

Cross country skiing is the way to see nature best

By Lem Mesco
staff writer

You don't hear as much about cross country skiing as you do about downhill skiing — for a reason.

The reason is that businesses which operate ski lifts and the tourism agencies to which they pay dues don't make money off cross country skiers.

And yet from the point of view of the outdoors' lover, cross country is the way to ski. Not only is it cheaper, but you can be close to nature. You see deer tracks — and even deer — and hear bird songs you never hear on the commercial slopes.

Maybury State Park and the Huron-

outdoors

Clinton Metro Parks are two fine spots for cross country skiing. (In the past, we've seen many cross country zealots in the Island Lake State Recreation Area woods near New Hudson, but they've been fewer this year with all the snowmobiles racing around there.)

IT'S GREAT. We have seven to eight miles of cross country trails marked, said Tony Klain, manager of Maybury State Park on Eight Mile

Road, a few miles west of Northville. "One is quite easy. Others go through the woods," said Klain. Maybury's ski trails follow its hiking trails and bicycle paths. The park also has a sledding hill and a restable picnic shelter with a fireplace.

A concessionaire will rent you such equipment as shoes, poles and skis from 12:30 p.m. to dark Tuesdays-Fridays, and from 9 a.m. to dark Saturdays and Sundays.

The park is open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. Admission is \$2 per vehicle per visit, but it's a bargain to get a state park annual vehicle permit for \$10.

THE SEVEN Huron-Clinton Metro Parks have cross country skiing.

Leading the parade is Kensington, near Milford, with 15 miles of trails. To the northeast is Stony Creek, near Rochester, with 1.7 miles.

In southern Wayne County, there are Willow, near New Boston, with 4.5 miles, and Oakwood, near Flat Rock, with three miles of marked trails.

Kensington, Stony Creek and Willow also have rental concessions. The concessionaire is Ruppert Campfitters Inc., which also offers lessons. Call one of their stores in Royal Oak, Redford Township or Ann Arbor for information.

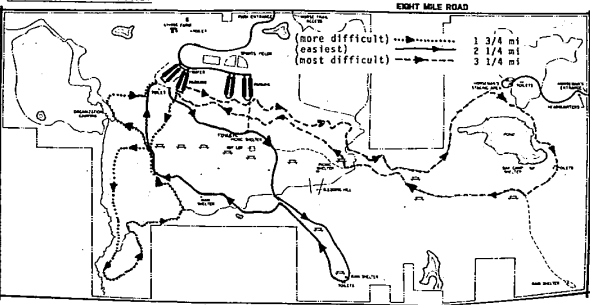
If you want to blaze your own trail, try Metro Beach, near Mt. Clemens; Hudson Mills, northwest of Ann Arbor on North Territorial Road; or Lower Huron, near Belleville.

Vehicle permits are \$2 for the day and \$7 for the year.

MAYBURY is offering another new feature this year — hayrides in a horse-drawn sleigh. The 20-minute rides start every half-hour from noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays and cost \$1.50 a person or \$5 a family.

Groups of up to 20 may make reservations for Friday, Saturday or Sunday evenings. Call concessionaire Dean

CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS



Maybury State Park uses its seven miles of hiking and bicycling trails for cross country skiing in winter. The lines indicate marked trails, and there is plenty of usable open land, too.

Carmony at (517) 522-5394 for prices and information.

UPCOMING programs at Kensington Metro Park are:

• A quilting demonstration at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, by Ann Wiersma in the Farm Center at the north end of the park. There is a \$1 charge. If you're into early American crafts, we recommend these farm programs. Register in advance by calling the Farm Center at 685-9105 or the park office at 685-1551.

• A nature cross country ski tour starts at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 10, from the Nature Center on the west side of the park. Naturalist Mark Szabo will lead the 2½-hour trek, stopping to examine activities and survival tactics of plants and animals. Call the park office to register.

• An indoor-outdoor "Nature in Winter" program begins at 10 a.m. Sunday with Mark Szabo in the Nature Center. He'll show color slides and play the guitar indoors, then lead an hour-long nature hike. Call to register.

• "Preparing and Spinning Wool" begins at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14, in the Farm Center. Sheep's wool will be prepared and spun. Charge is \$1. Call to register.

Pontiac Lake is off-limits for winter; ice too thin

Stay off Pontiac Lake this winter. The ice will be dangerously thin because lake levels are being drawn down for dam repairs, according to Oakland

County Drain Commissioner George Kuhn.

"It's down three feet now, and it'll be down seven or eight feet by the end of the month," said Kuhn. "Total draw-down will be 10 feet."

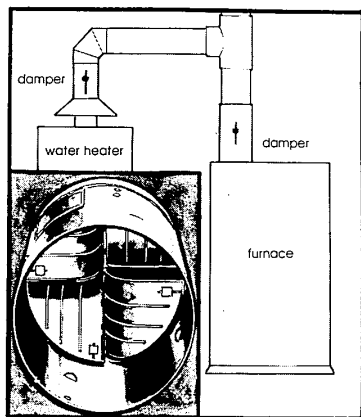
This week the lake will be posted at four access sites against any use.

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