

*Polar Dipping in Estevan*

# Prairies North

the magazine of Saskatchewan

## the JOYS OF WINTER

Building the  
**EARLSFIELD**

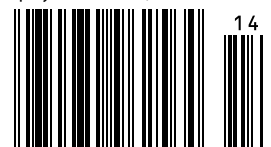


The Great Backyard  
**BIRD COUNT**

**HISTORY OF**  
Table Mountain

Winter 2021

Display until Feb 28, 2022 \$7.99 CAD



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A photograph of a winter forest. The scene is dominated by evergreen trees heavily laden with snow. The ground is a smooth, white expanse of snow. In the background, taller, thinner trees stand against a clear, pale blue sky. The lighting is soft and even, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

*The*  
**JOYS**  
*of* Winter  
Photography





*The air is crisp and cold. Days are short. Snow and frost blanket the landscape. Time to stay inside and hunker down until spring? Nope. It's the perfect season to grab your camera and head outside for some of the most exciting photography of the year. Winter serves up outstanding photo opportunities we simply don't find at any other time.*

Story and Photos by  
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Karpan





**P**hotography is all about the light. While winter days are short, the light tends to be attractive throughout the day. In summer, mid-day light is harsh, overly contrasty, and unflattering for photographing landscapes. But in winter the sun stays low enough in the sky that it never becomes too harsh.

Prime times for taking pictures are the golden hours just after sunrise and just before sunset. Catching a summer sunrise means getting up well before 5:00 a.m., while in winter we can sleep in, have a leisurely breakfast and a second cup of coffee, and still have plenty of time to capture the sunrise.

Later in the day, we can photograph golden hour, sunset, and the blue hour all before suppertime. For night photography, the stars turn brilliant by early evening, plus the full moon rises and sets at “civilized” times.





## The Joys of Winter Photography

Snow and frost are what really make winter photogenic. How often have we heard the term “winter wonderland”? Fresh snow gives the landscape a crisp, clean look, while heavy hoarfrost is nothing short of magical. Leafless, dead-looking trees in winter suddenly come back to life. White frosty trees look especially striking against a bright blue sky. If you wake up to find frost-covered trees, it’s best to get out as soon as possible, before the wind picks up and blows off the fragile coating.

Winter is tailor-made for experimenting with abstract photography. Sometimes the snow itself can make for compelling images, especially where wind has sculpted it into artistic contours. Long shadows of tree trunks on the snow can create interesting compositions. When photographing hoarfrost, get in super close to capture the intricate and elaborate structure of the frost itself. During a snowfall, experiment with different shutter speeds to catch snowflakes in the air. If you have a macro lens, zoom in on patterns of an individual snowflake.







Wildlife photography in winter is special as well. Fur-bearing animals look their best with heavier coats of fur or hair, so an image of a fox, coyote, bison and numerous other animals will almost always look better in winter.







While there may be fewer birds around in winter, the remaining ones are usually easier to photograph. Birds are more active at feeders in winter so this is often the best time for close-up shots. We usually don't want photos of birds right at a feeder, but rather on their way to feed. We place our feeder in front of a tree with low branches. Birds will often stop and perch on the branches on their way to the feeder, which is where we want them. House finches are usually easy to photograph this way; some can be a brilliant red, or even shades of orange or yellow. Our favourites, however, are colourful Bohemian waxwings that often show up in late winter, sometimes in huge numbers, to clean off any berries and apples left on trees.







## The Joys of Winter Photography

We can find winter photography possibilities almost anywhere. Among our favourite haunts is Prince Albert National Park because of its easy accessibility, excellent chance of finding wildlife, and mix of forest, lakes and the Waskesiu River. The park keeps most roads open all winter, plus trails for skiing,

snowshoeing, and hiking make it possible to venture farther afield. Best of all, this is a great place for winter camping. Lakeside campsites come complete with closed-in picnic shelters that have wood-burning stoves. It's hard to beat being right on the lake for sunrise and sunset.





## COOL CAMERA TIPS

When photographing snow scenes, it's common for cameras to underexpose images. The camera gets fooled into thinking that the overall scene is a lot brighter than it actually is, so it cuts down the amount of light. It's often necessary to add some exposure compensation on the plus side. Check your camera back or histogram frequently to see if you have to adjust the compensation to achieve the proper exposure.

Camera batteries don't last as long in the cold, so make sure that the battery is fully charged before heading out. Ideally, also carry a spare battery and try to keep it warm in an inside pocket.

A big problem is getting condensation on your camera when bringing it in from the cold. Minimize this by putting the camera in a closed camera bag, or even into a plastic bag, while you're still outside. When you come inside, the condensation will form on the bag rather than on the camera. Letting it warm up gradually will lessen the chance of moisture creeping in where it doesn't belong.





Another of our go-to spots for winter photography is the Saskatoon riverbank. Parts of the river near downtown never freeze. Open water in winter can make for a magical setting as the cold air mixes with the warmer water, producing great clouds of steam. The colder the better. Bone-chilling temperatures in the minus 30s and 40s create vapour so thick that it's sometimes difficult to see the opposite bank. At sunrise the low sun shines through the mist, giving it an eerie golden glow as the opposite end of a bridge melts into the fog, as if disappearing into the Twilight Zone.

Various spots along the river offer excellent vantage points, with easy access along the Meewasin Valley trails. We especially like the area near the weir along Spadina Crescent. The 3.4-metre drop in the water generates even more mist in the air, with nearby trees usually taking on a thicker coat of frost as well.

No matter where you go, dress warmly and embrace the season. The more you enjoy winter photography, you might start thinking that the season isn't long enough. Well...almost.

