a-hundred years flood. The bike path meanders along the north bank of this muddy trickle. My wife vows someday to live where "it's not flat and the streets aren't all straight." She moved from Dos Palos to Fresno to Merced. Cruel joke that. Yet she finds temporary solace in the curved biking/walking path of Rascal Creek where she can fantasize.

Rascal Creek bike path is a runner's paradise. It is magic and entices runners into being faster than they really are. This is because the straight stretches are few and relatively short. It is an optical illusion, of course. When runners can see a course that extends miles ahead in a straight line, their oxygen-starved brains think "long, very long." If you place those same runners on a curved course of the same length they run faster because the chore does not appear so daunting. Given its relative straightness, Bear Creek is tougher on runners' minds than Rascal Creek.

Though surrounded by suburbia, Rascal possesses some fine wildlife sights. Egrets are perhaps the most noticeable, given their white plumage. Close looks however reveal kingfishers, great blue herons, mallards, doves, muskrats, ravens, robins, and a fantastic colony of squirrels at Rahilly Park.

The egrets are unimpressed by one's huffing and puffing or ratcheting of gears. Keep a steady pace and the egrets accept you for the transient beast you are. Stop to focus your camera and, with a couple of effortless wing beats, they float to a more comfortable location.

by Alan Beymer

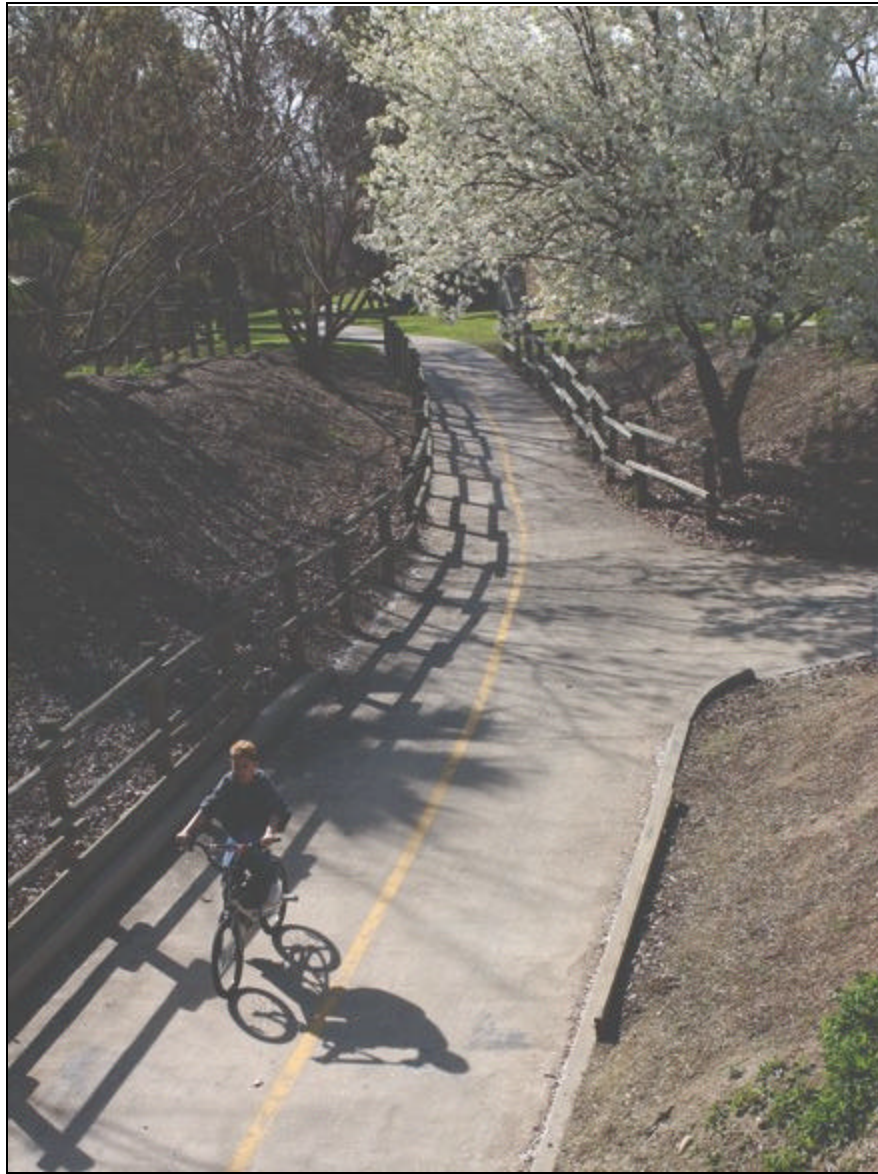
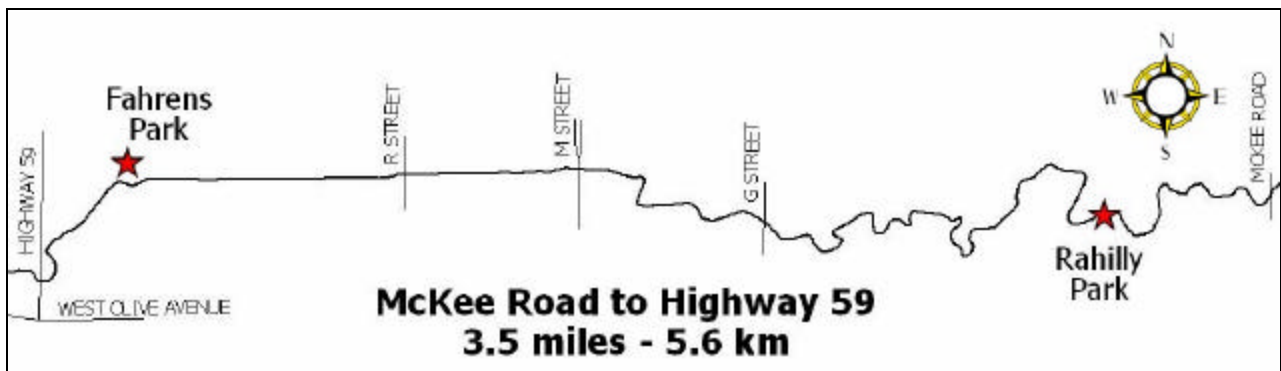


Photo by Alan Beymer

February sunshine entices a young biker onto the Rascal Creek Bike Path at the M Street under-crossing.



Two Parks. One at each end. Recreational facilities at both. Benches and water along tree-lined route.