

Oregon Nordic Club

Willamette Chapter

oncwillamette.org

P.O. Box 181

Salem, OR 97308



Newsletter

March 2026



2/26/2026

by Jim Todd

Snow fall was intermittent and scarce in February, but the stalwarts who persevered had some good times; see the tour reports below and keep dreaming of spring snow.

SKI SCHOOL:

Oregon is experiencing one of its poorest snowpacks ever. Ski School was postponed in January due to poor snow conditions and then canceled in February due to a Hoodoo closure. Hoodoo is open as of March 5 (but the Nordic Trails are closed today). The uncertainty has made it impossible to plan our "normal" Ski School. With regret, we are canceling Ski School with its lessons from Hoodoo's Nordic instructors. However, our goal is still to get you out on the snow for the best skiing experience possible. As an alternative, we could take people out for a beginner ski day with mentoring by our club's experienced skiers on Saturday, March 14 or 21.

Here are the pricing options for mentoring a small group of novice skiers at Hoodoo:

1. If Hoodoo is closed we can ski their Nordic Tracks at no charge. If you need to rent gear that would need to happen elsewhere.
2. If Hoodoo is open and grooming, trail pass is \$16 (\$10, if 65+), rental \$25 and RFID card \$5. Note: RFID cards are permanent.

Contact Bob (503x621x6626) or Jim (503x378x7003) if you are interested and available these dates and we will try to get something set up. Questions, let us know.

Thanks

TOUR REPORTS:

February 10, Tuesday: Circle Lake Trail

by Jim Todd

The weekday bunch caught a sunny day following a light snowfall at Santiam Pass. Bob led Frank, Howard, Jim and Tim on the north leg of the North Loop and then out the Circle Lake trail as far as Circle Lake. The pack was thin (side stepping over logs and rock ledges in places) and there were a half dozen frozen water crossings; but it was great to be cruising in untracked snow. We ran out of time for the full Circle Lake loop to Island Junction shelter and instead found a new off-trail route back to NBO shelter for lunch. In the afternoon we again opted for off-trail skiing. Our route had a number of zig zags, but by skiing more or less parallel to the south leg of the North Loop and steering for Hayrick we managed a perfect landing at Ray Benson's parking lot; a fine day on skis.



Bob's additional thoughts:

Snotel said we have 6" to 8" of new snow. It was pretty nice and it stayed fairly cold all day. Trail breaking was never more than 3" to 4" deep and we found that even with the new snow the cover was pretty meager in some places. I wanted to see if we could follow the Circle Lake trail section that I worked on right after the early snow we had in the fall. The Salamanders did a thorough job of downed tree removal and I did a lot of limb removal and put up some new diamonds and re-secured PVC poles about 1/3 the way to Island Junction shelter. We skied as far as I had worked without too much difficulty but more work is definitely needed. Look for work sessions next summer. Oh, and Jim's off trail route to NBO, we did some serious bush whacking to make our way to the blowout. It was a good day though and now I think we will need to wait for more of that good white stuff.

