

Limberlost Forest and Wildlife Reserve – Jan 29 to Feb 1st

Report by Sarka

I am a newbie to WA and this was only my second outing. The Voyager Quest trip the weekend of Jan 16 – 18th got me hooked. I became a member the first thing the next Monday and was lucky enough to get a spot for Limberlost two weeks later.

Some of us arrived to Limberlost on Thursday in blowing snow conditions. On Friday morning with temperatures at -22 C we headed to explore the country S and SW of Solitaire Lake. As we started on an untracked portion a snowmobile came by to pack the trail for us! How awesome! We started skiing on the Barlow road towards the marshes south of McReynolds Lake. On the hill past the Boyenne River, which flows from McReynolds Lake Bill and Al turned right into the deep snow to break the trail (new logging road) and get a head start on us women who continued on the road down to Lee Lake to look at the fishing cabin there. We returned back and followed Bill's and Al's deep tracks through the bush and soon caught up to them. From there it was a hard bushwhacking along the ridge above the marshes.

Later we descended down to a marsh to the SE of McReynolds Lake where we found a nice sheltered corner for lunch and a warming fire. A lively and highly technical discussion evolved on the topic of hotspots that smartphones can create for wifi reception. The topic morphed to a lighter side and we had a good laugh. We then bushwhacked over to the north end of McReynolds lake where we took a road east (that is marked as unrestored trail on the trail map) and connected back to Barlow road.

We returned on Barlow road to the intersection with Kalonga wetland trail, which we took for a period to time. About half way along this trail we started a difficult climb breaking fresh snow straight up where we connected to the Buck lake road and headed home. It was a long but beautiful, cold sunny day.

Back home Chantal and Desi served an amazing dinner of so many dishes I can't even describe, all very tasty. More people arrived that night. Bill and David launched two huge Chinese lanterns that we all watched from inside the lodge as it was just too cold outside. The lanterns had a hard time lifting in the bitter cold.

On Saturday, the temperature was cold again. We started out around Buck Lake and then undertook a long climb all the way up the Long Lake road. When I saw the top of the hill on the road I thought that is it. From here it has to be only down. How wrong was I! There were many other steep climbs all day long. I don't remember the exact route but we made it to Millar Hill via Burns Lake and then back to Helve Lake where we had lunch on the porch of a fishing cabin with comfortable, but cold, seating in plastic chairs – and the unexpected use of a BBQ! From there to on the Kalonga wetland trail all the way to Barlow road. At that point I had had enough, Bill wanted to get to his turkey roasting duties and Tom's hands were freezing. So the three of us headed back home while the rest

of the intrepid skiers, led by Donna continued through unbroken snow bushwhacking above the southwestern side of Solitaire Lake. It was a very long day, even for me, let alone the rest of the group that took an hour or more of hard skiing. The dinner was fabulous, turkey with roasted potatoes (where is the gravy, Bill?☺), beans and salad followed by Fayyaz's and David's scrumptious desserts. Later we were treated to Bill's slide show of hiking the Tombstone Mountains in Yukon and backcountry skiing out West. So many amazing places to visit and never enough time....

Sunday was very cold again. We headed to Clear and Turtle lakes, then along a river and through the winter wonderland with large pillows of fluffy snow that had collected on the cedars. Another climb (just when you start thinking that this would be an easy day!) onto the ridge to Naomi's Rest with an interesting rock formation. Then a tricky descent through trees and some more bushwhacking and finally back to the lodge. A great lunch of leftovers, time to pack, say goodbyes and depart for home.

Limberlost felt like a paradise to me. A large natural, privately-owned refuge where people can come for a day and use the trails free of charge or stay in wonderful cottages for a very reasonable price. We had tons of laughs, great food, amazing skiing. Thank you Bill for organizing the trip. I will definitely be back to Limberlost.