



# ALASKA SKIJORING AND PULK ASSOCIATION

## PAW PRINTS & SKI TRACKS

*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!*

### More FUN in the SUN ASPA trail tours by Lisa Stuby

We had two awesome trail tours during the past several weeks. Despite it being an el-Nino year and having unseasonably warm temperatures and little snow. So far we have been able to get out and enjoy winter skiing and skijoring. On January 31st we did the first of these on the Chena River. I almost didn't bring Killae as he was recovering from a minor soft-tissue injury, but in the end I did and he was a happy boy and got to chase his buddies and a couple of dog teams and it didn't seem to lame him up too bad. I was surprised at the quality of trail as I was expecting us to skijor down snowmachine trails. Turns out, in preparation for the 2016 Sonot Kkaazoot, "Bad" Bob Baker (who was "Good" in my mind on January 31st) took his new double drag down the Chena River a few days earlier. He expertly went over several sections of jumble-ice areas 4 or 5 times until they smoothed out. Bob didn't groom a small section just upriver from the DOYON building because of some open water problems there. Unfortunately, according to his account a month ago (I am typing this on Feb 26th) he thought that this would freeze up fine by next month. Unfortunately as I type this, it is in the low 40's (Fahrenheit) and I wouldn't now get on the Chena River. As a matter of fact, other events that usually take place on this section of the Chena River like the Tired Iron and Iron Dog finish have been moved off of the river due to potentially unstable conditions. So, any river travel, please be CAREFUL!

However, what a treat to have had the opportunity to ski the Chena River downriver from Graehl Park (where the Sonot Kkaazoot has actually started in the past) two months before the Sonot Kkaazoot. Below are some photographs I took.

