



# Seward Nordic News

The quarterly newsletter of the Seward Nordic  
Ski Club

SPRING EDITION

## Upcoming Events

- **Saturday, April 5 – Dennis Perry Fundraiser**  
**Time:** 5:30 – 7:00 pm. **Location:** Seward High School. There will be a dinner with door prizes, followed by a silent auction. The dinner menu will include spaghetti with choice of two hearty sauces, sourdough bread, salad, beverages and hand-dipped ice cream. **Cost:** \$10 per adult, \$8 for student/youth, and \$25 for a family of 4. Donations welcome. Volunteers are needed to help set up, serve and clean up. Sue St. Amand will be the kitchen coordinator. Call her (224-3351) or Duane Chase (224-3261) if you would like to help. Thanks!
- **Seward Nordic Ski Club Spring Meeting**  
The Club will have a spring planning meeting in April, exact date to be announced. It likely will be Sunday April 13 or Sunday April 27. When we have the details determined, we will send an email to the Club. The goal of the meeting is to review the activities and accomplishments of this past year, and to set goals for next year. All members are welcome to attend. If you cannot attend but would like to offer some input, please email us at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com). We always welcome thoughts and feedback from club members.

## News

**GROOMING** – Our Ginzu Groomer has been a great addition at Mile 12, and our committed groomers continue to work on the trails into the spring. Thanks Tom, Herb, Dan and Duane! The Ginzu is pulled by the Pisten Bully, which continues to have mechanical problems. The Club purchased a new generator to help with starting the machine, but ideally the Pisten Bully needs some rebuilding work. The groomers are exploring options for this, and will submit a proposal for work on it this spring and summer.

**GRANTS** – Thanks to Madelyn Walker for writing a grant to the Alaska Ski Education Foundation (ASEF) to expand our supply of rental Nordic ski equipment. Our program allows students in need to rent the equipment from SNSC at a low cost and return it at the end of season. The grant would greatly improve the quality and quantity of our equipment. This year is opportune for the proposal, since the High School participation in skiing was excellent – 30 students! The club has more goals for grants this spring and summer, including one to the Rasmussen foundation for a Seward Junior Nordic Program.

## Seward's Nordic Skiers Rock at Tour of Anchorage

by Duane Chase

Nine nordic skiers from Seward, ages 14 to 67, made a splash at Anchorage's latest Race Tour. Andy Cloward was our only classic skier, and the remainder skied the Freestyle Race, with Mark Chase the only 50K participant. Here are the results by name, race skied, and age group. The Tour ranks

the male and female skiers in separate groups, separated by age, similar to the Mt. Marathon race.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RACE SKIIED</u>	<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
Andy Cloward	Classic Ski, 25K	age 15-17	11th place
MacKenzie Barnwell	Freestyle, 25K	age 12-14	2nd place
Allison Barnwell	Freestyle, 25K	age 15-17	3rd place
Austin Gillespie	Freestyle 25K	age 15-17	13th place
Duane Chase	Freestyle 25K	age 65-69	2nd place
Ray Robinson	Freestyle 40K	age 35-39	3rd place
Marylyn Barnwell	Freestyle 40K	age 45-49	5th place
Bob Barnwell	Freestyle 40K	age 45-49	12th place
Mark Chase	Freestyle 50K	age 18-24	11th place

Those placing in the top three for their age category received medals. Great job Seward skiers!

## Seward Seahawks Nordic News

The Seward Seahawks ended their year with an incredible showing at the Nordic Ski State Championship Meet at Kincaid Park, held February 21-23. The Seward Girls won the meet, becoming the 3A Champions by narrowly beating out Valdez. The Seward Boys did an excellent job as well, placing second just behind SuValley High School.

The teams were expected to do well in the freestyle races, but their strong finishes with the classic races helped clinch their final places in the meet. Allison Barnwell took 24<sup>th</sup> in the 7.5 kilometer classic race, beating out several Junior Olympic members. Mark Chase led the boys' team, and Coach Bob Barnwell described his performance as "shining."

The teams did very well in the freestyle races on Saturday, and both teams took second in the relays on Sunday. The Seward 2008 Nordic Ski State Team consisted of Allison Barnwell, MacKenzie Barnwell, Meghan O'Leary, Samara Johnson, Tori Feemster, Sam Feemster, Mark Chase, Aaron Sarka, Mike Zweifel, Matt Nyholm, Andrew Ferkinhoff and Kenny Audette. Great job Seahawks and congratulations on an amazing year!

## Member Spotlight: Heather Shank

This month we are featuring Heather Shank, a longtime and active Ski Club member. Heather first joined the club 5 years ago, she admits "selfishly to find out about the best places to ski. But I stuck with the club once I realized what a fun group of people it was." She is a very involved club member, having written the trail updates for several years and being one of the key planners of our biggest fundraiser, the Mt. Marathon Pasta Feed. She loves to ski and finds it is a great outlet in the winter. Having a baby hasn't slowed her down much, and she can often be seen out pulling 10-month old Van in his Chariot. In the summer, she trail runs (and has run Mt. Marathon 11 years in a row!), hikes and loves to pick berries. Heather works as the Office Manager for Anderson Tug and Barge. She is originally from Boston, and moved to Seward in 1995 with her husband John. They are expecting their second child this September.

