

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



November, 2016

CARING FOR THE SANDWICH RANGE SINCE 1892

WINTER CAMPING: A SPECIAL ISSUE ! (chez toi dans le bois!)

I've always preferred hiking in winter to any other season. Who wouldn't? No bugs, no bears, no slipping on wet rocks or autumn leaves; no sweat (well. . .almost no sweat) and — unless you're out in a blizzard — no getting lost, since you can always follow your tracks back. And speaking of tracks, are we not all agreed that there's nothing like snow cover for seeing who else is out there? As for light —the days may be short, but with leaves gone and snow reflecting whatever sun is around, the woods are actually at their most brilliant in winter.

Winter is the only time you can traverse bogs and marshes, and cross lakes and ponds. You can bushwhack without having to actually whack bushes, provided they're weighted down with sufficient snow. And best of all, since not that many people share my views, trails are underpopulated. (Although it drives me nuts that someone postholes along my favorite trails when the snow is fresh, leaving deep holes that ice over and offer turned ankles. Whoever you are, get yourself a pair of snowshoes, please!)

Sir Ranulph Fiennes famously said, "there is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing". There are of course many variants of this (it rhymes in Norwegian: "Det fins ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlige klær."), but I'm happy to give credit to Sir Ranulph who is tough as nails and has many cold weather exploits on his resume, some of which were extreme enough to negate even the possibility of appropriate clothing. But, since we're not talking about pulling a sledge across Antarctica, appropriate clothing and gear in our friendly woods are pretty straightforward. Still, I for one, keep learning. Here's a humiliating confession. For years, I came back from every winter hike dehydrated because my water was full of ice crystals painful to swallow. Then I went out with friends who offered me a drink of hot tea from their thermos. Duh. Would I ever have thought of the power of vacuum technology if they hadn't put the idea into my head? Probably not. I figured out instep crampons on my own, but learned about Kahtoola Microspikes from friends. Once I'd had an instep crampon work its way unnoticed to the side, leading to a painful fall on my butt, the difficulty of getting the microspikes on and off became a non-issue. They never slide or fall off. Even when you want them to. And, of course, modern snowshoes have aggressive crampons built in. Not like the first ancient snowshoes I tried which were a lot like wearing large tennis racquets on one's feet; excellent on a fluffy flat and like two small sleds on a slippery slope.

So winter hiking in the Whites is no big deal. If you're reading this, you've probably done it. But winter camping is a big deal. Of course, you could always use the rolling up in your bag under a tree method. A lot of people, including your faithful editor, have done that, most of us out of dire necessity and in even more dire discomfort. Getting up to pee in the middle of the night becomes quite the challenge, and then there's the problem of getting a fire going in the morning with hands that don't work very well. In fact, there are quite a few problems with this sort of winter camping. What we're talking about here is winter camping that is — believe it or not — comfortable. Where you're warm and cozy, well-fed and lounging about in your long johns enjoying a last cup of tea before blowing out the candle and going to bed; at home in the woods. I know it sounds like a cabin fever dream. But it isn't. So here are the tricks of the trade, as narrated by WODC members Sheldon Perry, Evelyn MacKinnon and Fred Lavigne (the latter two better known as Fred'n'Ev). We'll start with an essay by Sheldon.

Winter camping- Really?

Sheldon Perry

There's a well known phrase: "Summertime and the living is easy." But what about winter? I have a counter phrase for this: "Summer gives you its love. In winter, you have to go out and earn it!" If you're not out in the quiet cold of winter playing and enjoying the beautiful low-angle sunlight, winter becomes scraping the ice off your windshield and driving around on those dirty, salt-covered roads. So, when a friend of mine, Geoffrey Burke, showed me his 11 foot trekking toboggan, designed for hauling his winter gear, wanigan (Note: this is a box for carrying food, pots and pans) and tent setup for a compact light weight wood stove, I saw the light. This could be days and nights in the woods, in comfort!

After many years of canoe camping, I have learned that the point is not to "rough" it but rather to "smooth" it. After all, it's rough enough in town.

To get started, I needed more information. The book "A Snow Walker's Companion" by Garrett & Alexandra Conover is the iconic winter trekker's guide, absolutely stocked with detailed information about tents, stoves, toboggans, snowshoes, gear and food, as well as the preparation and the planning for extended trips. What a resource! In addition, if you want to rub elbows with extreme snow walkers, attend the Snow Walker's Rendezvous at the Hulbert Outdoor Center in Fairlee, Vermont. This November event is awe-inspiring. While there, my friend Geoff, a wooden boat builder by trade, teaches a toboggan building course, and I, being a

wood nut, thought, “I can do this!” By the fall of 2014, there were just two missing ingredients - a tent and its accompanying wood stove.

