

Introduction to Snowshoe Hiking

Let's Go Snowshoe Hiking!



In this slideshow you will learn:

- How snowshoes work and why.
- Funny names for a few snowshoe designs.
- What native peoples used to make snowshoes.
- What we use to make snowshoes today.
- How Minnesota animals are adapted to snow.

How Do Snowshoes Work???



Ask for student responses to this question: How Do Snowshoes Work?

What do the students think?

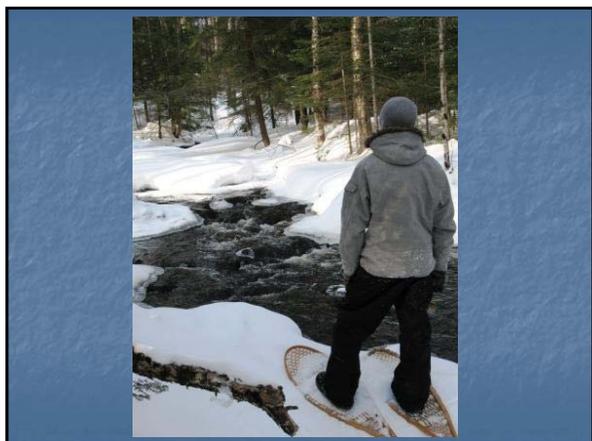
They make your feet bigger!



Bigger feet spread out your body weight over a larger area. A larger area is more likely to support your weight.

That means you won't sink as far into the snow. Will you walk "on top" of the snow? No, even the biggest snowshoes sink into the snow a little leaving an interesting track!

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Biologists, as well as hikers, use snowshoes to get into areas they can not reach easily other times of the year.



Sometimes snowshoes even come in handy when there is no snow!

In the summer, when wetlands are dry the mud is still deep and very sticky. Refuge biologists might use snowshoes to explore a wetland!



Ask your students any or all of the following questions:

- How do you spend your winter? Are you inside in front of the TV or game system?
- What kind of exercise do you get in the winter?
- How much time do spend outside enjoying a beautiful winter day?

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Calories Burned During Winter Activities

- Bird Watching, 175/hr
- Building a Snowman, 250/hr
- Walking, 200-300/hr
- Hiking & Climbing Hills, 400-475/hr
- Snowshoeing, 475-700/hr
- Running, 550-700/hr
- X-Country Skiing, 400-1000/hr

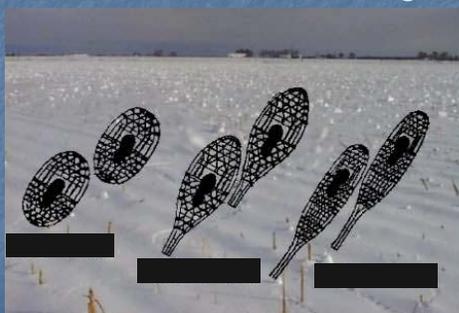
Center for Disease Control, American Heart Assoc., Calorie Lab, Nutristrategy

Compare with the students the most common winter activities shown here.

- Which burn the most calories per hour?
- Which do they think requires the least expensive equipment?
- Which are hardest to learn?

Snowshoe Hiking is one option that is a great winter workout, requires minimal equipment (that can often be borrowed or rented), and allows you to explore beautiful areas.

Different Snowshoe Designs

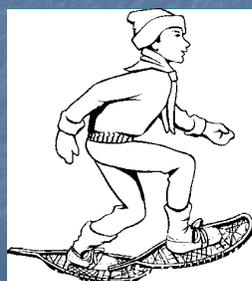


These different snowshoe shapes were created to travel through

- different types of habitat (prairie, forest, wetlands) and
- different types of snow (wet and heavy, light and fluffy).

Snowshoe designs have often been named after the areas of the country they are used and the peoples who developed them.

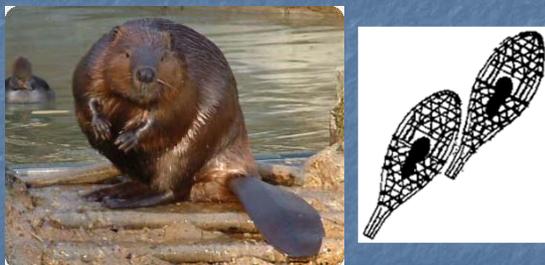
What Does This Snowshoe Shape Look Like?



