A TIP OF THE HAT TO THE COMING YEAR

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Scouts a hundred years ago could purchase uniform jackets and trousers from the BSA national council. They could buy felt broad-brimmed hats, too, and shape them to suit their personalities. Whatever they wore, their heads were filled with the same enthusiasm young people bring to the Scouting program today.

The biggest event in the coming year will be the 2013 National Jamboree at the Summit. Plenty of other exciting opportunities will unfold across the nation, too, as Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturers pull their hats down tight and set off on adventures in any weather.

SNOWSHOEING
Hats off to those who explore the world of frost and snow! Snowshoes invite you to explore where few others can go. They’re perfect for many cold weather hikes and campouts in landscapes made special by the magic of winter.

Daniel Carter Beard, one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America, explains in one sentence everything you need to know to get started:

“There is only one way to learn to walk on snowshoes, and that is to put them on and try.”
—Daniel Carter Beard, 1025

Snowshoes work by putting a large platform under your feet so you can float atop the snow rather than plunging in with each step. For centuries, snowshoes have been made by bending strips of wood into the shape of a frame, then weaving leather laces to form that big footprint. Snowshoe sizes and shapes varied to match an area’s prevailing challenges.
Many modern snowshoes are fashioned from aluminum tubing frames and neoprene webbing. They are tough, comfortable to use, and require little care.

An alternative requirement for the Camping merit badge is to "backpack, snowshoe, or cross-country ski for at least 4 miles." That opens the possibility of carrying your gear in a backpack or on a sled and use snowshoes to take you into the backcountry for a campout in the snow.
Poles help you keep your balance on snowshoes. The trekking poles from www.scoutstuff.org are ideal for winter travels as well as summertime hikes on open trails.

As with any outdoor travels, you’ll want to use the principles of Leave No Trace to protect the environment you’ve set out to enjoy.

**LEAVE NO TRACE**

Scouts have always used a hatful of common sense to take care of the outdoors. The BSA adopted *Leave No Trace* in 1997 as its minimum-impact program. Today, Scouts join with many managers of public and private lands using Leave No Trace to guide them.
Leave No Trace Backpacking in Glacier National Park

Leave No Trace offers seven principles for everyone to follow:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

You'll soon discover that Leave No Trace way is an easy and efficient way to do things. Several BSA awards encourage Scouts to apply Leave No Trace to all of their outdoor adventures and to share their knowledge with others.

Cub Scout Award  Boy Scout Award  Trainer Award

Environmental responsibility is not just for the outdoors. There are many ways that we all can minimize what we use and recycle what we don’t. A simple step is with a reusable shopping bag rather than paper or plastic bags to bring home groceries. You’ll find good ones for less than a dollar each at www.scoutstuff.com.

JAMBOREE AT THE SUMMIT

Hold onto your hat, it’s just six months until the 18th National Jamboree, the first great gathering at the Summit! That’s the BSA’s new high adventure base in West Virginia. There’s still time to sign on for the adventure of your Scouting lifetime, but don’t delay.
The jamboree will celebrate the best of Scouting. You can meet Scouts from across the nation, challenge yourself with high adventure activities, learn new skills, and enjoy the wild country of West Virginia. Whitewater adventures, rock climbing, zip lines, mountain biking, terrific stadium shows, exhibits - it's all going to be there, waiting for you. Your unit leader and council office can tell you how to apply.

(This edition of the Be Prepared Newsletter was developed and written by Robert Birkby, author of the current editions of the Boy Scout Handbook, Fieldbook and Eagle Scouts: A Centennial History.)