

Winter Outdoor Activities Update for the KML: 2020-2021

written by Chris Guibert | April 14, 2021

The winter season of 2020-2021 started a new chapter in the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge history book. For the first time in nearly a decade, and only the 3rd time since it opened in 1934, the Lodge and restaurant were open to the public and the cabins were available for rent (the golf course-side cabins). The restaurant continued with their rustic worldly food concept that consists of an ever changing weekly menu. The grand fireplaces were lit and a warm atmosphere was waiting for the guests upon arrival.

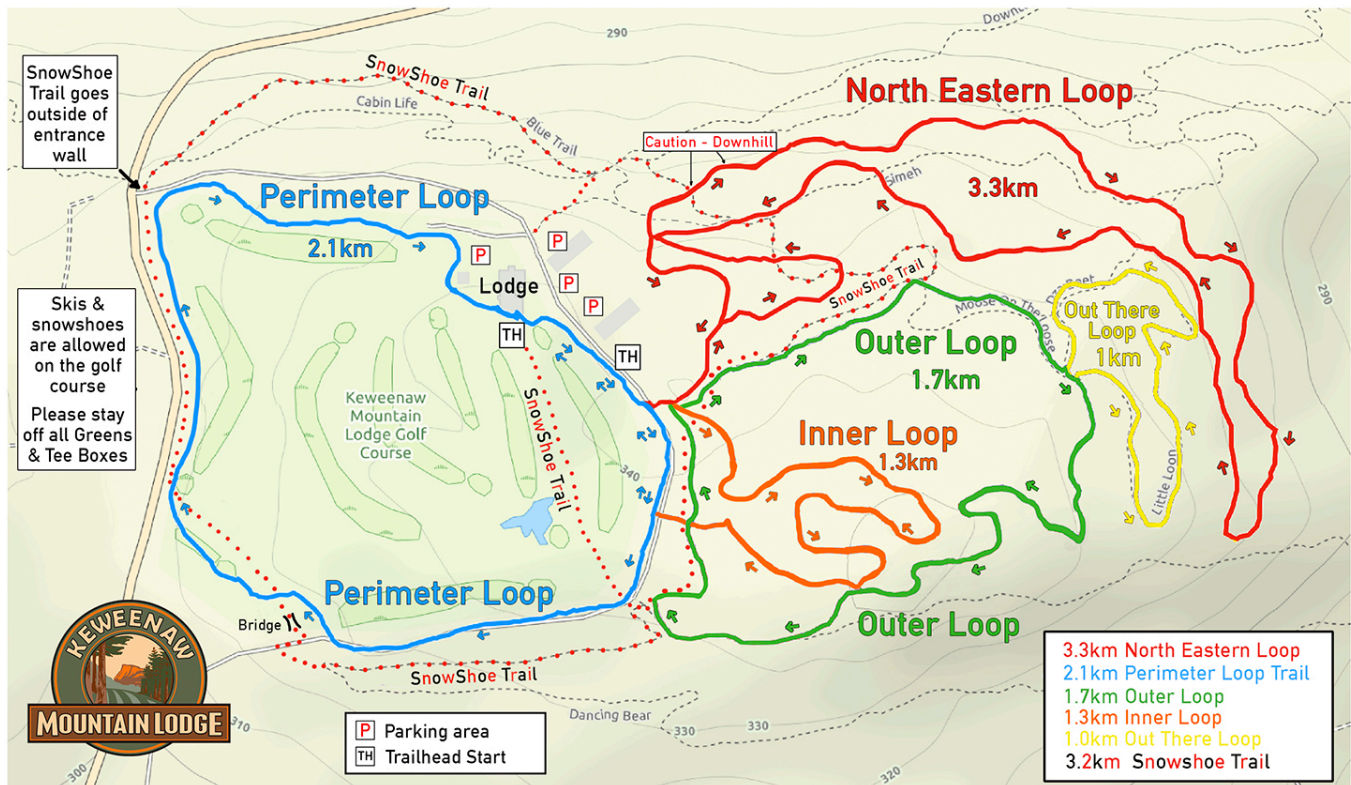
One of the biggest attractions for the Lodge this winter was the reopening of the cross country ski trails and designing a dedicated snowshoe route. This process began in October with a meeting with Steve Rowe, the original designer of the cross country ski trails (in 2007). With his blessing and encouragement we began trimming and chainsawing; cleaning up 10 years of unmaintained growth.





We kept the original trail names and purchased new trail signs. The next step was to GPS the routes and create a map and label them with color coded markers.

