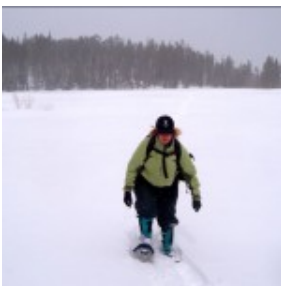


Foul weather dampens snowshoe trek to Round Lake

By Kathryn Reed

By April the word snow has taken on an unpleasant definition with me. The nice words for it are yuck and icky.

Still, I wasn't going to let the doldrums win. So out came the book "Snowshoe Routes Northern California" by Marc J. Soares. I didn't want to go any place I had been before and I didn't want to drive far.



Sue Wood
trudges
through Big
Meadow on a
snowy Easter.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

We ended up picking the Big Meadow and Round Lake route. Sue and I had done this plenty of times as a hike on dirt, but never in the snow.

Parking is a little sketchy along Highway 89 headed up Luther Pass from South Lake Tahoe because the Big Meadow lot is not accessible with snow on the ground. Caltrans plows a couple cut outs, so it is do-able without the threat of being towed.

Even though we are familiar with the route to Round Lake as well as Dardanelles Lake, we wouldn't have done this had other people not already been there. In a different season everything looks unfamiliar. Plus, we were well aware of the forecasted storm for Easter Sunday. We didn't really want to become the story.

Immediately I knew the route the earlier snowshoers were leading us on was a bit suspect. Still, it finally seemed to track the route I had been on sans snow.

Normally, it's a bunch of switchbacks. This had sharp turns and then went straight up.



Scenery is stunning along this trail.

The book says you'll cross Big Meadow Creek. We never saw it or heard it. It's probably buried in all this snow or possibly frozen.

Boughs full of snow filled the looming conifers as though it were the middle of winter. Branches hung from the weight of the white stuff. A Tahoe Rim Trail marker barely peaked out at one point.

Trekking into the forest, the sun flitted in and out, casting shadows in a playful dance.

The trees protected us from the wind that whistled through the tight knit trees.

The worst part about the trail was the dog poop. As someone who used to hike with her dog, I understand the charm of an outing with the four-legged members of the family. But pick up after them in every season.



A bit of sun
dotes the trail
for Sue Wood.

We finally hit the expansive meadow. By then the snow had started to fly. And fly it did – in all directions except vertical. Waterhouse Peak was obscured by storm clouds settling in.

The start of the hike is at 7,237 feet. By the time we got back to the Jeep, it was snowing there as well.

At the edge of the meadow we lost the trail set by earlier shoers. Across we went, heads down as the wind whipped around us. Snow was picked up and spun like mini tornadoes. The sun was no longer anywhere to be found. The wind was howling, not whispering.

The book says to follow the edge of the meadow. The author says it can be wet as the snow begins to melt. I remember in summer walking straight across, so that's what we did. It was all good with so much snow.

With how exposed the meadow is, the sun is bound to dry this area out fast as the seasons change.



Big Meadow
does not look
inviting.

On the far side of the meadow there was no evidence anyone had been there before us. We called it a day. Foraging farther in search of a lake when a winter storm advisory for the afternoon had been issued was not something we were about to do.

It's definitely a route I'll try again, but next time it will be on a sunny day. Even though most Lake Tahoe ski resorts will close this month, the snowshoe season will last much longer.