



Annual ASPA membership dues are due. If you want to continue your membership, please complete the form included, and send it in with your dues. Thanks!

Trail Tours Every Sunday

Check Hotline (45-SKIJOR) or alaskaskijoring.org

March 1 Chena Lakes Race

Check Hotline (45-SKIJOR) or alaskaskijoring.org

March 8 Birch Hill Race

Check Hotline (45-SKIJOR) or alaskaskijoring.org

March 11 Fun Race #3 Location TBD

Check Hotline (45-SKIJOR) or alaskaskijoring.org

February 2015 Weather Woes and Hope for the Future

Well, I thought I was on top of things and had the newsletter all ready to go, except for a little space for a write up for the UAF skijoring race and a page to post photographs. Sadly, the weather spirits have frowned upon us and the race had to be cancelled due to freezing rain on Saturday February 21st and 22nd. MANY THANKS to Brian Charlton for organizing this race again. Brian made the right call to cancel as trails were dangerously slippery. Heck, just walking down my road to the mailboxes even with traction on my shoes was interesting. Really, I needed ice skates and the daughters of friends who live nearby were doing just that—ice skating on their road! During events like this it is also good to stay off of wet, crumbling trails so that skiers don't make deep impressions, especially given this relatively low snow year. Happily, two days after the 2015 "ice-apocalypse" a few inches of snow fell and the temperature dropped.

Now that ice-apocalypse is hopefully OVER for the remainder of snow season in 2015 (hope hope HOPE—at least we don't live in Anchorage) be sure to THANK all of the wonderful trail groomers who will be working to get the trails back into shape. Also, THANKS to all of the ASPA volunteers like Brian who coordinate and organize the fun skijoring races.

The next skijor race will be at Chena Lakes on March 1st. Cost will be \$10 for members; \$15 non-members. All racers need to preregister by Friday, Feb 27 at 10 pm by calling Sara Tabbert at 479 0456 or emailing stabbert@hotmail.com. Check in will be at or before 11:30, race meeting at 11:40, race start at 12:00. Racers will start at 1 minute intervals. If it is -15 or colder at 9:30 am at 458-3745 extension 1113 on the day of the race it will be cancelled. Call the ASPA hotline, 457 5456 shortly after 9:30 to verify the status of the race. There will be one, two, and three dog classes

The race will be held on the Mike Agbaba trails at Chena Lake Recreation Area. To get there take the Richardson highway through North Pole and follow the signs. The turn off will be on your right and the park will be to the left of the highway. Go through the main entrance and turn left on Lake Park Road. The trailhead is a short distance down this road near the children's playground. For those with weak bladders, before you turn left to the children's play area and start of the Mike Agbaba trails, to the right are two outhouses and they are usually stocked with plenty of toilet paper. **SEE TRAIL MAP UNDER "TRAILS" SECTION AT www.alaskaskijoring.org.**

We will be offering distances of 3.8, 6.5, and 9.5 miles, with a 12 mile option if anyone is interested. Longer distance racers will go out first followed by shorter distance racers. Start order within each distance class will be random. The usual race rules will be used and we will have a quick reminder of these at the race meeting. Be additionally aware we are guests on Borough property so cleanup and following park rules are very important.

As Always, **VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED.** We need a starter and two timers or the race will not happen! Handlers and photographers would also be fantastic. Please contact Sara Tabbert if you are willing to volunteer.

HOW DO YOU MAKE THE PERFECT SLED DOG?

Here is an interesting article I found in an old Science Daily post from 25 September 2010: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100721194758.htm#>

Over the last few hundred years, Alaskan sled dogs have been bred to haul cargo over Arctic terrain and, more recently, for racing. Now, researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Genetics* have identified the contributions different breeds have made to the speed, endurance and work ethic of Alaskan sled dogs.