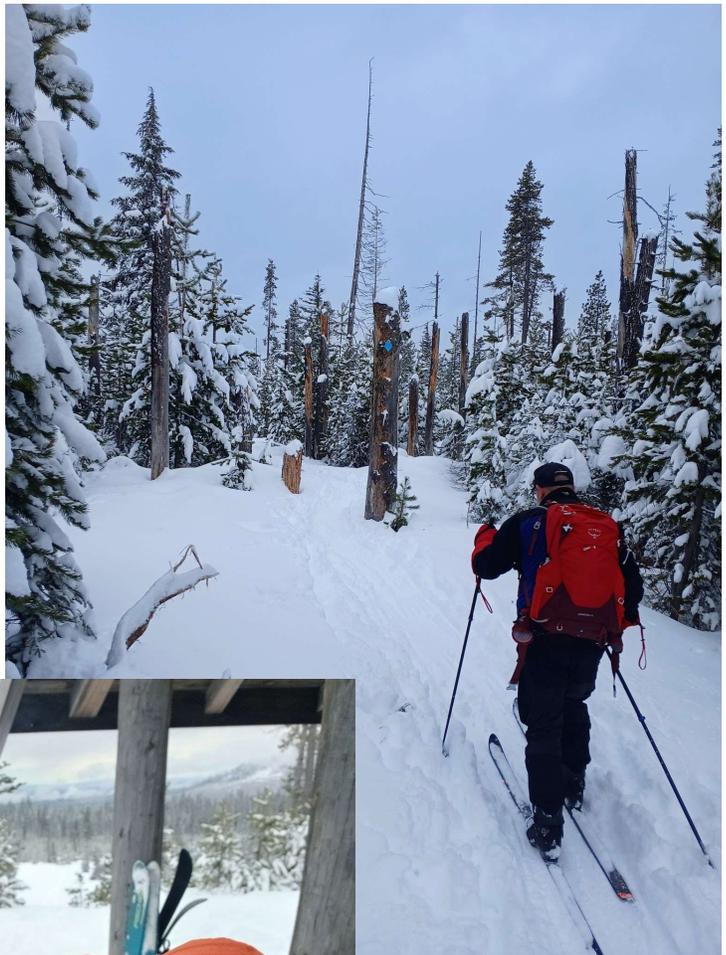


February 21, Saturday: North Blowout

by Jeff Starr

Thanks to the recent storm Jeff, Neal, Bill C, and Melisa found excellent snow conditions at Ray Benson with about 2 feet of snow coverage. It was snowing off and on and the forecast for rain in the afternoon never materialized. We saw blue sky before the day ended. Because of the heavy morning snow and predicted rise in temperature, we chose to ski the North Blowout loop so we could eat in the North Blowout shelter and be back to the parking lot before 3. There was plenty of firewood at the shelter and several skiers passed through while we were there. Both Neal and Melisa are newer to cross country skiing so we began by taking the northern leg of the loop with its less challenging terrain. They had no trouble and elected for a more challenging ski back on the technical southern leg of the loop. With multiple steep ascents and descents, we all got in plenty of practice climbing and descending. I was impressed with everyone's textbook level of herringbone climbing and stem Christie turns. We all finished the day in great spirits looking forward to the next time we can get out in such fantastic conditions with such wonderful companions!

photos by Jeff Starr





Nicely done, skiers!

March 25, Wednesday: Pioneer Scout Camp

by Howard Simon

It was a beautiful day after the atmospheric river so I headed up to the twin meadows road (2261) to ski up to Camp Pioneer (at elevation 4528). I was able to drive up the road about 1 1/2 miles, leaving 4 miles to the camp. The road is fairly steep, climbing over 1500 feet from the highway. There were several sections of road melted out and a couple downed trees. Arriving at the camp, I was greeted by a dry picnic table sitting in the sunshine. After a leisurely lunch, I explored the camp and then headed down the road. Some shady and icy sections were quite fast. 2 hours skiing up and 45 minutes coming down. A good day but I'm wishing for more snow!

Photos by Howard Simon



February 26, Thursday: Hoodoo's Backside

by Jim Todd

Warm, sunny weather in winter has disadvantages. The snow melts and softens, then freezes overnight. When Tim and I reached Santiam Pass at 10:00 Thursday morning, the snow was still frozen like a rock. Boots would scarcely scratch the surface. Rather than struggle on skis we took a hike at Santiam SnoPark--first east to the PCT trailhead and then west to the nearly restored Santiam Ski Lodge. By the time we finished lunch back at Ray Benson the temperature had risen to 40F, with grip and glide working nicely. We skied south on the Big Lake Rd., then west on #860 behind Hayrick and finally off trail to the base of Hoodoo Butte. Skis were never sinking more than 1" and we had a great run back to the SnoPark in our tracks. Sorry, no photos--I was working too hard trying to keep up with Tim.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING at the WINTER OLYMPICS:

There were six cross-country ski events at the 2026 Winter Olympics--a total of 12 races with the men's and women's events. Thirty-three skiers (18 women and 15 men) from eight countries won medals. Johannes Høsflot Klæbo of Norway made history by winning Gold in all six men's events. He now has 11 golds (three more than any other athlete in Winter Olympic history) and is likely to compete in at least one more Olympics. For the US team Ben Ogden won Silver in the Individual Sprint race and partnered with Gus Schumacher for another Silver in the Team Sprint. These are the first Olympic medals for the US men's team in 40 years. For the US women, Jessie Diggins won Bronze in the 10K Freestyle race, her fourth medal in her fourth and final Olympics.

For Winter Olympics visit: <https://www.olympics.com/en/milano-cortina-2026>

and for World Cup skiing: <https://www.fis-ski.com/cross-country>

WEEKEND DAY TOURS:

Snow is scarce and spring is upon us; but heavy snow can happen in March. Check with Bob or Jim if it snows and you want to get out on a weekend.

Guests are welcome on Willamette Chapter day tours. Please contact the tour leader for details and to ensure the tour matches your interests and skill level.

We need more tour leaders for weekend tours; please step up and lead a tour to your favorite destination. If you wish to lead a tour, suggest a tour destination or learn more about tour leading, contact Jim Todd (503x378x7003).

