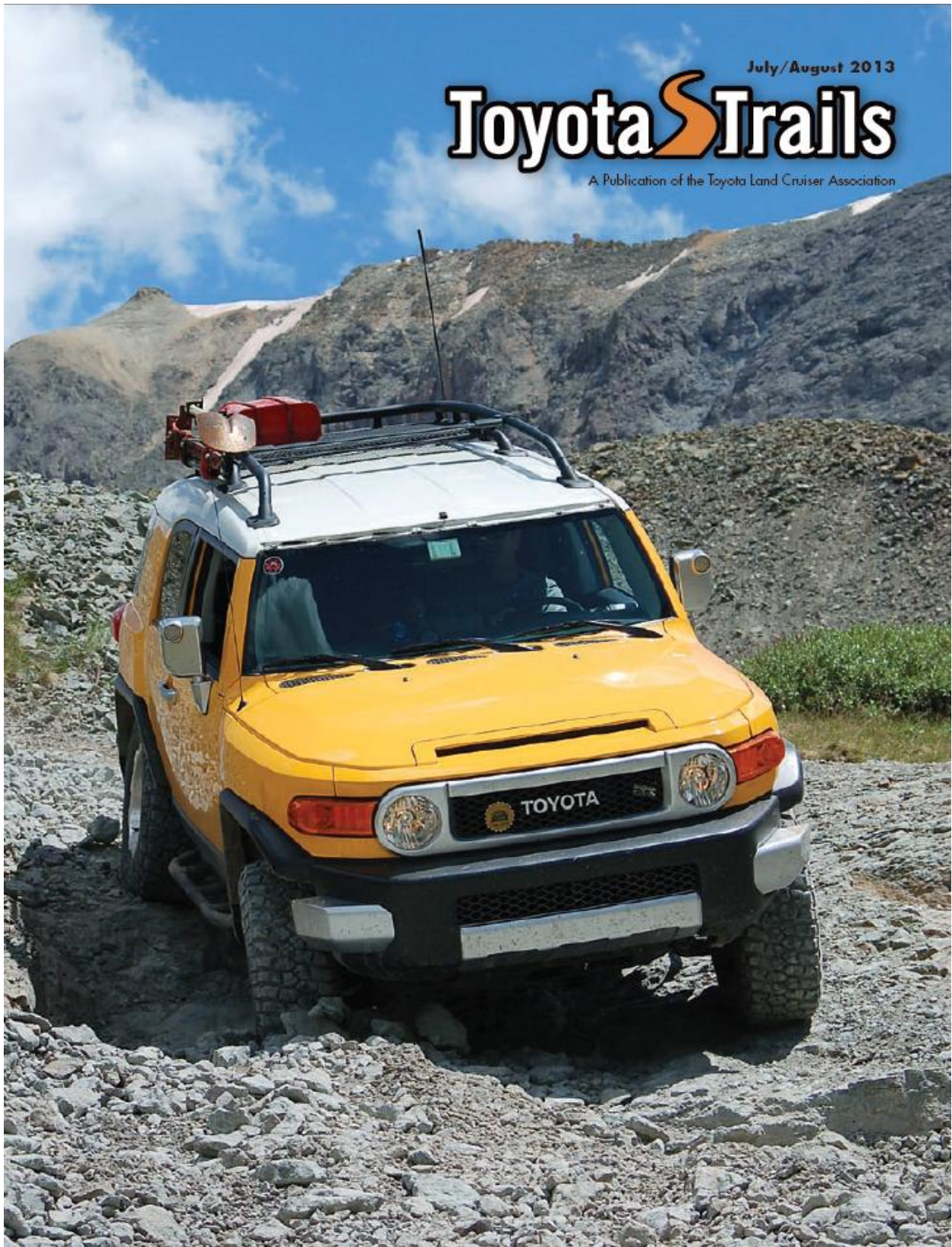


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Toyota Trails

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One hundred and twenty-plus Toyota vehicles—always a good turnout for the Jamboree.

by Phillip Jones

LONE STAR TOYOTA JAMBOREE 2013



Late model Land Cruisers did their heritage proud on the trails.

