

# There's winter fun close at hand

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The area around Cedar Rapids may not rival Colorado or even Minnesota for the availability of outdoor winter activity facilities. But there is plenty to do for those who care to brave the elements.

Dubuque is the closest site for downhill skiing with long runs. Both Sundown at Dubuque and Chestnut Mountain in nearby Galena, Ill., make snow and are in operation throughout the winter.

Closer to home, there is a smaller hill with a tow-rope lift at Squaw Creek Park southeast of Marion. Under the jurisdiction of the Linn County Conservation Commission, the ski area has a judge available.

Squaw Creek Park also offers a trail for cross-country skiing and a sledding area.

There are other Linn County parks that provide wintertime fun.

At Pinicon Ridge south of Central City, there is a trail for cross-country skiing, an ice skating area and a lighted sledding hill. Snowmobiling is also allowed at the park.

Morgan Creek Park west of Cedar Rapids offers a cross-country ski trail and sledding. Ice skating is available at Waukena Park in Center Point, and cross-country skiers may use the Cedar Valley Nature Trail between Hiawatha and Center Point.

Among the area state parks that allow snowmobiling are Palisades-Kepler near Mount Vernon; Lake Macbride north of Iowa City; Pleasant Creek between Toddville and Center Point; and Wapsipinicon near Anamosa.

The only Cedar Rapids park where snowmobiles are permitted is at Seminole Valley Park off of 42nd Street NE, although the Cedar River is used when the ice is thick enough to support the machines.

But Rick Blackwell, program manager of the Cedar Rapids

Recreation Commission, cautions that the river does offer dangers.

"People should not skate, walk or even snowmobile on the river. Although the river is frozen on top, the currents below are strong and the depth of the ice varies greatly. A crack or hole in the ice can happen at any time."

The recreation commission maintains skating rinks at four locations in Cedar Rapids.

Sites at Noelridge Park, 4500 Council St. NE, and the Lou Dennis rink, 2600 Ellis Blvd. NE, are lighted and have warming houses. The warming houses are open on weekdays from 6 to 9 p.m., school vacation days from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m., and on weekends from noon to 9 p.m.

The warming house at the Lou Dennis rink will open at 8 a.m. on weekends when races are scheduled.

Bever Park, 2810 Bever Ave. SE, and the former Hayes school property, 1924 D St. SW, have sprayed ice rinks with a timer on lights.

Blackwell notes that skaters are urged to use rinks only when the area is posted as being open. Ice must be 4-6 inches thick before it is safe for use.

The recreation commission will mark and maintain cross-country ski trails at Jones Park, 91 29th Ave. SW, and at the Indian Creek Nature Center, 6665 Otis Road SE.

Coasting hills for toboggans and sleds are not maintained by the commission but are available at Roosevelt Junior High School, 300 13th St. NW; Shawnee Park, just north of F Avenue and 19th Street NW; Harrison School, 1310 11th St. NW; and Jones Park.

Within Marion, there is a sliding hill at Thomas Park, Blairs Ferry Road and Marion Boulevard, that has a warming house and is supervised on weekends. There is also an outdoor ice skating rink at Taube Park, 31st Street and McGowan Boulevard.