

## **Itasca State Park Nature Programs and special event for December 17-March 19, 2019**

Hello Itasca Friends!

We are mid-way through December and even if we don't have a lot of snow there are still fun things to do this winter in Itasca State Park! Mother Nature wants to toss us one or two warm days in the mid-30s (maybe making up for the cold Autumn) which will settle some of our snow. But it is a nice temperature to be outside. Winter birds are active at the park bird feeder station at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center and park users are seeing wild turkeys, ruffed grouse and pine grosbeaks daily along Main Park Drive. About 2 inches of snow coats the ground making it feel like the holidays up north. We have not begun grooming trails due to the low snow depth. Enjoy walking along the snowshoe routes...no snowshoes needed with the low snow. Ice fisherpersons have been out. Ice is averaging 10-inches, and we advise all persons going on the ice to test the ice thickness and use caution since the thickness can vary with underice currents. Remember ice is never 100% safe.

### **Winter bird count in Itasca State Park: Monday, December 17**

Discover the forest as autumn peaks in the Itasca area! Join us for a hike along the Hiking Club Route. We will follow the Ozawindib/Myrtle Lake Crossover/ and Deer Park trails for a 3.5 mile loop. Enjoy the autumn views across several lakes so remember to bring your binoculars and camera. Notes: Dress for being outdoors, including sturdy boots that can get wet/muddy, water, energy snack, sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, insect repellent- including tick gaiters and hiking/trekking poles. \*Meet at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center in Itasca State Park at 12:30 p.m. as we carpool to the trailhead.

### **Winter Facilities: OPEN:**

Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center open from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily (closed Christmas Day, December 25)

Pathway to the Headwaters of the Mississippi River is open year round.

### **Winter Trails: Skiing, Snowshoeing and Snowmobile trails:**

Most hiking trails in the south portion of the park, the bike trail, a portion of Wilderness Drive and the South Entrance Road are groomed for cross-country skiing. Walkers, hikers and snowshoers are asked not to walk on the groomed section of trail. Snowmobile trails follow the boundaries of the park. See our winter map at: [Itasca State Park Winter Trails Map](#) or at ([https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/state\\_parks/spk00181\\_winter.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/state_parks/spk00181_winter.pdf))

### **DNR Snow Depth and Groomed Trail Conditions:**

Wondering if it is good skiing? Wondering what trails are groomed or just curious as to how deep the snow is across the state? Go online and learn more as you plan a trip in Minnesota's great outdoors.

[Minnesota Snow depth and groomed trail conditions](#) or [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snow\\_depth/index.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snow_depth/index.html)

### **Take Home a Memory: Souvenirs and More! At the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center Gift Shop open year-round**

Snuggle into a wearable memory from Itasca—check out the new line-up of sweatshirts and t-shirts. The ever-popular Douglas Lodge China is still available for purchase—see samples of the china at the visitor center

Special one day only Holiday sale in the gift shop—Wednesday, December 19—come out and find that last minute stocking-stuffer. Sale applies to select items.

### **Headwaters in winter—Watch the Webcam!**

Popular for our southern snowbirds---Watch the snow fall along the shores of Itasca. Check out the webcam. Is your family going to the park but you can't join them? Have them text you when they are at the headwaters and watch them from home! Watch the webcam and see if you can spot any mink hunting along the open section of the river or otters sliding across the snow-covered ice.

Go to: [Mississippi Headwaters webcam](#) (or at [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state\\_parks/Itasca/headwaters.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/Itasca/headwaters.html) ) *Side note: some users with Android systems might have problems viewing the webcam; problems may occur using Internet Explorer, try using Chrome or Firefox to access the webcam)*

### **Featured nature sighting report for the dates of November and December:**

- Friday, November 23 black bear seen moving around near Douglas Lodge.
- December 8, ice average thickness 10-inches on Lake Itasca
- December 11-14, flock of pine grosbeaks seen along Main Park Drive
- Red squirrels busy at park bird feeders, along with blue jays, chickadees, and red and white-breasted nuthatches.
- Pileated woodpecker seen around the visitor center and near the south contact station.
- December 13, wolf tracks seen in snow along Nicollet Trail.
- Wild Turkeys seen around the north end of the park (between the entrance to Bear Paw Campground and the North Entrance road)
- Red fox tracks seen throughout the park in the soft snow.

### **Postscript:**

PS: Feel free to share this program schedule with your friends!

*If you no longer wish to receive this email update, please send an email with your first and last name and email address to [Constance.Cox@state.mn.us](mailto:Constance.Cox@state.mn.us) and your name will be removed. In the subject line type: "remove name from newsletter".*

**Connie Cox**

Lead Interpretive Naturalist, Itasca State Park | Parks and Trails Division

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**

Itasca State Park

36750 Main Park Drive

Park Rapids, MN 56470

Phone: 218-699-7259

Fax: 218-699-7210

Email: [constance.cox@state.mn.us](mailto:constance.cox@state.mn.us)

[mndnr.gov](http://mndnr.gov)