Finding a tent was easy. Tentsmiths fabricates traditional canvas tents for folks via the Internet and is just up the road in Conway, NH. I chose a Civil War era wedge tent, large enough to sleep three people, with gear, including the wood stove. The tent is both fire resistant and water repellent. They customized my tent with a 5' flexible thimble for the stove flue. My wood stove came from Snowtrekker in Solon Springs, Wisconsin. The sheet metal stove, including the stovepipe, only weighs 17 pounds. A heat reflector and the cloth hearth are necessary to prevent snow from melting underneath. At this point, in my own mind at least, I am ready to go! It's the winter of 2015 and snow is a-comin'!

Winter camping is a ton of work and hardly a solo endeavor. My vision is less about hauling and trekking and more about setting up a cozy base camp and taking day snowshoe trips from there. For my campsite, the White Mountains offer a plethora of choices, but I look for the following: Access should be on a moderately graded trail to a site deep enough in the woods to feel that I am away from the hubbub of civilization, yet close enough such that I will not die getting there while hauling my loaded toboggan. There should be clear running water nearby and an assortment of interesting day hikes to keep me busy during a good portion of any day. Any site should be 200 feet from both a trail and any source of water. But keeping busy is not a problem. There is much to do in setting up, and company is really handy here.

At this point, you have arrived with your trekking toboggan, loaded with all the gear (wanigan, food, clothing, sleeping bag, mat, and something “stiff” to sip if it gets really cold). The first move is to pack down the snow with a generous area for the tent. This should be slightly crowned such that any moisture will drain away from the site. Set up the tent on a large water repellent tarp. I set my stove on thin Baltic plywood for stability and securely fasten the stovepipe with a tripod structure and wire. Allow for the wind! Rugs are a must, of course. Another person should be looking for dry firewood situated nearby. Downed hardwood trees with branches up off the ground are ideal. Undersize the wood to fit comfortably within the stove and expect to feed it often. Crosscut with a bow saw and, when necessary, split to size with an axe. I like to sort and stack the wood according to diameter both within and outside the tent. It's a lot of work, but you will feel great doing this knowing the reward will be a well-heated tent. If everything goes smoothly, you should do all this work with the goal of a hot cup of tea warming your hands within a generous hour.

Remind yourself that the further you are out into the woods and the nastier the weather, the better any meal will taste. Cooking is done on top of the stove. An accessory metal shelf that extends the stovetop area is well

advised, as this will allow for more pots and the ability to simmer. Always have a large teapot full of hot water ready for drinks and cleaning up. Bring hors d'oeuvres. Live it up!

By now you are thinking about elimination, you know, the solid kind. No magic wand here. Dig (the deeper the better), squat and replace your divots. I always have sanitizing hand wipes, in abundance, because clean hands are way more than just a courtesy.

Ok, my first 4-night stay went amazingly well for a neophyte. My guests were also on their first winter camp, but they were the best at just about everything. Having a love for the outdoors in winter will make it work. But I did learn a few things: My long trekking toboggan, although great for the tundra of the far north, did not work well on a White Mountain forested trail. It would rather tip over than take a turn, and as I pulled it with a strap, I could not control the front end. Going downhill, I shifted positions to tether it from the rear - not very convenient.

Accordingly, I made several significant adjustments, which included cutting my toboggan in half to create a tractor (the front half) and a trailer (the rear half) and then used some quick-releasing marine hardware to hinge them together. I devised a rigid yoke to connect me to the tractor and a leather harness to connect me to the yoke. Yes, I am both the engine and brakes. With these three detachable elements, many advantages appear. I can fit everything in my car - nice. I can take sharp turns on the trail and if I come to a steep section, I can detach the trailer, proceed up with just the tractor and return with a strap to haul the trailer. Brook crossings or other obstacles are less problematic, as my load is divided into several units. And — the bottom is lined with polyethylene to reduce friction. One last important note: each guest needs a sled to haul their own gear, even if it is plastic.

So, ditch the phone (or turn it off), and leave the place as you found it! Winter on!