East Texas is known for scenic hills covered in thick, piney woods—a stark contrast from the remainder of the state. Wildlife is more plentiful in this greener region. Rains occur more frequently. Even the rattlesnakes are a healthier size. Nestled in a valley in the midst of this region is the town of Gilmer. Head northeast and uphill from Gilmer for about six miles and you'll find Barnwell Mountain Recreation Area (BMRA), located on one of the taller hills in the vicinity. This 1,850 acre off-road park is a four-wheel drive wonderland, with a vast network of trails—and every trailhead looks inviting. BMRA features electrical RV hookups, showers and restrooms with real plumbing, a pavilion area for gatherings and numerous campgrounds—the perfect setup for the annual Lone Star Toyota Jamboree.



Bryan Tatem demonstrates proper winching techniques.



It's wheels up for Bryan Tatem's FJ Cruiser.



BMRA is conveniently located between Dallas and Shreveport, both within a few hours. All sides of Barnwell Mountain feature miles of descending and ascending trails. Fun can be found at all levels of difficulty and some of the more difficult spots have parallel bypass trails. Each trail is clearly marked with trail names and ratings, as well as entrance/exit designations. BMRA even offers a quality map of the park and with the extensive trails, plentiful camping spots and desirable facilities, BMRA is the ideal location to host large off-road events.

Hosting a large event is exactly what Toyota Trail Riders (TTR) does on an annual basis at BMRA. TTR is a TLCA-affiliated off-road club based in Dallas, Texas, founded by Toyota off-road enthusiasts who own trucks other than Land Cruisers. TTR holds monthly meetings on the same night and at the same location as the Lone Star Land Cruisers club. Members of the two clubs off-road together, talk shop after the monthly meetings and support each other's events.

Eight years ago, TTR started the Lone Star Toyota Jamboree with the intent of inviting Toyota off-roaders beyond the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The event has since grown in popularity. For 2013, there were 106 drivers pre-registered, with another 20 registering at the event—and 47 of the registrants were new to the Jamboree.

One of the goals of the Jamboree is to introduce off-roading to people who are new to the sport. Bryan Tatem, President of TTR, held a recovery class to explain the various pieces of equipment, the do's and don'ts of recovery and how to think safety first. Bryan's wife, Tish, held a beginner's off-road class to teach basics of trail etiquette, how to stay with a group plus a discussion of safety-conscious tips. TTR officers and Trail Masters led guided runs for easy, medium and extreme levels of difficulty. On Saturday afternoon, Tish Tatem led the ladies on a Powder Puff run through scenic, yet challenging trails.

The Jamboree is also very family-friendly—even designating one of the campgrounds as only for family use. On Saturday afternoon, kids were invited to participate in the Nature Investigators event, where kids conducted explorations and collected nature items.



Anna Golden kicks up the dirt in her 1989 4Runner.



Ramiro Sanchez descends a Gilmer trail in his 1978 FJ40.

TOYOTA TRAILS



Sam Hartsfield ascends a difficult ledge in his 1996 4Runner.

The trails close at 10:00 pm, leaving plenty of time to get in some nighttime offroading. Each night, groups would head out for thrill seeking on some of the more challenging trails. Amazingly, every rig came back in one piece—most carnage was encountered during the day.

Competitive fun was had at the obstacle course, featuring large dips with flags designating the route for a timed run. Test Your Flex brought a flex ramp that provided the opportunity for a few rigs to amaze the crowd.

If your trail ride highlighted an accessory needed for your rig, vendors were on hand with an array of essential products. Friday night was the vendor meet-and-greet taco dinner, where products were on full display. Or you could try your luck Saturday night with the nice collection of raffle prizes, including bumpers, rock sliders, fridges and



Kevin Hubbard faces the added challenge of evening rain on the twisted trails.

recovery gear. The raffle was followed by a delicious, East Texas style barbecue dinner.

Mark your calendar. Lone Star Toyota Jamboree 2014 is already scheduled for the first weekend in May. We hope to see even more new faces next year.

PHOTOS BY PHILLIP JONES

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