

February 24, 2024: Moonlit Snowshoe Hike Recap

written by Amy Oestreich | March 1, 2024

“Adapt accordingly to the situation in a positive manner.” This is one of our core values at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge, and the low amount of snow this winter has proved to require some adaptations to our adventures. In 2023, Keweenaw County reported 55 inches of snowfall for the month of February, this year, we received a mere 21 inches.

This lack of fluffy flakes presented a new opportunity. After assessing the crusty snowshoe trail, the Outdoor Activities Team decided to offer the guided moonlit snowshoe hike as a “hike by moonlight”. Thirteen participants laced up their hiking boots and adventured on to experience something new. Has anyone ever hiked the Keweenaw Mountain Trails without snowshoes in February? A pioneering thrill filled the air!

Guests had arrived with different hopes as to what they would like to experience. Some wanted to challenge their night vision, some came to enjoy the silence and some were excited to see wildlife. Tonight we were hoping to see or at least hear an owl.

Wearing hiking boots allowed our footsteps to be quieter than snowshoes would have. The moon was high and bright and we were able to see clearly. Being in nature is always special – the still of the night adds an almost magical feeling. The calming effect of nature then allows the mind to quiet. As we made our way down the canyon on the Adventurer Snowshoe Route, we heard the rustle of large wings overhead. In unison, our footsteps halted to a stop. We heard the gentleman who had hoped to see an owl: “Look, right there, it’s an owl!” Magic? Maybe. Maybe he wished upon a star that night.

Gazing at our lucky stars, we hiked into the opening on fairway 4 of the golf course. We stopped to admire how the clouds formed shapes in the moonlight. It is funny how pointing at cloud images can make you feel like a kid again! Just then a beautiful rainbow ring encircled the full moon. A lunar halo casts an almost spellbinding glow across the sky. This is caused by the refraction of light from ice crystals in the upper atmosphere. Many times it appears as a white to grayish blue light. But tonight the entire spectrum of light was visible by us all. Yes, definitely magical.

When we adapt, we just may experience something new.



[Amy Oestreich](#)

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January 27, 2024: Moonlit Snowshoe Hike Recap

written by Amy Oestreich | March 1, 2024

The first full moon of 2024 rose on Thursday January 25th, the Wolf Moon.

This January's Moonlit Snowshoe Hike on January 27th, corresponded with the annual [Snowshoe Hare](#) event which included multiple activities celebrating snowshoeing in the Keweenaw, and was under the Wolf Moon. The owners of Iverson Snowshoes, Jim and Victoria Baker, treated participants with the opportunity to walk in the snow with traditional wood snowshoes made by Iverson. In the morning, a guided exploration on snowshoes was offered by naturalist Tom Oliver with MTU's Center for Science and Environmental Outreach. After working up an appetite on the trails, folks could try a bowl of rabbit stew or other rustic worldly food items from the Little Cabin Cafe. In the afternoon, guests observed presentations about the History of Snowshoeing, Snowshoe Hare Ecology and even learned how to lace traditional snowshoes.



Guests meet in the Winter OAC to sign waivers and for a pre hike discussion.

As night time approached and the skies turned to dark, we hoped for a full moon to light our adventures on the Moonlit Snowshoe Hike. Typically January in the Keweenaw brings cold temperatures and endless snow to cover the winter paths. The colder temperatures sometimes help keep the night skies clear and the continuous fresh snow light and fluffy. However, being an outdoor enthusiast and hobbyist skywatcher, I have learned that the word "typical" may not be a dependable tool for planning our adventures. Sometimes the weather can be uncooperative, and that was the case this evening. Moonlight and fresh snow amiss; the adventurers hiked on.

To many individuals, full moons are one of the most dramatic sights in the night sky. Every month, Earth's moon goes through its phases, waning and waxing in its constant transformation from new moon to full moon and back again. Full moons occur approximately 29.5 days as the moon moves to the side of Earth directly opposite the sun, reflecting the sun's rays off its full face and appearing as a brilliant, perfectly circular disk.

For millennia, humans have used the movement of the moon to keep track of the passing year and set schedules for hunting, planting, and harvesting. Ancient cultures and Native Americans have given these full moons names based on the behavior of the plants, animals, or weather during that month. Although many Native American tribes gave distinct names to the full moons, the most widely accepted names come from the Algonquin tribes who lived in the area of New England and westward to Lake Superior.

