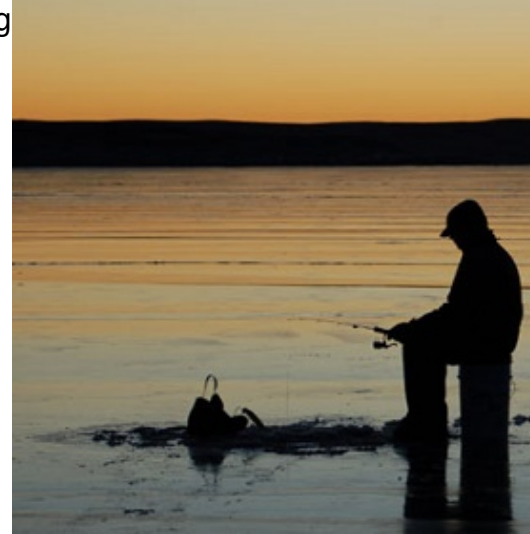


<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/icefishing-river-s5.jpg>



Ice fishing to snowshoeing, cross country skiing to snowmobiling, Wisconsinites have many options to choose from to enjoy the outdoors while also preventing the spread of COVID-19.

MADISON - Winter is a season to celebrate, although some lifelong Wisconsinites may disagree because of the snow and freezing temperatures. The change of season and anticipation of the first snowfall can be joyous. Maybe, after months of green grass and empty treetops, a white blanket of snow brightens our view once again.

Winter is a truly magical season. Rather than being stuck in the house, there is a whole new world outdoors to enjoy, especially here in our beautiful state. We've grown accustomed to making the most out of any situation in 2020. This season won't be any different. But, we can still celebrate Wisconsin's role in pioneering some of the most well-known winter activities. We can also enjoy all that Wisconsin has to offer during these winter months, even while following proper precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19.

When I was a youngster living on the north side of Eau Claire, and wasn't building snow forts or sliding down the big hills with friends, I'd sling my skates over my shoulder and hike down to the city park. The park's skating rink was full of friends and a bonfire to warm us up. If we were feeling really ambitious, we'd catch a ride to Half Moon Lake to punch holes in the ice and take our chances at hooking some fish to bring home.

Winter in Wisconsin

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31

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Once I reached my teen years, my dad bought a snowmobile. We spent many days and nights exploring the trails. Once I was able to drive and load our machines up, we rode trails that took us through woods and up hills that I'd never been before. While downhill skiing came later for me, it added to my love of winter. When I got a wood burning stove in my home, I had even more reason to love winter.

The list of activities one can do on a Wisconsin winter day is endless. The outdoor recreational opportunities in Wisconsin have continued growing since I was young. It's more common than ever to strap on a pair of snowshoes and hike the trails. Cross country skiing has become one of the most popular sports for so many and put Wisconsin on the map.

The American Birkebeiner has become one of the most extraordinary events in the nation and it takes place right here in Wisconsin from Cable to Hayward. An event first held in 1973 with 35 skiers has now become a classic. In a good snow year, it'll attract thousands from all over the world. With varying lengths and difficulties, it's a race for anyone who can manage a pair of skis.

[Earlier in our state's history, Wisconsinites developed the concept of snowmobiles](#). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Wisconsinites experimented with modified winter snow machines – like bicycles, sleighs and even Model T Fords. Eventually snowmobiles, as we know them now, caught on as a fun winter activity, as well as a dependable form of winter transportation.

With nearly 15,000 lakes in Wisconsin, and fishing an obsession for so many, winter isn't a time to give the fish a break. In fact, for some, it's the time of year to get serious. Once the ice is thick and safe to walk on, there will be holes drilled, tip-ups set and shanties dotting the ice.

Although the Birkebeiner, snowmobiling and ice fishing traditions will be different than in years past, there are still many opportunities to be outdoors, enjoying the season safely with members of your own household.

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Hikers can enjoy the trails throughout the beautiful Driftless landscape. With a pair of snowshoes, anyone can walk these snowy trails and enjoy the fresh beauty of the winter scenery. These activities give an entirely different perspective of the wonders of our Wisconsin.

If you find yourself dreading the coming of winter, think again. Wisconsin is truly a wonderland of all seasons. You'll find the lake, hills and trees you admired in the summer will thrill you all over again in the winter. Bundle up and enjoy Wisconsin all over again.