Sometimes snowshoe designs were also named after animals the native peoples depended on. What does this shape remind you of?

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The Beaver Tail Snowshoe



The beaver tail is the most popular snowshoe design. The tail helps hikers keep their balance. It is especially good for long hikes in open areas or on trails.

What Does This Snowshoe Shape Look Like?



Ask students what this shape reminds them of?

The Bear Paw Snowshoe



The Bear Paw is a round and wide snowshoe design. It was sometimes called the "old lady" shoe because older woman usually wore them!

This design was better suited for woodland habitat as they are easier to turn around in.

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The Alaskan Snowshoe



The image shows two yellow Alaskan snowshoes with a long, narrow, teardrop shape. Below them is a photograph of a wide, flat, snow-covered landscape under a clear sky, with distant mountains visible on the horizon.

The long slim design of the Alaskan Snowshoe is especially good in wind swept wide open spaces where the snow is deep and fluffy.

Snowshoes of the Past



The image is a collage. On the left, a man in a hat and plaid shirt is kneeling and working on a snowshoe frame. To his right is a close-up of a vibrant red maple leaf. Below the leaf are two smaller images: one of a green deciduous tree and another of a tall evergreen tree.

The original snowshoes, made by the native peoples of the past, were hand-made of natural materials. The frame was often made of soft, bendable woods from willow, ash, spruce, boxelder or maple trees.

Lacing Materials and Designs



The image shows three different elements related to snowshoe lacing. Top left: a bundle of orange-brown lacing strips. Bottom left: a close-up of a snowshoe's internal wooden frame with a complex lacing pattern. Right: a woman wearing glasses is shown working on a snowshoe, weaving the lacing into the frame.

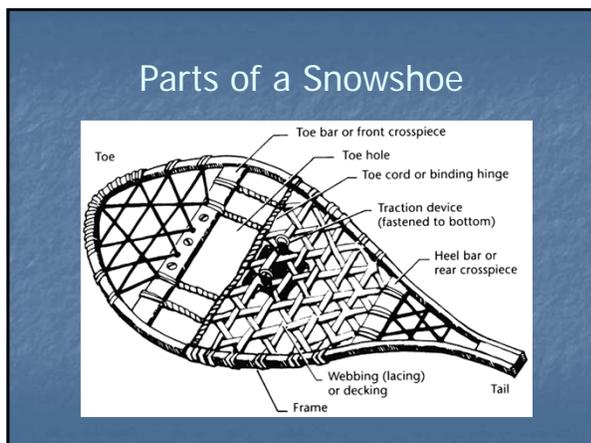
Native peoples used strips of hide from deer, moose, or other animals they hunted. They often weaved and knotted beautiful designs into the snowshoe.

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Today's modern snowshoes are easier to use and care for. They are made of materials such as aluminum, metal, rubber and nylon that need no special care and are virtually indestructible.

Ice claws, also called crampons, attached underneath, makes hiking up hills and across icy terrain much easier.



(point out the major parts of the snowshoes using a Refuge snowshoe)

- Toe and Toe Hole
- Binding
- Tail
- Crampon (sometimes also called a cleat or claw)
- Deck (referred to as webbing in laced shoes)



Snowshoe Hare

The snowshoe hare is well designed for winter. The large hind feet help it stay on top of the snow as it runs from a coyote, fox or other predator.

It is also well camouflaged in winter. As temperatures drop and daylight shortens, the white winter fur begins to replace the brown summer coat. This color change helps it blend into its surroundings.

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Winter Adaptations – Lynx



Lynx

Large, round feet help this wild cat chase the snowshoe hare. Fur between the pads of the feet and toes help to protect the foot from ice and cold.

Winter Adaptations – White-tailed Deer



White-tailed Deer

Deer have hooved feet which is helpful in snow and ice. Their hooves are small however and deer have a hard time traveling in deep snow.

Winter Adaptations – Moose



Moose

Moose also have hooves that protect the foot from sharp ice and bitter cold. This large animal sinks deep into the snow but no problem!

The hump on their back is muscle. They are able to move through the snow like a plow .

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