



The Gumboot Chronicles

Bear River Mercantile

Bowron Lake BC

Jan/Mar 2007

Welcome to our new Newsletter!! We greet hundreds of visitors each year and the most common question our guests ask is, "Do you live here all year around?" When we answer in the affirmative the next question is always, "What do you do in the winter time?" This Newsletter is our way of sharing our way of life in the Bowron and what better time to start than during one of the our wonderful winters!

Where does the name come from: I must have at least 1-½ million pictures of the Bowron.



I never tire of the views; every hour of every day presents a different mood. The lake, the mountains, the plants, the wildlife, the snow, it has been great since I adopted my daughter's old digital camera as I can now click to my hearts content. As I wander along my daily treks, my sidekicks the dogs accompany me! (Bet you thought I was going to say my husband, he also joins me during his days off from his "real job") Of the dogs, there is Speckle our 15 year old, almost crippled, Heinz 57 who sticks very close to my side and is somewhat camera shy...and there is Charly Gumboot, our 3 year old streak of red lightning, lab/ridgeback cross, who is continually doing silly antics, making him one of my favorite photo subjects. So consequently a "Gumboot Print" graces approximately 1 million of my

1-½ million pictures, hence the Gumboot Chronicles.

Winter Trekkers – This winter we had two groups visit and attempt to ski, snowshoe or slog around the Bowron Lake Chain. Tony Bouwmeester, Gary Daugherty and Rick Amschler, all from Edmonton Alta, traveled the circuit from Feb 3rd to 10th 2007. Despite encountering warm weather, rain, hail, slush, snow, heavy willow growth and open rivers, they managed to complete the full circuit. During their first two days they traveled from the trailhead to the bottom of Isaac Lake. After that the trip slowed considerably, as it took three days to bushwhack along the Isaac and Cariboo Rivers to Lanezi Lake. Tony reported that, "The trip, on the whole, was not difficult. But, at times it was very strenuous. Once a decision was made or a goal decided upon, we set our minds on achieving that goal. Our fortunate long distance travel days were a bonus. The short distance days were not necessarily unexpected. We could have done without skis, even though we used and appreciated them. We could not have done without snowshoes.

On Feb 16, 2007 Daniel Holmes of Vancouver and his friend Dan from Germany arrived to find the conditions somewhat changed. They made it to the bottom of Isaac Lake before deciding to head back the way they came. Daniel writes, "Day 3: 2 km from Isaac Shelter. -3 degrees C with snowstorm developing. Two feet of wet powder at Isaac shelter area. Speed reduced from 5 – 6 km/hr (on good crust) to 1.8 km/hr in powder. Sleds were misery. Camped at lakeshore because it was dark. Arrived at 6:00pm." The next day they turned around and spent the next 5 days enjoying their way back.

Their complete trip reports can be found on the Bear River Mercantile website at www.bowronlake.com - visit the "Gumboot Chronicles" there, to find them.

Ice Antics - It is amazing how drastic the ice conditions can change from day to day. During our daily outings we documented the continually changing conditions.



Sandy with a cold arm

January 20th found us digging through 15 inches of soft powder to check the thickness of the ice, which was 14 inches at 100 yards out from shore. Then January 26th found us with hardly any snow left on the ice after a big windstorm and melt.



Charly enjoying the "runway"



Charly checking out snow blobs.

February 15 produced a horrendous windstorm, which occurred after a morning of big wet snowflakes. I wish I could have gone out during the storm because by noon "snowballs" were crawling all over the lake ...by 3:30 it was pouring rain. These pictures were taken the next day (Feb. 16th) after the rain had reduced the balls to blobs. I was amazed to see "crawl" tracks showing where the balls had traveled along the ice and even more amazed to find that most of them traveled in curvy lines, often changing directions.

Snow blobs, snow blobs, everywhere.





March 6, 2007 we were in the middle of a big melt; I had the white “sand” beaches and turquoise waters I love so much. Snowshoeing, or should I say snow sloshing was WET. Charly found a crack in the ice where the melted snow water was siphoning through; it actually formed a water funnel and the sucking sounds drove him “buggy”!

Then 3 days later (March 9th) the ice was all healed up and we had the biggest, but somewhat rough, skating rink in the West. Only problem was the ice was peppered with spider holes that were covered with only a ¼ inch layer of ice, some of the holes were big enough for a man to fall through!



Charly and Dick checking the depth of the ice through a small Spider hole. Sandy “carefully” approaching a big Spider Hole.

Then to make things worse, the very next day, we got 5 inches of fresh new snow, which covered up all the spider holes.

Needless to say I have not walked on the main body of ice since!

Of Swans & Moose – This winter we had about 30 swans in the area. So far, since we have been here, this is the biggest flock to winter over. Also I run into two moose quite regularly – a big pregnant Mama – at least I think she’s pregnant because she’s so big in the belly and one smaller, shy moose whom I only catch glimpses of.



I have had two exceptional Moose encounters this winter: Once when Charly roused big Mama out of a slumber down by Antler Creek. She came splashing out the mouth of the Antler, traveling right down the middle of the creek and stopped in the Bowron River just below

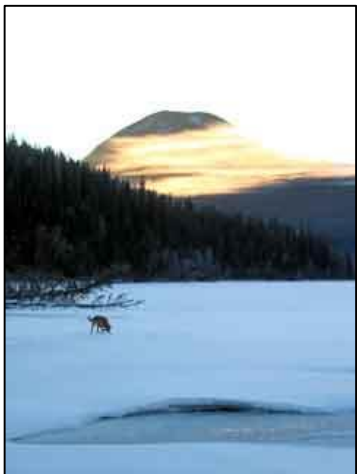


the Bridge where I happened to be standing --- without my camera!! Charly, knowing he was naughty returned to stand at the other end of the bridge. Moose stood there watching Charly, I imagine wondering what Charly’s next move would be, not even noticing that I was right above her. I could have dropped a snowball and it would have landed right on her back.

See the hidden moose in this picture?



The next incident has me banging through the bush heading down to the river with my X-country skies in hand. I was crawling over a big fallen log when I noticed Charly standing at attention with his



ridgeback hackles high in the air. I looked up, and was shocked to see Mama in the middle of the river, not 20 moose steps away. By then she must have been very used to running into us all winter long, because she calmly stood there enjoying her weed dinner before slowly moving away at her own speed. And it was then that my camera batteries decided to die @X#&. Of course, I know that without the pictures, these stories are like the “fish that got away” but they will be forever etched in my memory!

Happy winter wanderings J

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