### March 6

#### Birch Hill Races

Jim Whisenant Cross  
Country Ski Trails

Chris Burrow

lewjohkennel@gmail.com

### March 16

#### Fun Race #4

Check hotline (45-SKIJOR) or  
alaskaskijoring.org

### March 20

#### Orienteering Race

Creamer's Field

Check hotline (45-SKIJOR) or  
alaskaskijoring.org

### March 27

#### Fun Race #5 and year end Pizza Party

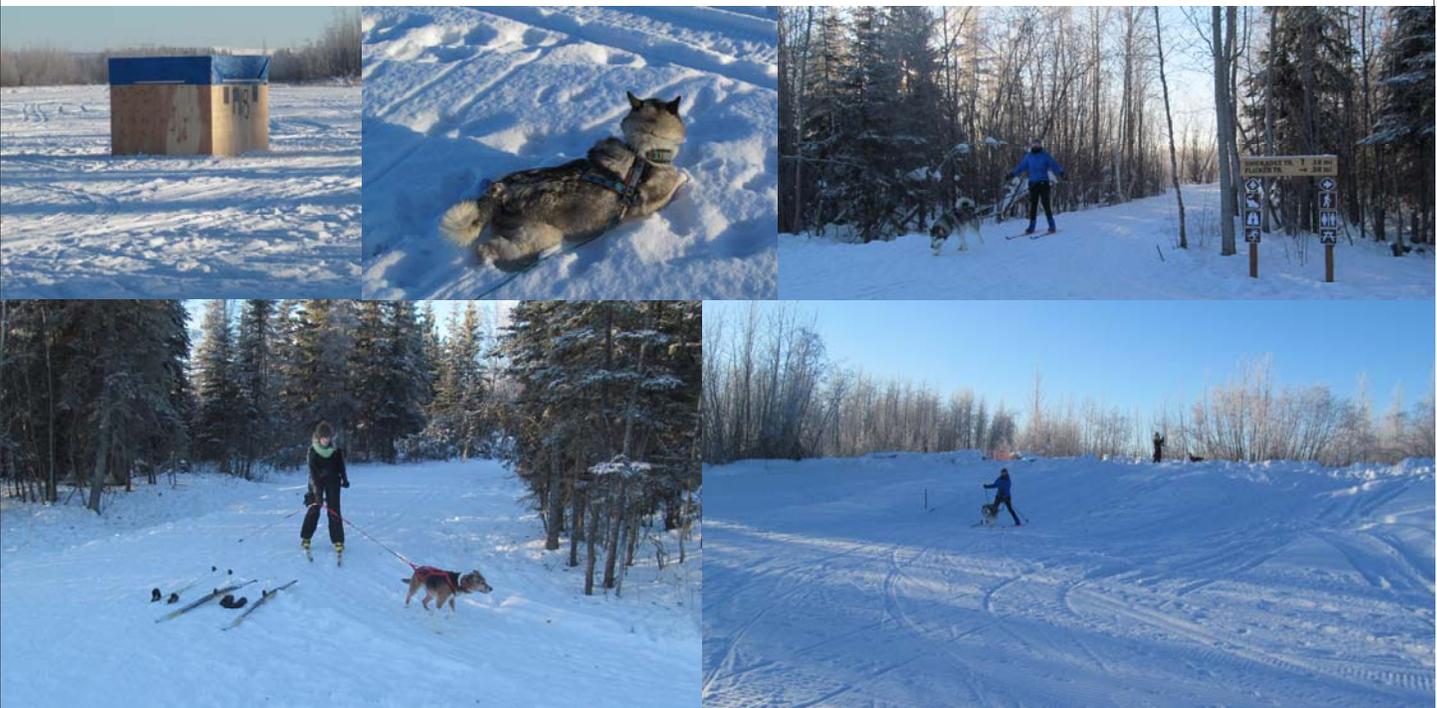
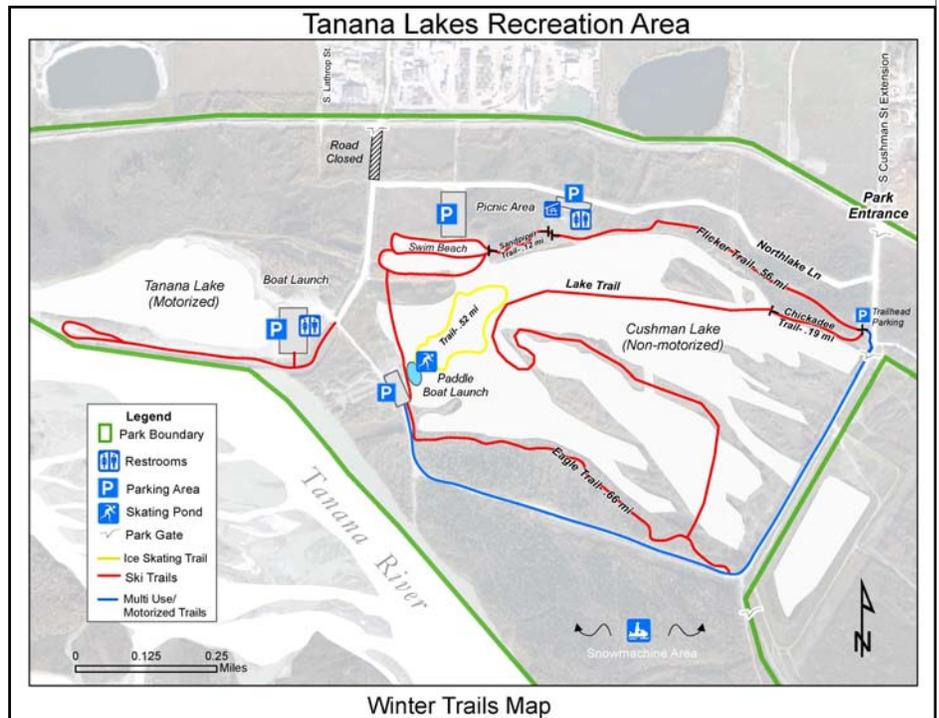
Check hotline (45-SKIJOR) or  
alaskaskijoring.org



Seven skijorers and their dogs participated. We skijored with Jamie and her malamute, Dancer, and from Google Earth, it looks as though we went downriver about 4 miles, so an 8-mile round trip. Not bad for an 11-year old elkie. Thanks to Sara Tabbert for coordinating and leading this excursion with Dora.