Sheldon relaxes in front of his tent

Winter Camping — Really? Part II

Evelyn Mackinnon & Fred LaVigne (with notes from Sheldon) as whispered into the ear of Your Trusty Editor

Everyone who's at all interested in winter camping starts out by reading Garrett and Alexandra Conover's book, "A Snow Walker's Companion". Even I (SG), who originally regarded winter camping the way someone in the market for a bed regards the Procrustean brand, read it cover to cover and found it fascinating. They cover *everything*, from how to poop in the woods to how to carry water from a river. The Conovers specialized in winter hiking/camping trips where you're setting up camp multiple times as you travel (Sheldon even got me to watch a video of a trip they made upriver in Labrador which would lead one to give up winter camping forever, it being a virtual anthology of pain and suffering), so much of it is not relevant to what we're talking about here, but it's all interesting and a great deal of it is useful. It's somewhat out of date (it was written in 1994 and I'm sorry to say that the Conovers have since divorced), but it's well worth reading and re-reading (It's so worth reading that I announce with regret that someone has stolen my copy and I had to get one out of the library). There is a later edition from 2001, but that's out of print and even used copies are pretty expensive. This later edition's title "The Winter Wilderness Companion: Traditional and Native American Skills for the Undiscovered Season", explains the Conovers' philosophy which is to learn from the Northern native peoples how to live in the woods. They spent years with native friends and both books share the wealth of knowledge they acquired. It is not surprising that they offer instruction on how to make your own everything as native peoples did, but even native peoples now take advantage of at least some items commercially available. And even if you don't sew your own tent or anorak, their instructions will tell you what to look for when you shop for material. But you can also learn from our local experts, and I'll try to condense some of their key lessons here.

Note: The Snow Walkers' Rendezvous is held each November in Fairlee, VT. Started in 1995, this is a way to meet fellow northern winter travelers, learn skills, and trade tales. Garrett Conover usually teaches there, as does Tamworth local, Geoff Burke, who leads a workshop in toboggan construction. If you'd like to attend, register early -- space is limited. However, be warned that most of the folks at the Rendezvous travel in groups, setting up camp each evening along their trek; a very different kind of camping from what we're proposing here.

Since any reader considering winter camping will read *A Snow Walker's Companion* from cover to cover, taking careful notes along the way, I'll limit my notes to what FE and Sheldon have told me that I think is particularly useful and not covered by the Conovers. Here goes: Keep in mind that the winter camping we're talking about here, as practiced by both Sheldon and Fred & Ev (henceforth to be known as FE) involves setting up one campsite and staying there, taking day hikes in the surrounding area and returning to the tent every evening. This adds greatly to winter camping's ease and comfort. Sheldon had his maiden winter voyage last year; FE have been winter camping for twenty years, which makes them about as experienced teachers as we're likely to find. Like many, they were inspired and instructed by the Conovers' book. They also attended a Snow Walkers' Rendezvous, but only after they'd camped for a couple of years. (Probably because they started camping in 1995, the first year of the SWR, which was not yet well known.)

Whether you buy your **tent** or make it yourself, it should be cotton, fire-resistant and water-repellant, and fitted with a thimble for the stovepipe. And it would be really smart to take FE's advice to set it up the first time in your yard before trying to do it under uncertain conditions in the woods.

All of our informants quickly recognized that the Conovers' use of ropes for **hauling** their toboggans, was fine for traveling along a frozen river in Labrador but unsuited for our mountain trails, where the toboggan smacks the back of your legs and trips you up on the downhill slope. (On the rare occasions when the Conovers had to maneuver down a steep slope they managed by wrapping the sled ropes around trees and warping them down.) FE and Sheldon have learned from experience to use rigid poles that keep the toboggans safely behind going downhill.

Lighting: This one is easy. Everyone carries headlamps. FE use candles for evenings in the tent, while Sheldon uses a collapsible solar lantern which he recharges during the day.

Clothing: We all know how to dress for winter hiking. Camping adds the need for lounge/sleepwear (long underwear is good) for time in the tent. All our informants mentioned that overheating and sweating is more of a danger than cold, so layers are good. They also expressed surprise at how warm the tent can get! **REALLY IMPORTANT: Ev cautions that when you're cooking or fueling the stove, wear wool shirts and leather mitts. Do not wear synthetics. That seductive fleece or microfiber might be great at home or on the trail, but a spark or flame can make them melt onto your skin, causing third degree burns.** Sheldon pointed out that synthetics are not only dangerous around flames, but also (manufacturers claims to the contrary) don't breathe as well as natural fibers, so you're more likely to sweat and feel uncomfortable in them. He has one synthetic wind- and water-proof set of bib overalls and hooded jacket, but tries to keep all his other layers cotton and wool.