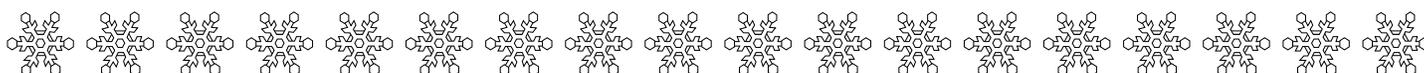
Heather Huson and Elaine Ostrander, from the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, USA, worked with a team of researchers to carry out genetic analysis in 199 sled dogs and 681 purebred dogs from 141 different breeds. Huson said, "The Alaskan sled dog comprises several different lineages, optimized for different racing styles -- long or short distance. We sought to identify breed composition profiles associated with expertise at specific tasks, finding that the Alaskan Malamute and Siberian Husky contributions are associated with enhanced endurance; Pointer and Saluki are associated with enhanced speed and the Anatolian Shepherd has a positive influence on work ethic."

The researchers sampled sled dogs from eight kennels, rating them for speed, endurance, and work ethic, using established criteria specified for the distinct racing styles of sprint and distance. These attributes were correlated with genetic information taken from each dog and compared to likely ancestral breeds.

Speaking about the results, Huson said, "The Alaskan sled dog presents a case in which a genetically distinct breed of dog has been developed through the selection and breeding of individuals based solely on their athletic prowess. Interestingly, this continual out-crossing for athletic enhancement has still led to the Alaskan sled dog repeatedly producing its own unique genetic signature. Indeed, the Alaskan sled dog breed proved to be more genetically distinct than breeds of similar heritage such as the Alaskan Malamute and Siberian Husky."

If you use the Creamer's Field trails, the North Star Golf Club trails and/or the Isberg Trails, PLEASE donate to the ASPA trail grooming fund. For a frequent trail user, a \$50-\$100 donation would be appreciated. An occasional trail user should consider a \$20-\$50 donation. Mail your trail donations to ASPA, P. O. Box 82843, Fairbanks, AK 99708 or give them to an ASPA volunteer at any ASPA sponsored event. Thank You

ALSO be sure to THANK the volunteer trail groomers, without which these wonderful trails would not be available to us!



Trail of the Month by Lisa Stuby

This month's trail of the month comes with a bit of a history lesson. I am referring to sections of the Goldstream Valley trails. These trails are definitely skijorable and are popular multi-use trails for mushers, skiers, bicyclists, walkers, etc., and are maintained by local mushers. A parking pullout exists on Ballaine Road that can be found as you drive towards Goldstream Road to the right and allows easy access to the east side of these trails. There is more than just one trail, as I've noticed several branches, so I am going to focus on a nice, little out and back I did a couple of weeks ago. After parking, Killae and I went down to the frozen pond and got on the trail which intersected with the main trail. This trail used to be part of the Tanana Valley Railroad (TVRR) and as we went along I could feel my skis making the gentle wumpa wumpa as I skied over old railroad ties. With every "wumpa" I could imagine Engine #1 that is now restored and working on occasion at Pioneer Park to be whistling and chugging with passengers and goods, many who found this to be quite the long trip away from their homes in the bustling town of Chena. We then crossed an intersection with another trail that goes uphill to a repeater station off of Eldorado Road (If I remember correctly) to the right and to other trails to the left (as of this writing, careful going left as you will hit bare dirt crossing Goldstream Creek and it is quite the dip). We kept going straight. The trail itself is fairly flat and I thought it was wide-ish enough to skate and I did, even though I was wearing classic skis. We went to a point where the trail veers off the "tracks" and goes through a series of frozen ponds. Because I've been doing this trail for over 25 years, Killae and I veered off to the left (sorry hard to describe and I don't want anyone to get lost) and ended up on an old railroad trestle. After a series of photographs, we continued and found an open area through the brush, complete with cattails, and what appeared to be a piece of grooming that connected us back up with the main trail through the ponds. Several years ago, this trail did not veer off to the right through the ponds, but did go over the trestle. Walking out here in the summer becomes quite the marshy mess and one summer I did it with a passionate friend from California who is an avid railroad fan. Nevertheless, I like visiting this spot and I don't think I am alone.