Cross Country Ski Trails and Snowshoe Trail



Acquiring grooming equipment felt like a Yooper scavenger hunt. We purchased a 2017 Gator from [Northland Sports in Lake Linden](#) and removed the wheels and put on winter tracks. We found a used Ginzu Trail groomer and roller at [ABR Sports](#) in Ironwood. ABR's Eric Anderson consulted on the gear purchase and instructed us on some grooming techniques.





Now we just needed enough snow to start grooming. It was not until late December that we had enough snow to open the trails. People were excited to see the rebirth of winter sports at the Lodge. Lodging guests, destination skiers, and winter enthusiasts from across the region came to use the trails. We decided early on that the trails would be free for the public to use, and all that we required was for a liability waiver to be signed inside the Outdoor Activity Center (OAC).

One of the big decisions was where to locate the OAC for the winter. Last summer the OAC was located in the building next to the tee box on hole one of the golf course (formerly called the Pro Shop). We decided to move the winter OAC into the conference room in the back of the Lodge. This would keep the staff and guests all under one roof. We also began stoking an outside fire pit for guests to warm up, have a place to connect and to sit for lunch.



The OAC ordered 20 pairs of [Tubbs snowshoes](#) in multiple sizes as an amenity for our lodging guests to use. These along with [Altai skis](#) were available for anyone to rent. Altai skis have been around for about ten years and they have recently surged in popularity. These short, 125mm skis with a permanent skin on the bottom proved to be an ideal way for guests of all ages to explore the grounds around the Lodge.



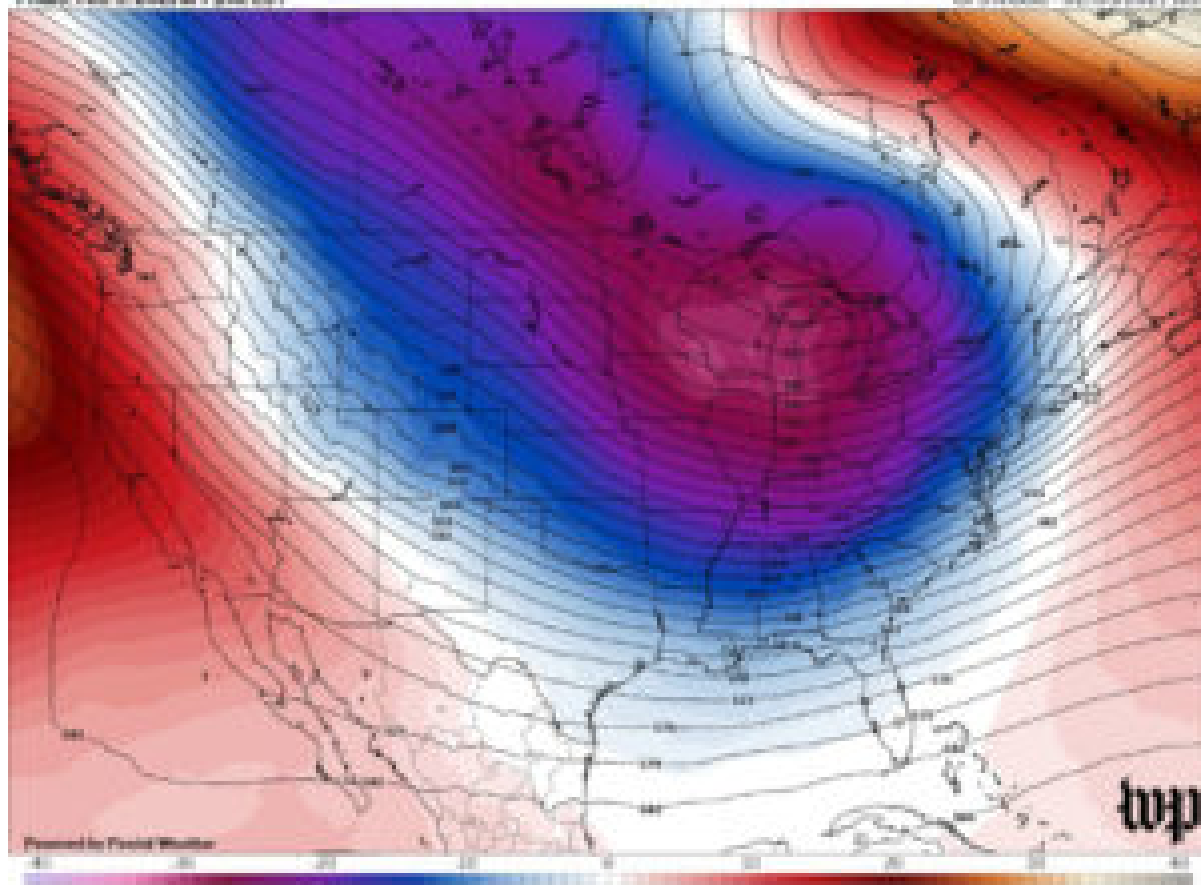


We experienced a low snowfall during January. In fact, Keweenaw County set a new low record for January, at 35.1 inches. To lighten the mood, we performed and posted a Heikki Lunta snow dance video to our Facebook page and to our surprise the video was viewed over 9,000 times. Still no snow, but on January 15th our luck changed and the snow began, we received over 30 inches in the next twelve days. The next big system came on February 4th and started a long lake effect snow cycle. An arctic blast moved in and temperatures dropped below zero.

