

2022 Snowshoe Hare Recap

written by Tom Oliver | February 14, 2022

On 12 February 2022, we expanded our winter event offerings by hosting the [Snowshoe Hare](#). The Snowshoe Hare was a celebration of snowshoeing in the Keweenaw. As a themed event, it was highlighted by planned snowshoeing activities throughout the day and evening. Those activities included a presentation on Snowshoe Hare ecology in the afternoon, and hare/rabbit-themed cuisine offered in the Lodge's restaurant and Little Cabin Café.

The [weather conditions at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge](#) cooperated the entire day. The high temperature only reached 7°. However, the mostly-clear skies and low wind speeds gave a beautiful backdrop to the day's activities. One person described the landscape as "it's like Narnia around the Lodge."



Snowshoe racer, Amy Snow, running on a single-track section of the race course.

A Snowshoe Race was the first activity of the day. The 1.4 mile (2.25 km) course followed a combination of wide, flat groomed and narrow single track trails. The course made its way through the open areas and the wooded settings of the lodge property. Three runners completed the race, with times ranging from 18:04 to 35:48. The overall and top men's finisher was Drew Wilson, setting the course record of 18:04. Amy Oestreich, the top female finisher, set the course record for women at 25:38.



Drew Wilson, top finisher for the inaugural Snowshoe Hare Snowshoe race.

The second activity of the day was a Mindful Snowshoe Hike, led by Dayna Browning, a certified Koru Mindfulness instructor and wellness advocate from Michigan Technological University. Dayna led eight snowshoers on the 1.5 mile snowshoe hike focused on

balance, being mindful and quiet, and connecting with their surroundings. Through her guidance participants experienced nature and the elements using all their senses. One snowshoer reported a great sense of relaxation from the hike, expressing that he felt “refreshed from the moderate activity and the crisp clean air filling his lungs.” Another snowshoer stated she felt peaceful from her heightened sense of awareness among the quiet snow-filled trees.



Mindful snowshoers participate in introductions and itinerary, from instructor Dayna Browning.

Later in the afternoon, Tom Oliver (the lodge's Events and Educational Specialist) gave a presentation on Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*) ecology. Eleven guests attended the presentation. They learned the differences between rabbits and hares, the adaptations of snowshoe hares for surviving the harsh conditions of the north woods, the groundbreaking research on snowshoe hares that has helped biologists understand predator/prey relationships, and what conservation threats exist for snowshoe hares.



"If what you saw was this big...it was NOT a Snowshoe Hare!"

To close out the event, a [Guided Moonlit Snowshoe Hike](#), was led by Chris Guibert (the lodge's Outdoor Activities Lead) and Tom Oliver. Twenty participants headed out into the still cool air of the night, exploring the forest and grounds of the lodge. In total, the snowshoers hiked about 1.75 miles. Although participants had red-colored lights to help their nighttime navigation, the combination of moonlight and white snow made flashlights unnecessary. While most participants had prior snowshoeing experience, almost none had ever done it at night. The feedback we received for this experience was all positive, with participants using words like "amazing," "unbelievable," and "beautiful."



Moving through the northwoods illuminated by only moon and its light reflected off the snow, is an unforgettable experience. To round out the Snowshoe theme, the [Little Cabin Café](#) offered rabbit sausage soup, as a lunch special, to help warm snowshoers coming in from the cold. The flavors of the sausage in the soup were complimented by those of kale, root vegetables, and chickpeas. The restaurant at the lodge offered Hasenpfeffer (marinated, slow-cooked rabbit), served with broccoli and jeweled rice. The Hasenpfeffer was tender and delicious and accented perfectly by the dried fruits in the jeweled rice. Grand Rabbits Cream Ale by Blackrocks was also available – and on theme.

The Keweenaw Mountain Lodge partnered with [Iverson Snowshoes](#) and the [Keweenaw Outdoor Recreation Coalition \(KORC\)](#) for this event. Iverson Snowshoes provided promotional materials as well as a variety of their snowshoe models which could be used by patrons, free of charge. The Iverson snowshoes were borrowed 5 times over the course of the day. KORC had members on-site to explain the efforts of the organization and a specific call to action they are currently pursuing. KORC reported that they had several new members join, as well as a dozen forms for their latest call to action completed onsite.



Lodging guest, Brad Smit, is shown how to lace up the bindings on the Iverson traditional snowshoes he borrowed, courtesy of [Iverson Snowshoes](#).



[Tom Oliver](#)

Since I was a child, nature, wildlife, and the outdoors have always been my deepest fascination – the intrinsic force which drives me. Those interests led me through, both, my career (in wildlife ecology/management and science education) and my preferred forms of recreation (hiking, backpacking, canoeing and kayaking, photography, hunting and fishing, and birding). Although, I was born and raised in the UP, these pursuits also

provided me the opportunity to live overseas (in Europe and Asia) for 15 years, which greatly expanded my experience with the outdoors and outdoor recreation in different cultures. So, if you're interested in anything related to the outdoors, stop by the Lodge (or catch me anywhere you may see me on the grounds) to chat about or get set up for your next outdoor adventure.