I found two trestles on the west side of Ballaine Road, but these are very hidden and very hard to find, especially when skijoring fast. For these trails I used to park at Ivory Jacks and skijor down a then disused airstrip. But several years ago, the owner made it off limits to traffic. Now I turn left on the first road past Ivory Jacks, make a left, then down, then a right to a road end where I park. Sorry, but I'm not up on street names, but I found that one way or the other, I got to the start of the trail. You can also park at the Ballaine pullout and CAREFULLY cross the road to the other side and hook up with these trails.

Prior to significant use of motor vehicles and roads, railroads were a primary means of transportation in the United States. The Tanana Valley Railroad began in the late summer of 1904 and tracks began in the town of Chena, which is now the Chena boat launch and picnic area off of Chena Pump Road. Engine #1 was the first steam locomotive in the interior of Alaska and was used to help build this railroad. Due to the cost of transporting supplies and worries about melting the permafrost (which happened anyway), no ballast was used and it wasn't unusual for trains to bounce off of their tracks. The (TVRR) was a 3 ft (914 mm) narrow gauge railroad that operated from 1905 to about 1917. The railroad came to be to service the mining districts that popped up in the early 20th century and connected Chena with Fairbanks. Primarily due to automobiles, Goldstream Valley became more accessible and the railroad ceased to be in 1930 as its hub, Chena, which once had a population greater than Fairbanks faded away in the 1920's. A portion of the railroad near Happy (today Ann's Greenhouses) and through Fairbanks later became part of the Alaska Railroad.



Trail and TVRR Trestle model, Killae (Left). Coming through the cattails after the trestle to the main trail (center).

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Looking for Skijoring Story

Sam Friedman, the Outdoors Editor of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, contacted me a few weeks about a possible story. He would like to get in touch with someone interested in getting into the activity of skijoring with your dog and having them describe their journey. You can be new to Fairbanks and wanting to try skijoring as a new Northern Adventure. Or be someone who wants to fulfill your New Year’s Resolution and get in shape and it just happens you have a dog who also needs some exercise. Nevertheless, if you’ve taken up skijoring this year and would like to share your adventures for a possible story in the local newspaper, please contact Sam. His e-mail address is sfriedman@newsminer.com.

Skijoring is not just for Dogs

Here is an article I downloaded from the Daily Mail from April 22, 2011. It is about an extreme sport of skijoring in Finland with reindeer. From the photographs it almost makes those local skijorers who race with three fast sprint huskies look “tame”.

It's reindeer racing season in Inari, Lapland, Northern Finland, and circled on every calendar north of Helsinki is the Reindeer Cup Championship Drives 2011. Competitors travel from all over the arctic nation to pit their thoroughbreds against the country's best. And as these amazing pictures show, it's not for the faint-hearted.

The jockeys harness themselves behind their trusted steeds with just a pair of skis separating them from the cold, hard snow below. Pounding around the freezing course, reindeers can reach speeds of up to 60 kilometers an hour, and injuries are commonplace. Most reindeer racing competitions take place around Easter, as the frozen north enters the season of the midnight sun.

Here, spectators do whatever they can to keep warm, usually favoring the furry pelts of animals for extra insulation. There are 51 reindeer herding co-operatives in Finland, of which 20 took part in the 2011 championships. When autumn arrives, reindeers are separated; some go to the slaughterhouse, others are kept for breeding and a few males are neutered and trained as work reindeers, mainly for pulling sledges and racing. Once that has been done, local breeder co-operatives compete to find out who owns the fastest and strongest reindeer.

Pounding around the freezing course, reindeer can reach speeds of up to 60 kilometers an hour, and injuries are commonplace. It is not uncommon for the skijorers to fall and loose their reindeer.



Quotable Quote

A dog doesn't care if you're rich or poor, big or small, young or old. He doesn't care if you're not smart, not popular, not a good joke-teller, not the best athlete, nor the best-looking person. To your dog, you are the greatest, the smartest, the nicest human being who was ever born. You are his friend and protector.

Louis Sabin

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Paw Prints and Ski Tracks is a monthly newsletter published during the winter season by the Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association. The coordinating editor of Paw Prints and Ski Tracks is Lisa Stuby. Your comments, articles and pictures are greatly appreciated. Please e-mail the information before the 25th of every month to las@acsalaska.net.



Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association

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