

Just joshing

“Chicago is expecting 20 inches of snow. Rahm Emanuel says he’s happy he doesn’t really live there.”
— Jay Leno

FROM THE COMEDIANS



Come snowshoeing

Yellowstone’s Winter Snowshoe Program begins at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at the West Yellowstone Visitor Center, 30 Yellowstone Ave. in West Yellowstone, Mont. The event is free. For anyone needing snowshoes, rentals are available. For more information, call (307) 344-2876 or visit www.westyellowstonechamber.com/calendar.

ABOUT TOWN



B5

OUTDOORS

INSIDE Fly of the Week / **B6**

Visiting Blowout Canyon / **B7**

Winter takes toll on some fawns / **B8**

Winter in the canyon

Wandering the South Fork’s winter range

By **KRIS MILLGATE**
www.tightlinemedia.com



Kris Millgate / www.tightlinemedia.com
Mule deer fawns in the Heise area are the largest in the state.

Nothing works right when it’s minus 18 degrees outside. Camelbacks contain frozen water. Snowshoe buckles break when tightened and nose hairs stiffen with ice crystals.

Michael Glissmeyer and Ryan Case know this as they head into the South Fork of the Snake River’s 18-mile canyon stretch for a fly-fishing trip.

“It’s very white and very bright with the sun out. The trees are just beautiful with frost on them,” angler Ryan Case said. “The river looks a little bit on the hesitant side. It’s going to be hard to get a fly in there, but we’ll see what we can do.”

The river is full of floating ice. Steam fills the canyon like the Yellowstone geyser basin and the only sound is the crunch of crusty snow under their snowshoes.

“The quiet. It’s great. There’s nothing better,” Michael Glissmeyer said. “There’s not a lot of access in the winter, so you have to work for it.”

Foot traffic is allowed in the canyon during the winter as long as users stay close to the river and leave the slopes alone. The whole area is closed to motorized traffic because it is prime winter range for wildlife, particularly mule deer. Moose, elk, swans and eagles rule the range, too, but hundreds of mule deer dot the south-facing slopes.

“There are animals everywhere,” Glissmeyer said. “You don’t see that anywhere else.”

Historically, mule deer fawns weathering winter on the South Fork are the largest in the state. They can average 80 to 90 pounds compared with Boise fawns, which average 60 to 65 pounds.

“It’s survival of the fittest, and there’s no doubt that over time, they’re big and they’re strong,” said Daryl Meints, Idaho Department of Fish and Game regional wildlife manager. “They’ve adapted to the conditions they have to face to survive an eastern Idaho winter.”

Land Trust, Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy work with the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service to keep the canyon’s winter range protected. In the past 20 years, conservation groups have worked with willing landowners to protect 20,000 acres. The acres are divided among 78 pieces of property worth about \$50 million.

“What you see is a relatively wild and intact corridor,” said Chet Work, Teton Regional Land Trust executive director. “It’s not easy work, but I think the values associated with this river and with this canyon have kept the conservation organizations active here for 20 years, which is remarkable.”

Users like Glissmeyer and Case recognize the value of the canyon even on the coldest day of the year. By noon, Glissmeyer is off his snowshoes and on the river. He’s in waist-high water surrounded by chunks of ice. Case is on a shelf of icy shoreline, net at the ready.

“I love fishing and I’m not willing to give it up because it’s cold,” Glissmeyer said.

Glissmeyer’s line quickly forms beads of ice and looks more like a pearl necklace than a tool to entice trout. His fly lands on ice more often than water.

There are no rewarding bites for their winter trek, but they both know rewards are reaped in other ways for those who brave winter in the canyon.

“I think this is a place that deserves some respect,” Glissmeyer said. “As long as people respect it, they should come and enjoy it.”



Kris Millgate / www.tightlinemedia.com
Angler Mike Glissmeyer waded through chunks of ice to fly-fish. His line was coated with ice on the first cast.



Kris Millgate / www.tightlinemedia.com
Ryan Case and Michael Glissmeyer are layered to their noses for warmth on a minus-18-degree day.



Kris Millgate / www.tightlinemedia.com
The canyon stretch of the South Fork of the Snake River is prime winter range for big game. Outside of the river, no motorized traffic is allowed in the winter and there is very little foot traffic.

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

Newspaper helper
Use newspaper as shoe deodorizer. Help shoes keep their shape and smell fresh by stuffing them with newspaper after wearing them.
— Realsimple.com

THAT’S ODD

Dirty bird
Police arrested a 41-year-old man Feb. 1 in connection with the theft of a parrot from an Ewa Beach home in November. When the bird’s owner confronted the thief for taking the bird, the robber tried to punch and strike the victim with a leaf blower, police said. The parrot bit the robber’s finger when he dropped it during the scuffle, police said. — www.msnbc.msn.com