

A whole new world is alive beneath the snow

evening fox a small flash of activity caught my eye and I realized a vole was darting out of a hole beside the path, grabbing a seed, and disappearing all too fast to be caught by my camera.

On the fields in the winter, you may see a fox or a coyote hunting for these small rodents under the snow. They will leap into the air to come down and break through the snow trying to catch their prey unaware.

It is this same search for food that will bring the Great Gray Owl and the Snowy Owl down from the north along with their smaller cousin the Hawk Owl. How do you find them? The easiest way is to let your friends know you want to see them, for once you know where one has been seen, chances are you will be able to find it in the same area when you go to look. These owls will feed during the day time so you may be in for a treat. They will often sit on a limb or wire and listen for activity under the snow which, when they find it, will lead to a plunge down through the crust in search of their next meal.

Each year the Christmas bird count finds Bald Eagles in our area. Last year five were found in a tree on the Nobel beach. In January, the birds were often seen in the early morning or late afternoon near the fish farm on Parry Island. Here, they often put out discards for the birds.

A great way to see the deer is to visit a yard where they are winter feeding them. This practice was started by the Ministry of Natural Resources a number of years back when we had severe winters and the deer population was small. Now this is done by the Winter Wildlife Feeding Program, a charitable organization. They do not usually start until well into January or when the snow is heavy and natural food is scarce. Unlike feeding birds, once you start you must continue because the stomach acids of the animals change to adapt to the new food. What a delight it is to enjoy these graceful creatures at reasonably close range. If you go to a feeding station and enjoy it, consider making a contribution to the program.

Often where they feed the deer, the mice come to get the corn and straw. This attracts the Barred Owl which remains around all year. The people at the feeding stations can tell you the time of day they feed and the times the owl comes to visit.

Our largest woodpecker - the Pileated - stays around all winter. This bird does not have a great abundance of body fat but survives by locating a few good sources of food and in the winter, will conserve its energy by restricting its flights to just those trees. When you find one of these you will find the bird returning on a regular schedule.

Otter tracks are fun to see in the deep snow. This short legged animal plows a trough through the snow as it travels. You may find a slide on the bank beside the water where this fun-loving animal comes out to play by sliding down the bank. On fast open water in the winter, they can often be found hunting frogs in the river bottom.

The early morning or late afternoon is the best time to look for our winter residents of the wild. Surprisingly you can often get quite close to them. On rare occasions, you may be privileged to see a flying squirrel. The best spot to find these is at your bird feeder after dark, as they are nocturnal. If in your search you hear the Barred Owl, then abandon your search, because it is looking for just the same thing and its call will send the squirrels into hiding.



Snow Fleas

Flying Squirrels



Fox

Cow Moose



PARRY SOUND MALL

**Climate Controlled • Free Parking
Food Court • New Ownership
A&P • Hart • RBC • PD Murphy**

**Mall Gift Certificates,
Complimentary Stroller
and
Wheelchair Loans**

Parry Sound's Shopping Centre for the entire family

Hours: Mon., Tues., Wed. & Sat. 9-6 Thurs. & Fri. 9-9 Sun. 11-4 (most stores)
FALL/WINTER HOURS - LABOUR DAY UNTIL JUNE 1

PROPERTY MANAGED BY
Winchester Real Estate Investment Trust
FOR LEASING
Call JAMES GRAY (705) 790-1587

Customer Care: 705-746-9252
Email: parrysoundmall@bellnet.ca
www.parrysoundmall.ca

Unique Reflections
ESTHETICS & DAY SPA
Electrolysis • Facials
Green Peel Skin Resurfacing
Makeup & Waxing
Manicures & Pedicures
Electrologist Esthetician
Dermatologist
51 Miller Street Parry Sound,
746-8373
201987

White Pine Inn

Lake View Rooms, Boating,
Swimming and Fishing
Economical Rates
Single, Double And Family Rooms
TV & DVD, Telephone (Local Calls, No Charges)
High Speed Internet, Mini Bar
Free Continental Breakfast

1449 HWY 69 South, RR#2, Parry Sound, ON P2A 2W8
TEL/FAX: 705-375-5357
RESERVATION: 1-866-796-7333
E-mail: whitepineinn@xplornet.com