The following Sunday (Feb 7th) I and Killae led a trail tour at the new and awesome Tanana Lakes Recreation area. Jamie with Dancer and Alisha Kottwitz with her dog participated. We did the groomed ski trails which, starting from Chickadee, are approximately 5 kilometers. According to my GPS watch, just a little more. After doing the first 5 km, I

put Killae into the car and skied with Jamie and Dancer a second 5 km. Unfortunately, the one negativity for us was this trail is close to the Cushman rifle range and my dog was sensitive to and scared of shooting noises. The other dogs didn't seem to mind. I don't know why my "hunting" type dog is sensitive to this, but he is. So, I returned to the car to a shaking dog. He wasn't happy during the skijor either and was happy to get back to the car. So unfortunately, I won't be able to do too many skijors here with him. I found the trail on Feb 7th to have been in great shape for both skating and classic skiing. It was fun to skijor past ice fishermen (and women, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game stocks the lakes), and a few people ice skating on the half-mile trail groomed specifically for them. This was Superbowl Sunday, so I bet if it were any other Sunday, there would have been more people. Again, as I type this, can't say what shape the trails are in with this sudden warm weather we have been having (end of February), but they were sure good here three weeks ago. Below are some photographs I took of the Tanana Lakes trail tour.



### Ski Practice Clinic at Creamer's Field by Lisa Stuby

On February 6, 2016 I held a Ski Practice Clinic at Creamer's Field and had 6 participants. We started off talking about our skiing experiences and I shared some tips and tricks. Some were new to cross-country skiing and showed up with classic skis and others new to skate skiing. I wore my race classics (don't be too impressed, I'm not very fast) so I could skate as well as classic ski in them. This clinic emphasize the basics and was meant for novice skijorers. I shared some tips and tricks to skiing and skijoring, some I learned over the years I took classes at Birch Hill Nordic Ski area and others I just figured out on my own. The BIGGEST thing I've noticed over the years that keeps owner and dog(s) from being able to skijor is the owner's inability to ski or stay upright. Having good balance and confidence in skiing is a very important first step to successful skijoring.

After discussing cross-country skiing basics for approximately 30 minutes we met outside and practiced. Afterwards, we were a group of four and these folks had brought their friendly dogs, so we went out and practiced with our dogs.

After the Practice Clinic concluded, I wondered if some of my advice was good or if I might have led them astray and the day they do take a class at Birch Hill or somewhere, their better trained instructor will be appalled by some of my suggestions on how to become more comfortable on skis. I was suggesting to do things like walk and dance in their skis. I've noticed over the years whenever I've gone skiing at Birch Hill in the evenings that some of the children will play soccer, etc. in their skis after their classes. What they are doing isn't just for fun, but also to increase their comfort zone in wearing skis so the skis become like wearing shoes. I took a class one time where we played "follow the leader" and just skied around trees, etc. Again, to build up that familiar comfort zone so wearing and moving in skis becomes second nature.

Well, to my great joy, I received the February 2016 Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks newsletter and there was an article by longtime NSCF member Robert Hannon that talked about what I had told my class. This made me feel better. It is a good article and because I have room, I'll reprint it on the next page. Many thanks to the participants who showed up. It was a fun morning.

### Lee's Cabin Trip

I have Lee's Cabin reserved for the night of March 13, 2016. In past years Sara Tabbert has usually organized an overnight to one of the cabins in the White Mountains. I can't say this is an "official" ASPA event, more like a "I have Lee's reserved and am opening it up to ASPA members to join us". I was inspired to reserve this cabin after watching the film "Denali" that was shown at the Banff Mountain Film Festival. This is a story about a man who's dog had been with him for so many adventures and ups and downs in life and towards the end, he would still bring the dog along even if he had to carry him on whatever adventures he could. At the end of the film the dog had to be euthanized due to old age and cancer. It was sad, lots of Kleenexes, I know I soaked mine. Anyway, Killae is 11 years old now and in the words of so many who seem him, "WOW he is Looking GREAT for his age!". However, as the months go by, I've noticed his tremors are getting worse. He is still in relatively good shape, but I think next year we won't be doing what we are doing this year, so I am trying to make the best of it. So, this adventure is about HIM! I tried to reserved Saturday March 12th, but during Spring Break, it was not possible. Heck, I was LUCKY to get Sunday the 13th!

So, right now, given trail/weather conditions, I am planning on skiing in with my dog and dragging a Pulk with gear for an overnight. We'll spend the night and leave early the following day. In past years some organizers of the White Mountains Events have organized snow machine support, brought out water for hot drinks and a pot of chili (WITH snowmachine support). I'd be happy to make a pot of chili **IF** someone brings out a snowmachine and there are a few participants. I don't own one, Killae wouldn't ride in one, and really I am no good at driving one. Snowmachiners tend to be popular with skiers as it is great to have someone take out gear. So, to save weight in my pulk, breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be very simple. If you come out you will need to bring out your own supplies and will be more or less on your own, unless.....

