

Wisconsin DNR: Outdoor report summary for February 9, 2017

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[Complete DNR Outdoor Report](#) (Reports from conservation wardens, wildlife and fisheries staff and property managers from around the state)

Snow improves winter recreation in north, rain hurts it in the south; sturgeon spearing season opens Saturday

The weather couldn't seem to make up its mind this week, with several inches of heavy snowfall across northern Wisconsin coming on the heels of daytime temperatures nearing the 40s in large regions of the state. Much of the rest of the state received precipitation in the form of rain.

This has made for variable trail conditions across the state. Snowmobile trails have now closed throughout most of the southern half of the state, but remain open across the north with conditions ranging from good to excellent according to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's [Snow Conditions Report](#) (exit DNR). Cross-country ski trails deteriorated across the southern and central parts of the state, but were still skiable at some properties such as Blue Mound State Park and the man-made snow loop at the Lapham Peak Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest.

Ski trails remain in good to excellent condition across the northern forest properties, including the Brule River State Forest, which will be holding a candlelight ski this Saturday in conjunction with the grand opening of a new ski shelter at the forest. In addition to Brule River, seven other properties will also hold candlelight events this

weekend. The end of this weekend is expected to bring temperatures near the 50s, which may drastically alter trail conditions so call ahead or search the DNR website for "[candlelight](#)."

[EDITOR'S ADVISORY: A slideshow of the construction of the new Afterhours Ski Trail warming shelter accompanies this Outdoor Report on the DNR website.]

[Lake Winnebago System sturgeon spearing](#) opens this Saturday and fisheries crews checking water clarity found average readings have dropped about a foot over the last week and a half but remain fair to good at an average of 9.4 feet.

Ice anglers were also out on Winnebago and report catching perch, crappie and white bass. The Wolf River has many open stretches of open water and anglers were catching a few walleyes. In the south, some sauger and crappies were being caught on Lake Wisconsin and anglers in Rock County were targeting catfish, walleye and bluegill.

On Green Bay, anglers again flocked to the Little Sturgeon area over the weekend with those in search of perch having a tough time but whitefish anglers reported a good bite, with many limits reported.

In the dead of winter, love is in the air. Grey squirrels are thinking about Valentines for their mates. Wolves are also mating and every once in a while one can catch a whiff of a fox or coyote marking their territories. Winter tracking conditions have been great in many areas, especially in the north, where in addition to more canine tracks, fisher and marten tracks have been seen. Small rodents are feeling the impact of melting and new snow. When it melts, the ground is frozen and so they do not have good underground tunnels, making them vulnerable. This is good for raptors and people looking for tracks have seen signs of wing impressions and small mammal tracks in the snow that indicated successful raptor predation.

Trappers are reporting that the warm temperatures are resulting in a lot of raccoon activity — much more than normal for this time of year.

Ravens, bald eagles and great horned owls are nesting. Turkeys are starting to strut periodically. Partridge have been seen "budding" in aspen and ironwood. Brown creepers have occasionally shown up with the winter feeding flocks of chickadees, nuthatches, gold finches and pine siskins. There have been 200-plus tundra swans

wintering on Lower Mud Lake in McFarland.

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