Entertainment: FE take books, including Ev's journal notebook in which she keeps a record of the trip, including animals and tracks they've seen, plus cryptograms, sudokus, etc. that they've ripped out of larger heavier volumes. At the risk of horrifying bibliophiles, I've ripped books down the spine for years, to take portions on trips. I wouldn't do it to a valuable first edition (actually, I don't own any valuable f.e.s), but I got over my qualms when I learned that my hero, Charles Darwin, did it all the time. He was an invalid for much of his life and read lying on his back. Those massive Victorian tomes were simply too heavy, so he cut them down the spine and read them in pieces. Sheldon, on the other hand, listens to music on devices (guess he has a solar charger, although he hasn't camped for longer than a few days so a charge might last), but invites guests for conversation, help in setting up, and the pleasure of their company. The longer the trip, the more important entertainment becomes -- winter nights are long.

Flooring: Sheldon takes rugs; FE use the time-honored method of breaking off balsam fir branches, being careful to take only a few from any one tree so the loss is not noticeable.

Seating: Having spent some time in Japan, where I learned that sitting on the floor without a backrest can be torture for Westerners, I was particularly interested in this. The Conovers use an interesting seating method on the trail, where you sit on your snowshoes, and bury your legs up to the knee in the snow, which acts as insulation. This presupposes that you have native type snowshoes; adequately high boots, and sufficiently deep, light snow. In our woods, we can usually find a rock, a stump or a fallen log to sit on for a lunch break. To make it more comfortable, I carry a very thin, lightweight stadium seat, made of tough insulating packing fabric. I got it as a free sample at a trade show many years ago, but it would be easy to make your own. The real issue, however, is how to sit comfortably during the hours you spend in the tent. Some people simply carry lightweight folding back rests. FE pack down the snow over the entire tent floor and then dig out the stove and wood area plus an aisle. They put tarps, inflatable thermarests, full length foam and then sleeping bags on top of their raised snow beds, and sit on them. The snow is packed as hard as they can make it, and the tarps hang down about 8". If the warmth of the stove starts to melt the bed, they take everything off and bring in some additional snow to even it out. On the other hand, as we might expect from a guy who lays down rugs in his tent, Sheldon has a far more elegant seating solution: a Roorkee campaign chair. This chair, designed by 19th century British Army Engineers, stationed in Roorkee, India, is so admirably suited to traveling/camping or just plain sitting, that it's impossible to guess the number of times it's been imitated and adapted. (I can't resist noting that 19th century British campaign furniture was so comfortable, elegant (and weighty) that in 1903, the then Secretary of State for War noted that, "The British Army is a social institution prepared for every emergency except that of war.") What makes it so good? Well, it breaks down quickly and easily to lie totally flat for packing, it's designed to shift and stay upright on uneven ground, it's sturdy, and it's amazingly comfortable. So comfortable (and beautiful) that I'd love to have one in my living room if only I could afford it. (Etsy offers a cheapie for \$625 along with a more elegant version for \$2,000.) Sheldon overcame the price problem by making his own. After all, he's a professional cabinet-maker who created his own unique toboggans, etc. The problem that he couldn't overcome is that of weight. The chair's sturdiness comes from solid wood and thick leather. Sheldon is a strong guy, but I think that the real issue is how far you're pulling your toboggan. He's gone a mile; FE have gone as far as seven miles. Weight is a big issue for them. *Below: Sheldon's Chair Assembled. Right: Sheldon's two part toboggan.*



Food/Cooking: Anyone who's gone on even a three or four day journey away from all food sources, knows how much planning goes into this aspect of the trip. After all, a four day journey for two people amounts to 24 meals plus snacks. Now think about a three week camping trip. I have friends who are (bit by bit) backpacking the John Muir trail in the high Sierras. They decided to do away with carrying a stove or pots. They live on home-made jerky, crackers, cheese and dried fruit. Other than the fact that many folks would find this diet unattractive (to me, jerky is basically leather that's been tanned with salt), they're hiking in summer. When the temperature is down around zero, the desire for hot food and hot drinks is primal. Plus, the stove is already part of your basic gear. It's what keeps you warm in the tent. It's no big deal to throw on a couple of light weight pots and pans, leaving the cast iron stuff at home.

Ev's take on food is that organizing it all (and preparing it all) is fun. This seems to me to be the only practical way to approach this. For her, this is part of camping, and just as challenging. It deserves the same focus and care as the actual time in the woods and, looked at the right way, extends the trip. Winter camping is the highlight of FE's year and a big part of the pleasure is in anticipation (planning) and remembrance which includes what to do differently next time. And a notebook like Ev's is a really good idea, since you can take notes on what does and doesn't work, what you didn't bring that you should bring next time, etc. Plus, it's a souvenir of each trip.