NEW & FULL MOONS OF 2024



at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge



JANUARY



11th



WOLF

25th

JULY



5th



BUCK

21st

FEBRUARY



9th



SNOW

24th

AUGUST



4th



STURGEON

19th

MARCH



8th



WORM

23rd

SEPTEMBER



2nd



HARVEST

17th

APRIL



10th



PINK

25th

OCTOBER



2nd



HUNTERS

17th

MAY



7th



FLOWER

23rd

NOVEMBER



1st



BEAVER

15th

JUNE



6th



STRAWBERRY

21st

DECEMBER



1st



COLD

15th

To see more about stargazing at the Lodge: keweenawmountainlodge.com

One of the names that January's full moon carries is Wolf Moon. It was thought that the wolves howled in hunger as they lamented over the scarcity of food midwinter. Perhaps more accurately though, howling and other wolf vocalizations are heard more clearly in the wintertime and are used to locate pack members, reinforce social bonds, define territory and coordinate hunts. The eerie sounds of resident coyotes and local wolf packs have recently been filling the nights in Copper Harbor. This possibly unfamiliar sound to visitors may create chills and even seem unnatural. However it may be one the purest forms of nature and the natural world. Oftentimes, this wild communication conjures up a connection between humans and wolves; a connection telling us we are part of this moment. The sound of howling may be a reminder that when hiking by traditional snowshoes under the blanket of darkness in the winter, that we too may not be far removed from our natural state. It has even been suggested that the Wolf Moon offers us greater opportunity for deep self-reflection.



Some snowshoers used red lights to navigate when the moon was behind the clouds.

During our adventure, the moon did not light our way and the wolves did not howl. In fact, the night was not typical, the temperatures were warmer than expected and the snowfall was less than average. Following the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge's core value of, "Adapt accordingly to the situation and react in a positive manner" we welcomed the "non-typical" conditions.



Lead guide Amy O brings the group together for a discussion on the history of the Lodge.

While reflecting on the natural scene around me; I realized...maybe "typical", "expectations" and "average" are not what we desire when we wander into the night seeking guidance by moonlight and the natural world.



All smiles after completing their birthday adventure!



[Amy Oestreich](#)

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March 4, 2023: Moonlit Snowshoe Hike Recap

written by Amy Oestreich | March 1, 2024

"Find Joy in the Unexpected" – Amy Oestreich





This year, the month of March is presenting early signs of Spring for the Keweenaw. The day skies have been sunny, the temperatures warm and the snow has been crunchy. Of course In other parts of the Northern Hemisphere that enjoy the winter season, new grass is already appearing between melting snow piles, bright yellow daffodils are poking through compressed decomposing leaves and Robins are feasting on worms. On [Saturday, March 4th, 2023](#), adventurous participants gathered at

the [Outdoor Activity Center](#). Under the light of the near full moon, Chris Guibert, OAC Lead, and myself, guided these folks on our 3rd Moonlit Snowshoe hike of the season; letting our eyes adjust to the “Worm Moon” of the Spring.



As I settled into the pace and comfort of nature, my mind wandered. I began to think of change: the changing temperatures, the changing climate and the changes or “advances” in technology. I appreciate time in this serene atmosphere; it is conducive for creative thinking. I always seem to ponder the past while maintaining my concerns of the present; how do we adapt to such changes? How do we adjust? How do we weave our past with our future? When I am traveling by snowshoes, especially under the moonlight, I feel a strong connection to our ancestors. This connection gives me a sense of security that we will continue to evolve with the changes. And how could I not?

Snowshoeing is an ancient mode of transportation that originated thousands of years ago among indigenous peoples in the Arctic regions of North America and Eurasia. The earliest evidence of snowshoes dates back to 4000 BC, when people in Central Asia used them for hunting and travel. I admire that not much has changed with this technology. Sure, snowshoes were originally made from materials such as animal hide and wood, and the basic design involved a frame made of wood or bone that was laced with more animal hide or sinew. It wasn't until the 20th century, with the introduction of new materials such as aluminum and synthetic fabrics, that the snowshoe evolved. And even then, the basic shape and concept prevailed.



While we may not be hunting or traveling in the traditional sense, we are definitely enjoying the evolution of snowshoes as a recreational activity. There is something magical that happens when we allow our minds to disengage from technology and draw our bodies closer to nature. The light of the moon seems to act as a catalyst for this. The thrill of the visual hunt propels our legs forward to experience memories.



We gathered tonight with hopes of hiking under a blanket of stars, clear skies, a bright full moon and perhaps even a display of Northern Lights. As expectations were built, one may have been let down by the cloudy night and blurred moon. Thankfully our mental adjustments have allowed us to adapt our attitude to enjoy the beauty the hazy sky has offered. The stars were not bright, The Northern Lights did not dance for us, but we did stop and reflect on the beauty of the unexpected. The cold, damp, foggy night air offered us an amazing ring around the moon!



A lunar halo is a ring of light that appears around the moon at night. It is caused by the reflection, refraction, and dispersion of moonlight by ice crystals in the Earth's atmosphere.

The ice crystals in the atmosphere act like tiny prisms, bending the light and separating it into different colors. The angle of the light passing through the ice crystals determines the size of the halo, with larger halos appearing when the angle is smaller.