***Favorite Trail Food:*** Milk Chocolate with Almonds  
***Favorite Post-Ski Drink:*** Peppermint Tea  
***Favorite Ski Trail:*** Iditarod Trail



# Trail Focus

by Ray Robinson

## *Who needs trails? Skiing spring crust is a must*

Spring in Alaska brings the kind of conditions that backcountry enthusiasts dream about. The freeze/thaw cycle of snow creates a firm surface that permits travel in any direction that you point your skis. Here are some tips for a successful adventure.

### **Skis**

The choice of ski depends on the terrain you wish to travel through. If long stretches of narrow trails or snowmachine tracks must be negotiated, a waxless (scaled) touring ski or combi ski might be necessary. If steeper areas are expected, metal-edged touring skis with climbing skins will help.



*Crust skiers find perfect conditions in front of the Portage Glacier on Portage Lake.*

It is probably best to avoid using skis that require both kick wax and glide wax because of the variable surfaces and debris you can expect to encounter. For lake surfaces and broad, gentle valleys, any ski type will work. In this setting, skate technique can be used to cover vast distances in terrain where travel would otherwise be difficult or impossible.

### **Poles**

Stronger poles with basic straps are recommended. Performance racing straps are impractical because terrain features, clothing adjustments, and hazards require removing your hands from the straps frequently. If skate skiing, slightly shorter poles might be more versatile if the terrain is highly variable. If big distances are being covered, broken poles can result in an epic day. Bringing a pole repair kit might help. Carrying a spare pole is better insurance. Your repair kit should include duct tape and a piece of aluminum tubing to splint broken poles. A spare basket might also be a good idea.

### **Other essentials**

If a full day is planned, gaiters are a good idea in case the surface becomes slushy or collapses or if deeper snow is encountered up high or in the trees. If you are traveling in a creek or river drainage, a pair of waders or waterproof socks might come in handy for water crossings. For loop trips, a map and compass or GPS are essential unless you really know the terrain you are covering. In addition to the pole repair kit described above, some strong wire or metal struts and a leatherman style pocket tool are also handy for temporary repairs of broken skis.

### **Timing the ski conditions**

Finding the perfect crust is an art, and it takes close observation and some trial and error to get it right. The basic concept is that warm, sunny days and cool nights establish the surface. Wind scouring can also create crust, although the strength of the surface is less predictable. The crust forms up at different times of the year at different elevations. Comparing observations with other local skiers can really help.

Seward area skiers are sharing crust conditions on our daily trail updates email forum. If you are interested in joining the forum, email us at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com).

A daily cycle often occurs. In general, the conditions are best after the sun has warmed and softened the surface of a firm crust for an hour or so. On warm days, the late day surface may become slushy or collapse under your weight, making travel cumbersome. This possibility should be considered if an ambitious trip is planned.

### **Risks**

Beyond the usual risks of spring backcountry travel, a few hazards are unique to crust skiing. Broken equipment or rotting snow can get you stuck a long distance from the car, so warm clothing, extra food, and a headlamp are advisable. Be sure to leave your itinerary with a friend or family member. Water immersion due to a snow bridge collapse could lead to hypothermia or frostbite.

### **Where can you go?**

The real question is “where can’t you go?” Just about any route that is not too steep or thick with tree cover can be negotiated at some point in the season. Frozen marshes, lakes, rivers, and streams provide the most reliable through-ways. Broad valleys above treeline or with multiple-use trails are also great. Below are some examples of local routes. If you would like to tell us about a favorite route, email us a description at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com).

#### ***Early season (now!)***

Bear Lake  
Exit Glacier flood plain  
Snow River Valley  
Glacier Creek (access via Stoney Creek Road)  
Box Canyon (access via Exit Glacier Road)  
Trail Lake  
Crescent Lake (access is steep via Carter Lake snowmachine trail, consider hiking)  
Portage Lake

#### ***Mid season (late April, early May)***

Summit Lake area  
Lost Lake (access via hiking either side, or skiing up Primrose)  
Swan Lake Canoe Route  
Resurrection Pass

#### ***Late season (late May and beyond)- all must be accessed by hiking***

Mount Tiehacker  
Harding Icefield (glacier experience advised)

## **Tech Tips**

by Ray Robinson

### ***Off-season ski storage***

With all of the great snow we’ve had this year, a long, quality spring season is ahead, and putting away the skis for the year is the last thing on everyone’s mind. When the time comes, however, a few minutes of attention will go a long way in protecting the viability of your ski bases.

Dirt and debris can clog the structure of your bases, making them less likely to accept and maintain wax. Dust accumulation from summer storage is no exception. Providing a thick layer of protective wax can prevent this problem.

Begin with a “cleaning wax” by ironing in warm basewax and scraping the wax while still warm. This process can be repeated a few times if the skis are dirty from spring debris. Next, iron in another basewax layer and allow it to cool completely without scraping. Leave this layer on during storage until the snow falls again.

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Any businesses interested in sponsoring the Ski Club, contact [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com). Thank you for your interest! Your donation is tax-deductible.

## Mission Statement

The Seward Nordic Ski Club is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting Nordic skiing for all ages, developing and maintaining a network of groomed trails, and sponsoring community ski activities and educational opportunities.

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<http://sewardnordicskiclub.org>