Obviously, you can buy freeze-dried trail food. If you can afford it and you like it, that's fine. Ev has a home dehydrator and she prepares her own. And, in addition to the cookbooks mentioned by the Conovers, Ev recommends *The Lightweight Gourmet* by Alan S. Kesselheim, and *NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) Cookery* by Claudia Pearson. Not all your food will be dried and Sheldon points out that a big advantage of winter camping is the presence of a really BIG refrigerator. If you don't want your food to undergo multiple freeze-thaw cycles, burying it in the snow or immersing it (in a waterproof bag of course!) in a stream will provide a constant temperature. And, since your editor is fascinated by what can be frozen; soft cheeses (but not hard) freeze perfectly — you can enjoy Brie, Camembert, etc. on the trail. Eggs! You can freeze eggs! Cakes, cookies and nuts not only freeze well but can be eaten frozen.



Sundries: Ev notes that face cream and candles are important. I'd add a way to hold burning candles safely. Plus sun screen, moleskin, aspirin and all those little things the lack of a single one of which can ruin your whole trip. Dental floss! This is not just for healthy gums; dental floss should be in every emergency kit. In a pinch, you can use it to tie together a tent, replace a boot lace, tie a note to a branch to alert a trail mate. . . and much much more. (this terrific hint is courtesy of John Huth, long range hiker and author of *The Lost Art of Finding Our Way*.) Dental floss is as useful as duct tape — there is no higher praise. And, having spent time in Alaska where duct tape is so idolized that dedicated high school seniors go to their prom dressed in formal outfits made completely of duct tape (which set off a national craze that's been great for duct tape sales), please remember that dental floss is in addition to and not a substitute for duct tape (which Lee Valley sells in a small, flat package).

Reading: It's sad but true that the best adventure/cold weather reading is about other people's suffering. If you want to read about how we took a trip and had a perfectly lovely time, you should probably switch seasons and stick to books about redoing Tuscan farmhouses. But for a real winter adventure story, we all agreed that our first choice was *True North* by Elliott Merrick. Just enough suffering, treated lightly; amazing toughness; sympathetic characters, and (this is where it differs from a mountaineering book) no one dies. Plus Merrick is a really good writer and his other books are also recommended. (Including *Northern Nurse* which is his take on the autobiography of his wife, who is one of the characters in *True North*.) Of course, if you *really* want suffering, the classic, the Platonic ideal of suffering, is Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World*. Cherry-Garrard joined Scott's Terra Nova (Antarctic) expedition and underwent conditions so awful that he never recovered, either physically or mentally. I've never been able to bring myself to read this book which is only recommended for masochists. For truly admirable heroism in the cold we have Ernest Shackleton, who managed to survive unimaginable hardships and save the lives of every one of his men: his own book, entitled *South* and the more famous recounting by Alfred Lansing: *Endurance*. Either of these would be excellent bedtime reading in your warm tent. It's clear that all of us would prefer to be on an expedition led by Shackleton rather than Scott. You might want to read Ranulph Fiennes' (the "no bad weather only inappropriate clothing" guy), *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know*. Or, you could just keep reading this newsletter for David White's terrific description of his two month winter adventure in a leaky log cabin. And, if you think that staying in a cabin is cheating, a cabin is harder to heat and far less comfortable than a tent. (See photo of Sheldon's sybaritic digs!)

If you don't like reading (in that case, what are you doing here?), here are a few suggestions. One of my favorite cold weather movies, unslick, unprofessional and riveting, is *Journey on the Wild Coast*. This film records a trip made by a young married couple who decided that before settling down they would take a year to have an adventure. Their adventure was walking (skiing, rafting, etc.) from their home in Seattle to the Aleutians. Most of it is in winter. Even May is in winter. They are amazingly tough, gutsy and likable, and make this trip on very little money and mostly with a home movie camera. You can no longer buy a dvd, but you can download the movie (for pay) from a British website steepedge.com. You can go to the WODC website where we've put all the photos we couldn't fit into this newsletter. In color! And, the top of page 7 announces our Winter Camping Expo, where you can see and experience it all right in Tamworth.

WINTER SOLITUDE

by DAVID WHITE

On December 3, 1995, I began a sixty-four day solitary retreat that allowed time for introspection, reading, writing, skiing, and snowshoeing. It required many of my winter camping skills.

