

TOURING NORTHWESTERN WISCONSIN WITH

"THE GIRLS"

By Diane Voight

With the sleds started, saddlebags packed and the morning bright and sunny, my daughter Michelle and I started down the Wild River trail from Lampson to meet the rest of the girls for breakfast at the Prime in Trego. The annual girls ride has become a Washburn County tradition for the past 19 years. While we have invited girls from all over the state, we are mostly based within our club, the Rolling Hills Snowmobile & ATV Club. Each year we convince a few new riders to join us and this year brought three new faces. Although they have been riding snowmobiles for years, this would be their first girls ride.

After a delicious breakfast we hit Trail 39 north out of Trego; it was freshly groomed and picture perfect. The morning was cold and crisp with the trees laden heavy with snow from our last snowfall. This section is full of rolling hills, tall towering pines and small creek crossings. A few deer and bunnies were lurking under the pines as we made our way through the forest toward Minong. Just before reaching the Wild River Trail south of Minong we made a pit stop at the Stoney Brook shelter for a brief stretch and restroom break. It was only a short jaunt into Gordon for lunch, a warm-up and gas. Much to our surprise, we met up with some other members of our club having lunch. It was a bunch of the guys/husbands that had left earlier in the week to tour northern Bayfield County for a few days. After a quick soda and sandwich we were back on the short connector trail south of Gordon that would take us to trail 41 which would lead us southwest through the barrens of southern Douglas and northern Burnett counties. This trail is wide and fun to ride, with lots of rolling hills and spotty pine groves.

As the sun was sinking low in the sky we arrived in Webb Lake at Rosenthal's Resort. The temps were dropping fast as the sky was clear and the moon was rising. We unloaded our gear into the cabin, which had been transformed from the old bar. Now you



A very welcome picnic and rest area sits deep in the forest of northern Washburn County.

walk up the hill to the all new bar and restaurant, which is where we headed for a great dinner and a few cocktails to celebrate a very successful day of riding.

Saturday morning brought lots of sunshine and cold, plus a change in our planned loop. One of the girls who had hoped to join us was able get away for the remainder of the weekend so we reversed the loop in order to meet her in Solon Springs. After a delicious egg bake, we suited up and took the couple mile trek to the Main Store for gas and an update from Larry and the crew on trail conditions. A few miles north of Webb Lake we experienced an extremely close encounter with a couple deer moving very fast across the trail in front of us. Soon we understood why – some other sledders were stopped along the trail watching a lone wolf meandering along a fire lane. After catching our breath and letting our hearts settle a bit, we made our way northeast through the barrens with a brief stop at Viewpoint west of Gordon before coming into Solon Springs. Angie was waiting for us at the gas station on the west side of town. We decided to go into town for lunch at the Village Pump while choosing the next loop. We could go further north and cross to the west to Moose Junction or take a shorter route into Cozy Corner. It was decided we were hardy and out for an adventure. Be careful what you wish for...

The trail across to Moose Junction was absolutely gorgeous. It wound through dense forests and across many small rivers and streams. After a warm-up in Moose Junction we began our trek south toward Cozy Corner where we took another brief warm-up at the Cozy Corner Inn before making our way to Webb Lake and the Main Store to gas up again before heading back to the resort. Whoa, not



Every branch had a thick coating of sparkling snow!



A brief stop along trail 9 west of Solon Springs.

so fast... we had a slight glitch in plans. A missed trail marker and the next thing we knew we were staring at a sign stating "Welcome to Wascott". It's not that we were lost, just missed trail 15/151 south into Webb Lake. We were too far to the east and back in the barrens. It was still very pretty, but it was getting cold and very dark and we were ready to call it a day. It wasn't long before we found our way back in Rosenthal's and, as we crossed the lake, the moon was stunning in the night sky. You forget how big and beautiful the moon is on a clear crisp night. We made it home safely and all was well. After settling in, we went up to dinner and discussed how I missed that trail that allowed us the "bonus miles".

Sunday brought yet another extremely cold morning. Since our ride back into Washburn County was short, we waited for the weather to moderate a bit before starting the sleds. All the sleds popped right off with the help of my husband's miracle little jump starter that he had sent along for the cold mornings. We made the trek into the Main Store for gas before scooting east along trail 8 back to Minong and south on the Wild River trail. Here we would say our good-byes as each of the ladies peeled off toward their respective homes. It had been another great ride and made all of us eager to celebrate the 20th girls' ride next year.



Mary Patrick & Joan Dienstl stopped to take in the views of the Barrens west of Wascott. **WSN**