500 mb Height Anomaly (dam)

Friday, Feb 8, 2024 at 7 a.m. CST

QPF model - 02/03/2024 12h



This low pressure system dumped 20" in the first 72 hours and then snowed every day for two weeks, blanketing the property with close to 80 inches of white powder. A winter wonderland was born and our newly formed snow grooming skills were put to the test. Trail grooming was happening around the clock.

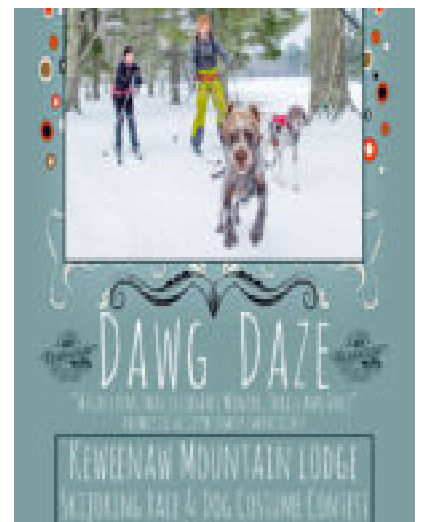




During February hundreds of trail users explored the cross country trails and the snowshoe trail. [Mount Bohemia](#) was open and the snow chasers descended upon the Keweenaw.



On February 27th we held our first winter event called [Dawg Daze](#). This was a fundraiser for the [Copper Country Humane Society](#). Dawg Daze had two events: The Perimeter Dog Derby and Costume Contest. The Perimeter Dog Derby was a 2.1 km time trial around the Perimeter Loop. The one rule was that you and your dog had to be attached and get around the loop together. Eleven teams (one dog and one human) made their way around the loop, times ranged from seven minutes and eleven seconds to fifteen minutes and fifty eight seconds. Costumes were worn by many and the well seasoned team of Christine and Lolo won top honors. The Costume contest was judged by three residents, Zoe, Ava and Kate. Bella and her dog mom took home top honors dressed in a Mardi Gras ensemble. \$145 dollars was raised along with multiple donations of food and blankets. Overall it was a fun day



and the start of a new tradition at the Lodge.





On March 1st the Lodge was featured on the [*Discovering*](#) show that has been airing on NBC TV6 out of Marquette for three decades. We took host [*Kristin Ojaniemi*](#) on an Altai ski tour which exposed thousands of people

to the Lodge and the skis. There was a surge in guests visits and Altai ski rentals for the next few weeks. March was another low snow month with less than ten inches of new snow falling on the grounds. There were many warm spells that caused some issues with grooming especially with the melt and refreeze cycle. Still, people were eager to get outside and enjoy the trails. Towards the end of the month a hard rain and warming spell really accelerated the melt down. By early April the snow on the trails was patchy at best. We officially closed the trails April 7th.

The winter season of 2021 was not without its challenges. The Covid pandemic was still surging and businesses were under strict state regulations limiting indoor dining and gatherings. It was a low snow year with Keweenaw County only recording 178.4 inches well below last year's total of 280.1 inches. However, the surge of people enjoying the outdoors was immense. Mount Bohemia sold over fourteen thousand season passes more than any other season of its twenty year history. The OAC had close to 600 people sign waivers to use the trail system in just three months. The Lodge remained continuously open for the winter season for the first time in a decade and one of the few years ever in its eighty plus year history.

All of us at the OAC would agree that the most rewarding part of this winter was seeing the smiles on the faces of people as they experienced the Lodge and the surrounding forest with their family and friends.



We are now getting ready for the summer outdoor activities, while also thinking about how we are going to increase the excitement around outdoor activities next winter.

FUN.JOYOUS.ADVENTURESOME.



[Chris Guibert](#)

Chris Guibert: I have a strong passion for all things outdoors and have worked as a tour guide and professional photographer for the last twenty five years. As the Lead of Outdoor Activities at the Mountain Lodge I want make sure you and your family have a great experience while staying and playing. Please feel free to ask me any questions about the trails, regional activities and local secrets.