I secured use of a remote log cabin named Guide House. Located on Enchanted Pond in northwestern Maine, it was one of six cabins at Bulldog, a fishing camp that was closed for winter. Uninsulated, it had genuine log walls with see-through gaps, and a single layer of boards on the roof. There was a single wood stove for heat, propane for lighting and cooking, and no water. Because it was ten miles from the nearest highway, my modes of travel were skis and snowshoes. In October I had provisioned the cabin for my stay and cut and stacked some firewood. When I arrived on snowshoes on December 3, I brought in clothing and more food in a backpack and in a sled that I pulled behind me. I arrived at the cabin in a blizzard. It was 3:00 pm and 5° F. Following are edited passages from a journal I kept during the period.

5 December 1995: This morning the sky is cloudless. At 8:30 am the air is still and it is 8°F. Some open water remains on the pond. The trunks of the white birches, lit by the rising sun, are glowing. They rise and divide, then divide again and again, ending in auburn tips silhouetted against the blue. Never has Bulldog been more beautiful. I have been here in October, when the colors were at their peak, and I thought the same thing then. But, for me, winter is the most stunning season. The quality of the light, refracted and reflected off the snow, is part of it. The stillness, contrasted with the wildness of the winter storms, is part of it. The black, open water of the pond and in the brooks is part of it. The trees are beautifully decorated with snow instead of leaves. The pointed and snow-draped firs stand in gleaming relief against the sky. The snowy hillsides have a subtle hue that I love.

14 December: At 6:30 a.m. the cabin is particularly cold. The fire has burned down to ashes. It's -20°F outside, 8 degrees in the small separate room at the rear of the cabin that I am using as a pantry. I build a very hot fire and let it burn un-damped. In the time it takes me to drink my first cup of tea, the room warms to the extent I can remove my down parka and put on a fleece jacket. By 9 a.m. I'm off for a snowshoe hike. It's still -10°F. As soon as I cross the northern end of the pond and enter the woods, I know I have made a mistake with my clothing. Because it was so cold this morning, I overdressed, forgetting how much heat I generate when I walk. Instead of single-layer windproof outer pants, I am wearing insulated warm-up pants over long underwear. I have on my usual top layers but, instead of gloves, I am wearing mittens; instead of my ski hat, I am wearing my warmest rabbit fur bomber hat. First I open my windbreaker zipper and my fleece jacket zipper; then I lift my ear flaps; then unzip the top of my warm-up pants with their full-length zippers; then remove my windbreaker and hat. Finally, off come mittens. What a mess! It feels tropical as I climb, particularly on my legs, which are quite hot. When I emerge from the woods onto Little Enchanted Pond, I add my hat and mittens, but I will not wear my windbreaker again today.

It looks like it could snow at any time. I continue my bushwhack, sinking six inches into snow that is eighteen inches deep, for another hour. I am now about three hours away from my cabin. I work my way into a thicket of firs to get out of the wind and eat. Bannock, sausage, and cheese, mostly frozen. There is ice in my water bottle. I start back at 12:25. The wind, although light, cuts like a knife. I'm glad now for the warm pants and especially the mittens. I slog uphill for an hour before heading back down toward Little Enchanted. It's terribly cold re-crossing the pond. The same when I reach Enchanted Pond. Worse, water is creeping into the snow atop the ice and I can't avoid it. My snowshoes freeze up badly. At 3:30, I'm back to Guide House. It still

hasn't snowed, but it looks like it should. Perhaps it wasn't such a good day to leave the cabin. It's 16°F inside. The liquid soap and the canola oil are cloudy. I'm sure everything in the pantry is rock solid. It's going to take a while to reheat the cabin. I am tired. The constant cold takes a lot more out of me than the walk alone would. It is still 0°F outside, and the wind is much stronger. By 6:00 p.m. the inside thermometer indicates 46 degrees at countertop height. I strip down to a tee shirt above, long underwear and fleece pants below. Supper's cooking.

17 December: This morning the wind blows softly out of the north, stirring limbs laden with snow. Leaving the air filled with snow dust as they fall, clumps of snow strike the ground with soft "whumpphs." Sometime after midnight, the storm ended, having lasted for more than fifty-five hours, and dropped 25 inches of powder.

When snowshoeing, I carry a pole, both to knock snow out of overhanging branches and to assist myself on steep inclines. This pole is a dead spruce tree that grew to be 18 years old. I know this because there are 18 whorls, where rings of branches occurred. With root structure and the very top removed, the resulting pole is about six feet long, and an inch and an eighth thick at its base. As of yesterday afternoon there were seven whorls of snow, which translates to 32 inches. Whoopee! Seven whorls of snow. I've been outside for a few hours this morning just looking with awe at my surroundings. Elliot Merrick, in **True North**, wrote of being dazzled by the beauty of the landscape of the high interior plateau of Labrador in the 1930's. He wrote a hypothetical response from nature to his feelings of awe: "That's nothing. If you live to be a million I'll take your breath away every day you keep your eyes open."

