



Bailey-Lagerstrom Nature Preserve

March 17, 2019

By Barb Scott

Some of the best snowshoeing can be had in March, and conditions this day were near perfect. Earlier thaws and then a light snow had produced a nice, soft platform on top of the snow that didn't require someone to break trail and supported even the largest person. The temperature was just below freezing and therefore was quite comfortable for a slow and meandering exploration. The wetlands were all frozen solid. We could go anywhere we wanted and so we did.

Our destination was the 422-acre (171-hectare) Bailey-Lagerstrom Nature Preserve on Sugar Island, owned by the Little Traverse Conservancy. It has about two miles (3.2 km) of Saint Marys River frontage and was set aside in 2004, so past land uses are evident but do not detract from the beauty of the place. It was a favorite place of Carl Lindhart's, and I thought of him often as we made our way.



Traversing the old road – B. Scott

After parking on Homestead Road, we entered on an old road that headed directly west through dense balsam fir and poplar. We spotted a massive witch's broom in a balsam fir that would make a nice squirrel condo if it were higher off the ground. Evidence of porcupine herbivory was frequent, most commonly on the tamaracks but also on alder, white pine, and even oak.



St. Marys River shoreline – V. Walker

We bypassed the first marsh with its statuesque dead trees and wove our way through the alders to the shore of the Saint Marys River.

The view of the frozen river was beautiful, but a persistent cold western wind forced us back into the interior. As a reward we found old otter slides, as well as canid tracks.



We rounded a large ponded area, where we came across an active beaver lodge. A bit further away in the alders we walked past a spot of open water where something had broken a hole in the ice. Lots of animal tracks surrounded it. Not so unusual, since there aren't unfrozen streams nearby for drinking water. What was unusual was that there were big chunks of ice from the hole a fair distance away, as if

something had tossed them there. It was a mystery we couldn't solve.



At this point, rather than retrace our steps back to the car, we tried to recreate Carl's route by circling back to the road. "Tried" is the operative word, as we never found a clear path through the dense firs and tired of the hard work of bending, pushing, and sometimes tripping through the trees. A snowshoe hare was spotted, white except for his nose, eyes, and the tips of his long ears. Unfortunately, he hightailed it before the rest of the group could see him.



An executive decision was made to retreat and circle back to familiar

territory, and Carl's old compass pointed the way.



St. Marys shoreline – V. Walker

We were very fortunate to have two excellent photographers with us that day. For Val's photo album click [HERE](#). For Renee's photo album click [HERE](#).



Tasty corn dog /cattail – V. Walker



The group – Hats off to V. Walker