

December 4th, 2009

Snowshoeing 101



NATIONAL TRAILS COALITION

NTC Weekly Newsletter

Some parts of the country already have snow and the rest of the region isn't far behind. Just because the weather makes us feel a little bleak it is still important to stay active and healthy all year long and a great and fun way to do this during winter is with some snowshoeing on trails near you. Getting started isn't that complicated and many towns have snowshoes you can rent or borrow through the municipality or local schools. So there is no excuse not to get up and try something new.

Human feet are just not made to navigate through deep snow but why miss out on adventures. Snowshoes can open up a whole new world of fun for you and your family. Here are some quick pointers to get you up and going this winter on our beautiful trails.

Getting up and turning

around: First step is learning to get up from falling in the snow. A simple approach to getting up is to roll over onto your front, put one knee up and push yourself up to a half kneeling position. Then raise yourself back to a standing position by using your knees to brace your hands/arms.

Walking in a circle is the easiest means of turning around. But time and space do not always permit that. A good alternative to turning around is to use what is called the "step turn." This movement involves lifting one snowshoe and placing it at a 90-degree angle in front of the other shoe (forming a "T" with your snowshoes). Then shifting your body and bringing the other snowshoe back alongside, making a half-turn. Do it again to make the full turn.

Stride A stride is walking forward on snowshoes at a gait that is compatible with the snowshoer's step. Walk as you would without snowshoes. But allow for

some straddling depending on the width of your snowshoe. The idea is to prevent hitting your shins or developing pain in your thighs due to too wide a straddle.

Stamping and edging:

Stand in place, step lightly with your heel first and then toe. Pause for a brief moment and then transfer your weight onto the full snowshoe. This is called stamping. The same goes for another technique called *edging*. Plant the side of your snowshoe edgewise into the snow, pause and push your weight onto the outside edge of the shoe. This solidifies the snow and builds a step.

Ascending: Going up and across hills involves procedures that require more skill and practice than other techniques. The technique is called stepping up. While facing directly uphill, step into the snow with your weight on your toes while planting your front claws into the hill. Use stamping as needed.

Descending: Down-hilling involves walking down a gradual slope with snowshoes level to the horizon, keeping knees flexed and putting weight directly on the shoe with some shift to the heel depending on the angle of the slope. Remember to keep level. Have Fun



Project Profile Tombstone Park — Yukon

The goal of the Klondike Active Transport & Trails Society was not just to create new trail and improve and rebuild broken and dilapidated trails in the area but to offer the youth in the region the chance to be part of a lasting legacy for their community. The projects that were undertaken not only improved the multi-use trails but also forged new friendships and a renewed respect for the environment and wildlife. It was hard physical labour and the rough but picturesque landscape sometimes required a plane or helicopter to air lift supplies to the building locations. All these great improvements were made possible with funding from Canada's Economic Action Plan through the National Trails Coalition and provincial funding from Yukon Parks-Northern Region, Department of Yukon Environment.



Throughout the summer of 2009 several different crews worked on this project in various stages. The first crew, starting in late June, commenced work on a board walk project on the North Klondike Trail. This is a very popular day use trail leading out from the main campground in Tombstone Territorial Park. Approximately a kilometre from the trailhead the trail drops to a low lying section adjacent to the Klondike River that is prone to flooding and slow to drain following periods of heavy rains or late snow melt. As a result the trail tread was often wet and muddy, making it uncomfortable for hikers and had led to extensive tread degradation and trail braiding. The boardwalk, being elevated, had the added benefit of improving lines of sight which will help mitigate potentially dangerous wildlife encounters.

Using materials supplied by and flown on site by Yukon Parks, KATTS crews built over 182 meters of boardwalk along this section. This project was completed for the most part by high school aged workers under the direction of an experienced supervisor. In addition to learning a variety of trail building techniques the youth workers also learned some basic carpentry skills and how to use a selection of power and hand tools.

The second main project that was undertaken in 2009 was the reconstruction of a trail bridge on the Klondike River Campground Interpretative Trail that had been destroyed by flood waters and ice during spring break up. The bridge spanned a side channel of the Klondike River and had once been the site of a beaver dam.

The third major project was the construction of a new trail route up the slopes of Mount Goldensides. Goldensides Trail is one of the few recognized trails in the recently established Tombstone Territorial Park. Yukon Parks made the decision to relocate the trail away from an exposed steep, rocky ridge by constructing a properly graded trail which would traverse the gentler north-east flank of the mountain. The new route will have the added benefit of allowing hikers excellent views of the surrounding uplands and mountain vistas without committing them to having to ascend the steep route all the way to the summit.

