



[above] The wonderful pond at Scout Tract, [below left] The entrance at Scout, [below right] a snow covered trail in Mitchell.

SCOUT-MITCHELL LOOP

by David Tuley

You must approach these forest tracts from Vivian Rd. as McCowan is cut at a creek valley. For this reason, these tracts are less frequented. Park on the side of the road, and be respectful of the quiet neighbourhood. These forest tracts have appeal year round.

On this January 19 day, the trail was hard-packed snow-ice with 2cm of snow on top. If it weren't for the fresh snow, sections would be impassable without assistance from microspikes; crampons and snowshoes would probably be awkward on such a hard surface.

For 1 pm on a Tuesday, the trail traffic was light - I spotted eight other hikers and only passed two. There was one car alongside the road on arrival, and six when I left. I attempt

to choose trail alignments to avoid the view of houses (and fence-line barking dogs). On this hike, I saw about ten homes, including a couple of horse farms.

Winter is a challenge, because of impromptu trail development by snowshoers. It is easy to get confused, so I used a trails app to stay on course.

A pristine pond is located at the west end of Scout Tract. On this day, the south leg of the pond loop was closed, either due to icy conditions on the hill, or the requirement to jump a creek at the outflow of the earthen damn. Regardless, you have to walk down to the pond one way or another. Obviously, it would be foolish for you or your dog to walk

on untested ice. Also, you may detect the presence of larger lakes nearby, but sorry, those are on private property.

There's hardly a hill big enough to get your blood flowing on either forest tract. Mitchell has the highest point at 351 meters - enough to feel it, but not enough to pant up the hill.

I saw two squirrels, but no large animal tracks, other than cross country ski tracks. All pets were on a leash except for two dogs with one individual, and he disappeared as soon as he saw me in the distance.

This is the perfect trail plan for a family - if Scout tires them out you can re-route back to the car. But if all is well, you can cross over to Mitchell without being tempted by the car. (U)