19 December: Looking toward the sun through the woods, I see billions of tiny snow crystals falling lazily through the trees. The air itself sparkles as though full of diamond dust. It is silent save for the occasional creak of a tree and the faint growling of skidders working somewhere in the forest. With bucksaw and sled I go after more firewood. I pack a snowshoe track to some standing, dead maples I found this morning, saw them down and in half, and place the butt ends on my sled. I tie them on and strap myself into the pulling poles, like a horse. What optimism! I cannot even begin to move them. I unload some and try again. Whenever I move forward, the sled tips on its side and I have to stop and right it. I manage, eventually, to drag four 5-inch trees to the woodshed in two loads. Good thing it is downhill.

20 December: Fetching water from the brook behind the cabin is such a pleasure. The path to the water hole is a deep trough through perfectly white snow, tramped down like the furrows made by rabbits to and from the places they frequent. The brook is now covered over with ice and snow so that its lovely sound is muffled. Not until I reach the edge of

the bank do I hear it. Then it is like delicious laughter erupting from the water hole which I keep free of ice. This sound, and the wind in the trees, the creaking of wood fibers, the booming of ice on the pond, the howling of coyotes, and the crackling of my own fire are familiar sounds here, the only sounds much of the time. It suits me.

6 January 1996: At 8:00 a.m. the sky is cloudless. The sun throws long bands of yellow light over the snow, and trees cast dark shadows. Everywhere, the snow is littered with pine needles fir and spruce needles, twigs, sticks, and branches. The wind has stripped the trees of much of their snow. The wind is gusty but its force has abated some since its nighttime violence. High in the ridges, it still shrieks. With the temperature at -22°F, it is a day to be extremely careful about where I travel and how I expose myself. At -20°, with a 20 mph wind, the wind chill factor is -68°F.

1 February: A crystal clear, sparkling, cold day. It never gets above 0°. By 1:00 p.m. I want to ski, so I head off on a bushwhack to McKenney Ponds that will keep me out of the wind. I revisit the caverns. With a headlamp I climb down into two entrances, one deep enough that I use a rope to lower myself down the snowy sides of the opening. Still I can find no access to the larger cavern that I have seen pictures of. There is another entrance that I do not dare attempt. It is a vertical hole about eight feet deep with snow in the bottom of the hole. It is too chancy to try this alone in the winter. I will return in another season to see what I have missed.

I ski down the gully and eventually find the stream that will lead me back to Enchanted Pond. Trying to ski on the frozen stream, one ski gets wet when the ice gives way and I have to stop to scrape the entire ski of ice – top, bottom, and sides; the binding too. The stream banks here are quite steep, but seem like the better option for continued travel. I cross a side gully, where a light dusting of snow has obscured a frozen flow of water. Instantly my skis slip downhill. When they come to a stop against a sapling, my upper body catapults downhill toward the brook and I find myself hanging from my skis, head lower than my feet, pack on my back, one pole underneath me. I cannot reach my bindings with my hands, but manage to get one open with a ski pole. Still, my feet are at such an angle to the skis that they don't want to come out of the bindings. After some thrashing about, I get free and upright again. Sobering, considering my remote location and the time of year. I have put quite a bend in one pole. The remainder of my trip back to Guide house is uneventful.

3 February: With the end of my stay approaching tomorrow, I find myself not eager to leave. I am happy with the way I've used my time - reading, writing, skiing, snowshoeing, chopping wood, and carrying water. The past two months have been among the best of my life.



- popcorn
 - gorp
 - bars - sca
 - cliff bars
 - fig bars
 - dried fruit
 - dulce
 - chocolate
 - candies
 - crackers
 - cookies
 - Branham crackers
 - Baking mix
 - pancake mix
 - maple sugar cakes
 - maple syrup
 - oil
 - butter
 - PB + maple
 - tamarini
 - miso
 - jam
 - tortilla
 - pita
 - bagels
 - eggs
- coffee
 - tea
 - milk (dry)
 - cocoa
 - spices
 - drink mix
 - broth pow.
 - Vitamins
 - vodka or other
 - matches
 - pots +
 - pot lifter
 - cups
 - silverware
 - spatula
 - rub. "
 - pot holder?
 - clothespins
 - journal
 - puzzles
 - Funmytime
 - books
 - cards?

Left: Sheldon's tent interior.

