



Lansdowne Public Library personnel Debbie Willis and Brice Weddoo ready to check out snowshoes to card carrying members so they can try the sport. (photo from 2016)

WALK LIKE A YETI

Winter Hiking and Snowshoeing in Leeds-Grenville

By Lorraine Payette

This winter has been a snow enthusiast's dream – piles and mounds of the white stuff as far as the eye can see, and plenty of cold temperatures to keep it beautiful and tempting.

Instead of letting it go to waste, many people are getting out to enjoy winter, hiking and snowshoeing in the region.

"In my active days I snowshoed on the Gananoque Trail from Herbert Street to the Rec Centre, at the CRCA in Kingston, at Landon's Bay (highly recommended), Parks Canada Jones Creek, Marble Rock, Charleston Lake Park, Frontenac Park, and the Provincial Wildlife area, often off marked trails or 'bush whacking,'"

said Peter Murray, Chairman of the Gananoque Trees and Trails Panel and member of the Rideau Trail.

"In winter, hiking is really only possible if there is little or no snow. Beware of ice under foot and under a skiff of snow. If using lakes or ponds, be sure they are safe."

There are different choices of equipment – whether the modern aluminum shoes or the old wood and rawhide. Good harnesses to fasten them to your boots are essential. Some people snowshoe with ski poles for balance.

"Most trails are not groomed or monitored," said Murray. "Knowing the

area you are going to is the best advice – don't bite off more than you can chew. Remember, you have to go the same distance to get back to the trail head or home."

Make sure that snowshoeing is allowed on the trail you are considering. Sometimes trails are restricted, and it's always best to check before going. Bring a buddy. Have a cell phone in case you are in range. Even with ideal conditions, a bad fall could leave you in a dangerous spot. A few minutes of practice in your own backyard will prepare you for going out on any of the public trails in Leeds-Grenville.

Snowshoes may be purchased, rented, or borrowed from places like the Leeds and the Thousand Islands Public Library's innovative Recreation Library. In 2016, the library in Lansdowne installed a Snowshoe Tree where residents can sign out a pair of snowshoes to use for up to three days at a time.

"The Rideau Trail Club has hiking/snowshoeing trips every weekend, and I see that the TLTI have a hiking/snowshoeing program as does Seeley's Bay Retirement home," said Murray. "Dress appropriately and limit your trip to your ability and experience. Use layers, as you can heat up and cool off quickly and carry a backpack with some water and trail mix or snack. Always let someone know where you are going, and when you should be expected back. A cell phone is good for emergencies."

There are great trails to explore at Hemlock Ridge Trail (Brockville – 2 km), Mac Johnson Wildlife Area (Brockville – 5 km), Westport-Rideau Trail (Chaffey's Locks – 28.9 km), Lion's Loop (Gananoque – 4.3 km), River Loop Trail (Gananoque – 7.5 km), Roger's Loop (Gananoque – 4.9 km), Management Trail (Kemptonville – 2.3 km), Marlborough Forest – Rideau Trail (Merrickville – 26.9 km), Opinicon Loop – Rideau Trail (Perth – 23 km), Portland Bay Trail (Portland) and Mill Pond Trails (Tichborne – 6 km). You can also contact the Thousand Islands National Park. Throughout the area you will find beautiful trails that are well worth taking the time to discover and explore.

For more information on the trails in Leeds-Grenville, please go to www.ontariotrails.on.ca. LH