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naturalists

Mission Hill snowshoe outing

March 14, 2020

- By Will Scott

Overcast skies and a sharp wind at our gathering spot, the Michigan welcome center, gave way to bright sunshine, a slighter breeze, and temperatures just below freezing for our snowshoe hike to Mission Hill. Thirteen of us forayed from Monocle Lake Drive through the Monocle Lake national forest campground, moving south parallel to Mission Hill and then up the steep grade. Just before we got to the top of the ridge, a large blown-down poplar cut off part of a switchback, forcing everyone to take a much steeper route to get back to the trail. The degrading snow forced some members to shed their snowshoes and crawl upward about 20 feet (7 meters) to get back on the trail.



We all were rewarded, however, with a lunch break while enjoying the view of Spectacle Lake and, in the distance, Lake Superior, still encased in ice.

After lunch, we trekked northeast along the Mission Hill ridge, seeking the second trail turnoff that is part of a loop hike. It's much harder to find in the winter. But we found it, and we made our way down, some by snowshoe, some by bum-sliding, and then back to the vehicles.

Sightings included several bald eagles, plus the tracks of coyote and bobcat.

For Renee's photos, please click here:
<https://flic.kr/s/aHsmLZos9G>