Lunar halos are usually white, but they can also display a range of colors depending on the angle of the moonlight and the size and shape of the ice crystals. The colors can range from red on the inside of the halo to blue on the outside.

In awe, we stop for photos; we are not let down! We are delighted with our chance viewing of the beautiful lunar halo. As we continue our snowshoe hike back to the Lodge. I enjoy listening to the guests laugh with each other, compare experiences and share their stories. I noticed a common theme: "find Joy in the unexpected".



Life can be challenging at times. Change can also be challenging. This challenge may force us to try new things, adapt, adjust, evolve and embrace the advances in technology. Just know, if it ever gets to be a bit much; you can always connect with nature and find joy...maybe even in something unexpected.



[Amy Oestreich](#)

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January 7, 2023: Moonlit Snowshoe Hike Recap

written by Amy Oestreich | March 1, 2024

“Connections” – I feel connected to nature; I think of the history of snowshoes. A simple piece of gear, created out of necessity, more than 4000 years before my time. I feel a literal connection to the snow. My feet are securely attached to a mode of transportation perhaps my ancestors relied on for food and travel. I begin to feel a heightened connection between my mind and my body. My other senses are alive as my vision diminishes. I read the snow without sight; the packed trail feels denser underfoot than the drifts, it sounds crunchy. The moonlight is enough – but my other senses must greatly assist. My mind cannot wander and lead me astray. Is this the way? I feel a survivalist sense of responsibility as 22 participants follow me onto the trail and into the night. – Thoughts – Amy Oestreich

The Outdoor Activity Center hosted its first [Moonlit Snowshoe hike of 2023](#) on January 7. We were excited to welcome 22 participants to the adventure. As a KML team member, I organized and guided this event for the first time. Below is a recap of the event:

Events are always filled with excitement and of course a little bit of nervousness. After all, this was my first time in charge of such an event. Twelve people had signed up in advance...no problem! To my pleasant surprise more folks kept arriving. As we began our introduction, 22 participants had filled the Outdoor Activity Center. Group activities are interesting and always fun. You have a range from "this is my first time on snowshoes" to "I think I was born with snowshoes on". What I notice, no matter the skill level, folks are there for the guided, group dynamics and perhaps more importantly the camaraderie that forms; the connection.



I welcomed everyone, gave a brief overview of the gear, trail safety, vision by moonlight, the Adventurer Snowshoe Route, and [Leave No Trace Practices](#). Then we headed outside to gear up and hike out. I was lead guide and Chris Guibert, OAC Lead, served as sweep.



The [Adventurer Snowshoe Route](#) begins by crossing the golf course. Snow levels were low and the route was not as obvious to my night-visioned eye as I had hoped. Leading a group creates a sense of responsibility. These folks are going to follow me...my anxiety challenged my confidence. I questioned a path I had traveled many times, but not with people depending on me. Then, connections...camaraderie showed me the way. Tom Oliver, a previous team member at the Lodge, who was instrumental in creating this route, leap frogged me and led us to our next junction. I embraced admitting that I got off trail a smidge. It reminded me of relying on our neighbors during times of need; asking for help; moving as a team; admitting imperfections.

As we traversed into the wooded section, I did have to chuckle

as Tom led us off trail for a brief moment. But truer, I thought of times past. I thought of the days when our ancestors used many of our current forms of recreation as everyday transportation. I thought of these modern snowshoes on my feet and how they evolved from hand shaped wood and animal hide. I thought about how they were used solely to move and hunt in the winter. I then thought of other forms of recreation, sport and even competitions and how they evolved from our ancestors modes of transportation: hiking, dog sledding, horseback riding... Again, I began to feel a connection to nature and history.

The route continued through the woods, alongside rock formations and then to an uphill portion. Sure, ascents can challenge our bodies, but I find that they can work our minds even more. Many times, what we think manifests what we feel. As we re-grouped in an opening, I suggested connecting to the internal chatter your mind tends to create when faced with difficulty. This hill is hard! I want to stop! I'm out of shape! What if we can change the mental narrative to,

I've got this! Keep going! I am getting into shape! As we connected our minds to our bodies, the hill disappeared underfoot. As if to reward us, just then, the full moon began to unveil herself from beneath the clouds. Hello Moon!



Our snowshoe adventure continued along the historic rock wall boundary and back into the woods. Pockets of moonlight guided us along the trail. The stillness of the night calmed me. I could sense the wildlife sharing their space with us. Little tracks imprinted the snow telling us where these critters come and go. Our night as a group was coming to an end. As we circled together, smiles shined in the light of the moon. We did it! We

connected as a community of snowshoers; each bringing a desire to explore and learn and each leaving with a new memory by moonlight.



If you are interested in joining our next Moonlit Snowshoe hike on February 4th at 8:00pm, please call the OAC for more information and reserve a spot.



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