

February 08, 2020

By Mark Harvey

February 8, 2020 was possibly the coldest day but sunniest day of a rather warm and cloudy winter. A group of 14 hardy naturalists met in Sault Ste. Marie at a frosty temperature of -20°C to begin the journey to the trail head some 50 minutes away by car. In spite of the cold temperatures, the pure blue skies and beautiful sunshine soon had all oblivious to the frigid temperatures.

The trailhead was located at the end of a hilly secondary road on Bass Lake due east of the Soo, north of Leeburn. Numerous small finches were observed along this route possibly collecting grit from the recently sanded road surface.

The adventure began by traversing Bass Lake to a well used trail on the north side of the lake. Ice and snow condition were ideal for walking or snowshoeing. Once across the lake the group picked up another well used trail packed by snowmobiles that headed up hill into the forest. This section of the outing passed through mature hardwood forest with a healthy component of old hemlock. Lichen and moss were observed on some of the older trees including the lichen, lungwort. Small mammal tracks were also found delicately scattered across the newly fallen snow.

After a moderate climb through the woods, past a tiny freshet of pure spring water and a pleasant walk on top the hill, the next lake called McMahan came into view. The viewscape on this frozen lake was dominated by large rolling hills, rock cliffs and a shoreline clad in very old hemlock and pine.

Following a well deserved rest and lunch on the shore of McMahan Lake in the shelter of a sunny rock outcrop, the group headed east across the snow and ice covered lake to circumnavigate a large island. A few ice fishing parties were observed trying their luck fishing for lake trout. Otherwise, the lake was largely devoid of any signs of human activity. The walk around the island led us back to our earlier route through the woods and back to the Bass Lake trailhead.

With the sun shining brightly the group headed back to the Soo with a stop for refreshments along the way. All who participated appeared to greatly enjoy the trip with no ill effects from the cold temperatures.

For more photos of this outing click [HERE](#)