Remember, impromptu tours are always an option. If you yearn for a day on skis, phone Jim, one the leaders below or a skier on the weekday list. Connect with your fellow Club members and get out when it snows.

March 7-8, Saturday or Sunday: B Tour, date and location depending on snow conditions and group interest. Contact Bob Young (503x621x6626).

March 8, Sunday: A Tour, Santiam Pass area. Contact John Hortsch (503x507x5727).

March 14 or 15, Saturday or Sunday: Beginner, A or B Tour; contact Bob Young (503x621x6626) or Jim Todd (503x378x7003) to see what's happening.

March 21 or 22, Saturday or Sunday: Beginner, A or B Tour; contact Bob Young (503x621x6626) or Jim Todd (503x378x7003) to see what's happening.

March 29 or 29, Saturday or Sunday: Beginner, A or B Tour; contact Bob Young (503x621x6626) or Jim Todd (503x378x7003) to see what's happening.

Tour Ratings: A key to the Tour Rating codes:

“Beginner” = Easy, short distances on flat or gentle slopes; appropriate for first time skiers.

“A” = Easy, distances up to 5 or 6 miles with a few slopes; basic skills are required; some of these may not be suitable for 1 time skiers.

“B” = Intermediate or experienced; distances of 6 to 12 miles or possible elevation gains of 2000 feet; may include steeper sections; some downhill skills are required.

“C” = Advanced, longer with greater elevation gains; includes both trails and off-trail with frequent steep terrain.

“D” = Expert, very difficult or long; possible backcountry travel and/or ski mountaineering.

WEEK DAY SKI TOURS

Why not break the shackles that bind you to the calendar this season? Try a mid-week tour. Contact one of the enthusiasts below and arrange an escape from routine. If you want to be added to this list, send your phone and email to Jim Todd, and we'll include it in the next Newsletter. Likewise, contact Jim, if you want your name removed for this season.

Weekday skiers:

Bill Caldwell	503x385x6494	wbcaldwell1 at q dot com
Chuck Daellenbach	541x928x4256	daellenbachc at comcast dot net
Frank Hoffman	541x475x0185	hh_tex at msn dot com
John Hortsch	503x507x5727	riverjohn at msn dot com
Denise Hughes	435x828x2273	salemhughes at gmail dot com
Peggy Mansfield	503x428x2475	pegevtay2@comcast.net
Bill Nelson	503x576x1278	bnelson at pacifcomm dot net
John Peterson	406x381x9185	jpmountaingoat at gmail dot com
Foxie Proctor	503x581x0207	foxieproctor at comcast dot net
Denise Sanders	503x859x4597	dsander at wvi dot com
Howard Simon	503x569x4299	hsimon6755 at gmail dot com
Jeff Starr	503x851x8403	jeffstarr3 at gmail dot com

Jim Todd	503x378x7003	toddwac18 at gmail dot com
Jerry Vessello	503x931x6344	jvess at comcast dot net
Bob Wells	307x203x7930	rawells.evts at gmail dot com>
Craig Wojcik	503x931x2705	ccwojcik09 at comcast dot net
Pam Wojcik	971x312x3984	pjwojcik09 at comcast dot net
Bob Young	503x621x6626	arch.byoung at gmail dot co

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY NEXT SEASON:

The Mount Jefferson Snowmobile Club is exploring hosting an avalanche clinic at Ray Benson next February. Anyone who does back country and off trail skiing should be aware of the risks, potential hazards, and basic rescue procedures. If you are interested please let me know so we can help MJSC get this going.

Bob Young

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

The Willamette Chapter has an active volunteer program assisting the Forest Service with ski trail clearing and marking; shelter construction and maintenance; and firewood stocking. Thank you volunteers! After having almost all the trails clear this fall we have seen new downed trees everywhere we've skied. It's an ongoing task. If you have questions about our volunteer projects or would like to join one, contact Jim Todd (503x378x7003).

SNO-PARK PERMITS:

Sno Park permits may be purchased online at the Oregon DMV: <https://dmv2u.oregon.gov/eServices/>. Annual permits purchased directly from DMV cost \$25—no handling fee. The process takes only a few minutes and includes a downloadable copy you can print and use immediately while waiting for your permit to arrive in the mail. Buy a permit and support Sno Park plowing.

2025-2026 OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS:

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Jeanne Miller	Vice President
Adria Buncal	Webmeister
Vacant	Newsletter Editor
Jim Todd	Day Tour Chair
David Forkner	ONC State Board Rep & Board Member
Pam Wojcik	Overnight Trip Coordinator & Board Member
Vacant	Volunteer Coordinator & Board Member
Christine Young	Board Member
John Hortsch	Board Member