Can't take Monday off, then feel free to come out and spend Sunday afternoon at Lee's cabin. If you are interested in spending Sunday night with us, please contact Lisa Stuby (lstuby@gci.net). The cabin can comfortably sleep about 10, I think. FRIENDLY dogs are welcomed to snooze in the cabin with me and Killae. If I hear from several people, then maybe we can coordinate and make our dinner a little less freeze-dried-y. Last year when I visited Lee's wood was beyond scarce. So, I am planning on sawing some dead and down during the last two miles into Lees. We can also travel toward Eleazar's later, which from recollection did have more dead and down. It will be good to replace what we burn—or at least try.

## When Skiing isn't Skiing

by Robert Hannon

Most beginning skiers who take classes probably think they are, well...getting ski lessons. But if your instructors are like mine, don't be too sure.

Over the past six years I've had some great instructors, a couple of them former Olympic athletes. All of them convince me that a good portion of the time while I think I'm out striding, skating or double-poling, I'm really doing other things, or should be.

Take classic form. As many of you know, timing, commitment to one ski, and balance all come into play to efficiently move across the snow. But my first ski instructor talked about kicking a soccer ball when trying to get us to move forward. I was baffled. At the time, I was lucky to stay upright and shuffle. That changed last year about halfway through a ski.

Firmly perched on one leg, I managed to swing the other leg forward and had there been a soccer ball in front of me I would have sent it a good distance. As it was, I drove forward with energy and was set up to repeat the movement on the other side.

Some of my other coaches or instructors talk about landing airplanes as your foot moves forward in the stride. You want that plane to have a smooth and level glide path as it passes the stationary foot before setting down. That imagery helped me to stop slapping my ski on each stride. I was bouncing down the runway, if not actually auguring in.

Another suggested image was how panthers or cheetahs coil up and then spring. This last imagery often comes to mind when I'm classic skiing. There seems something intuitive in the compression and extension of the whole body in striding.

Or take the double-pole kick. One instructor talked about preparing to dive off the edge of a pool as you swing your arms forward on the kick. That helped me keep my attention focused forward. And you can't cheat by sliding a foot forward on a dive if you are at the edge of the pool.

Then there is skating. One instructor talked about different dance moves when explaining the rhythms of V1, V2, and V2 alternate: some are like waltzes, others like two-steps. I'm no dancer, but I've come to appreciate how each of those techniques does seem to have a unique beat associated with it. The point also underscored the importance of getting into a rhythm when you are skiing for any distance.

And when it comes to taking corners, a pair of coaches talked about chopping onions. That is, taking many light, quick steps, using the ski edges while leaning into the turn.

So, you can see why when I'm out on the trails I'm doing almost anything but skiing, at least mentally. I'm kicking, flying, diving, springing, dancing or chopping onions. Who knew skiing was so versatile? But, as a result, every ski manages to engage me mentally as well as physically.



REMINDER, your ASPA dues are DUE for the 2015/2016 season. If you are like old-fashioned like me, you can use the below Membership Form and mail it in to ASPA per the instructions below. OR you can use Pay Pal and pay online at the ASPA website at:

<http://www.alaskaskijoring.org/about/store/>

Also, 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

**Membership Form for the Alaska Skijoring & Pulk Association**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or P. O. Box  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip Code

Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Type:**

- Individual \$20.00/year \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Lifetime \$175 \_\_\_\_\_
- Family \$30.00/year \_\_\_\_\_ (No lifetime available)
- Affiliate Club: \$10.00/year \_\_\_\_\_ (If already a member of your local skijor club.)
- Trail Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$5/day or \$50/season suggested)

Club Name \_\_\_\_\_

Club Address \_\_\_\_\_

Club Website \_\_\_\_\_

Mail membership form to: ASPA, P. O. Box 82843, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708.

\*Membership year is from October 1 through September 30.

Payments can also be made on the ASPA Website using Pay Pal at <http://www.alaskaskijoringl.org>

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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 25<sup>th</sup> of every month to lstuby@gci.net.



### Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association

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