

PROVINCIAL PARKS THIS WINTER

The snow is already upon us so now is the time to get those cross-country skis out of summer storage and "tuned up" for the skiing season. Cross-country skiing has always been popular but recent years have seen a boom in the sport unprecedented in its history. It seems like every household on P.E.I. has at least one pair of cross-country skis hanging around.

Unlike its Alpine cousin, Nordic skiing is a relatively inexpensive sport. For less than \$100, a person can be outfitted with all the equipment necessary to begin. Some people prefer to try out a sport before they invest money in it and Provincial Parks can help them. Brookvale, Brudenell River and Mill River Provincial Parks have rental skis and they all provide free groomed and tracked trails. Trail brochures are available for each park by calling 892-7431, ext. 267.

Both Brudenell River and Mill River Provincial Parks are planning ski clinics to introduce people to cross-country skiing. These clinics (January 10 and February 28 at Brudenell River and January 31 at Mill River) put the emphasis on the recreational aspects of the sport and are a very popular way of learning the basics. The clinics are also of benefit to intermediate and advanced skiers and a lunch and bar service will be available so come out and spend the day.

Our other 28 parks do not have tracked trails but they are all open for skiing and snowshoeing. While in our parks, try to pick out some of the different animal tracks in the snow. Look for: the snowshoe hare's big feet; the squirrel's small tracks that look like a baby snowshoe hare's; the ruffed grouse, with small growths on the sides of its toes, making the whole foot act like a large snowshoe; or the distinctive owl's, whose feet have feathers coming down over the toes. A chart of the common animal tracks has been developed and is available from Provincial Parks.

Remember, Provincial Parks never close, only certain facilities do. Why not visit several of our parks this winter and discover why they are beautiful year-round. They are open for your quiet pleasure so come and enjoy!