Above: Part of one of Ev's planning lists.

YOU ARE INVITED!

To the first joint WODC and Tamworth Outing Club WINTER CAMPING EXPO!
 Saturday, February 11th, 1:30 = 3:00 PM, in Tamworth Village, behind the Cook Library
 Meet the experts! Enter a tent! Sit in a Rookhee chair! Pull a toboggan! See a wanigan!

WEATHER NOTWITHSTANDING (EXCEPT DOWNPOUR OR BLIZZARD) CALL SHELDON AT: 603-323-7001 BUT ONLY IF IT'S URGENT.

Fall Trails Report

Our 2016 trails season is winding down. We did not undertake a major project this year but did complete all our annual maintenance and relocated two short sections of trails. Once again we hired Jed Talbot's Off the Beaten Path crew to assist with our annual maintenance. Jed's crew spent 200 hours clearing blowdowns, cleaning drainages, and brushing out trails. We combined that effort with contributions from adopters and 4 volunteer trails days. On our May Trails day we relocated a section of the Bennett Street trail that had been washed out by both Super Storm Sandy and more bad weather last winter. On our June Trails day volunteers cleaned drainages on the Big Rock Cave Trails. In July our trail volunteers did Annual Maintenance on the Bickford Trail. In September volunteers relocated a short section of the Brook Path to move the trail away from an eroding bank.

We have two small projects in mind for next season, one on Blueberry Ledge Cutoff and another on Dicey's Mill. We will evaluate the condition of Upper Walden next Spring to decide whether we will apply for an RTP grant to perform some serious trail reconstruction. Overall volunteers provided 298 hours of trailwork. When combined with the 200 hours from Off the Beaten Path we put in approximately 500 hours maintaining the WODC trails this season.

We have had a mild Fall this season so leaves are building up on the trails but no snow cover yet. Next May will bring a new set of challenges and opportunities. Thanks to all who contributed either directly or indirectly this season. I look forward to our working together again next year to keep our trails in great shape.

Jack Waldron, Trails Chair

(and, although he's too modest to say so himself, **WODC President**)

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	Synthetic (silky) Navy Blue T-shirt (New Logo - see design on	18	



Editor's Ramble: I've just finished reading *The Soul of an Octopus* by Sy Montgomery; a book that is wonderful in every sense of the word. It's gripping and beautiful; it's full of wonders, and it's written with a deep sense of wonder. Sy has written many books about animals, always mixing personal anecdotes with accurate science and each of the three I've read has given me a new and deep view of that animal's essential (bear with me here) humanity; which is to say, their personalities, their desires and pains; their abilities which are so different from ours, and which humans have so often seen either as defects or commodities. With octopuses (and yes, that's the proper plural), the inter-species divide seems uncrossable, yet she crosses it and develops relationships with several individuals, each with his or her own personality. These relationships usually involve a lot of physical contact (the book left me wanting to beg the Boston Aquarium to let me be enveloped in octopus arms), mostly affectionate but sometimes rejecting, as well as occasional sulks, pranks, and — because even large octopuses only live two to three years — mourning.

Until quite recently, the charge of anthropomorphism was the kiss of death for any scientist or science writer ascribing to an animal those traits which we humans prefer to think of as ours alone, and the threat of this label was sufficient to keep the field of animal behavior in line. But one by one, those traits are turning out to be shared not only across species but across phyla. For an inexplicably long time, vivisectionists denied — all evidence to the contrary — that animals felt pain. Then we were told that animals didn't really have emotions. That they can't use tools. That they don't have intellects; only instincts. That they cannot sense what others are thinking. That they don't have language. That they don't have culture, in the sense of behavioral changes handed down through generations. This denial of thought and intent and feeling to animals enabled (and continues to enable) us to mistreat them without guilt or sorrow. But one by one the barriers have fallen, and continue to fall as scientists show that animals — and not just gorillas and elephants and dogs, but also chickens and goldfish and octopuses — share much much more with us than we feel comfortable admitting. The latest book by the eminent animal behaviorist Franz de Waals, is entitled, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* The answer of course is that we're not.

We're not smart enough and even worse, we're not nice enough. It was both exhilarating and sobering to read a book by someone who was smart enough and nice enough to forge an emotional bond with an octopus, when we read daily about humans denying humanity and value to other humans who happen to fall into the category of "other". So I've decided that maybe "humanity" has nothing to do with having been born as a human. It's something that each one of us has to earn by our treatment of others — regardless of skin color, religion, education or national origin. And maybe -- even -- regardless of species.

Susan Goldhor



Wonalancet Out Door Club

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