



Outdoors

Our lives in the
Northwoods

Outdoors in brief

Angora man injured in snow machine crash

ELY – The St. Louis County Sheriff's Office is investigating a snowmobile accident that occurred on the Taconite Trail about five miles southwest of Ely near Twin and Mitchell Lakes on Monday afternoon.

A trail groomer made the initial report of the apparent crash to emergency responders at about 3:30 p.m.

James A. Nims, 67, of Angora, was traveling alone on the Taconite Trail heading from Tower to Ely, according to the report, when he lost control of his snowmobile on a left-hand curve in the trail and collided with a tree along the trail.

The Ely Area Ambulance, Morse/Fall Lake Township Fire and First Responders, and the St. Louis County Rescue Squad all assisted in response to the incident and in transporting Nims to the Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

Fishing report

Ely area

The extreme cold temperatures of late did little to dissuade many anglers from their quest to find some fish for the dinner table. Several good reports have been coming in from the local trout lakes that have many anglers optimistic. Lake trout up to eight pounds have been coming forth from Burntside Lake, and that shows that the fish population remains stable there. If last season was any indication, then this year should prove to be as fruitful. White tubes and Jigging Raps have been doing an exceptional job of luring these hard-fighting fish to bite. Some are also using spoons and doing moderately well. Stream trout have been coming on stronger as the lake conditions continue to improve. Miners Pit and Tofte Lake are still the top two as far as success rates go. Rainbow trout up to twenty-three inches have been coming to the hole in Miners, and Tofte Lake has given up a few splake in the five to six-pound range. Tiny jigs tipped with wax worms or small spoons worked in relatively shallow water have been working well. Glacier Ponds have also been in the sights of anglers seeking nice rainbow trout.

Northern pike action has been steady, but few fish over the forty-inch slot have been reported. Suckers fished along saddles and weedy drop-offs were still the best place to target these toothy, hard-fighting creatures.

Lake conditions are just now becoming safe to travel as ice thickness has been around fifteen to sixteen inches and any slush that was covering the surface has been frozen with the recent advent of sub-arctic temperatures.

Courtesy of Babe's Bait at Ely's west entrance.

ARROWHEAD ULTRA 135

“It was so cold!”

Brutal winds and temperatures near minus-40 tested the mettle of participants

ELEPHANT LAKE— For participants in this year's Arrowhead 135 Ultramarathon, it was a race against Mother Nature. As the lead racers checked in at Melgeorge's Resort late Monday afternoon, near the halfway point of this brutal competition, they had one objective in mind— staying in front of a truly bitter cold front that was sweeping down straight from the Arctic, threatening to halt most racers in their tracks. It was exactly the kind of conditions that participants in the race hope for, in order to test their mettle against the worst a North Country winter can throw at them.

The 135-mile-long race had kicked off Monday morning in International Falls, with the temperatures running in the teens-below-zero, making it the warmest morning in days. But the brief respite from the intense cold was to be short-lived as some of the coldest temperatures in several years descended on the area overnight on Monday, fueled by stiff northwest winds.

High temperatures on Tuesday and Wednesday struggled to hit minus-20 degrees and lows Tuesday night hit minus-35 degrees or colder across much the area. The wind made it seem far worse, with wind chills as cold as minus-68 reported in the area on Wednesday morning.

It was the kind of forecast that helped focus the mind and stiffen the resolve of the lead racers, all of whom were traveling on fat bikes Monday along a series of snowmobile trails to their ultimate destination at Fortune Bay, on Lake Vermilion.

“That's why we're working so hard,” said Don Gabrielson, from Washington state, who was back for another try at the Arrowhead Ultra after a ten-year hiatus. Bikers reported the trail was hard and fast, at least initially, although conditions slowed somewhat with the light, fine snowfall that settled into the area Monday afternoon as the leading edge of the bitter front. The fast start helped Jordan Wakely, of Grayling, Mich., set a new course record, finishing in just 11 hours and 43 minutes.

For racers like Gabrielson, the cold was starting to sink in. He said he had only faced one major surprise, when his water bottle top froze up. Pat Adrian, of Roseau, who was using a wearable water container that hung tight to his chest to prevent such freeze-ups, said his jacket zipper froze, preventing him from accessing his water. “My breath kept dripping down and it froze my zipper solid,” he said. “I could barely squeeze any water out.”

It's a perennial issue for racers in the Arrowhead Ultra and it would prove a far more critical issue by

Tuesday as the temperatures plunged.

While some bikers were able to beat the cold, for the vast majority of the 146 competitors who started the race early Monday morning, there was no possibility of outrunning the cold.

Scott Jensen, a 57-year-old attorney from Grand Forks, No. Dak., who competes in marathon swims and iron man competitions elsewhere in the U.S., said nothing compares with the Arrowhead Ultra 135. “This is the toughest race there is,” he said, as he crossed the finish line at Fortune Bay about 8:50 a.m. on Tuesday, having biked straight through the night.

The 64 runners who took part in the event faced the toughest challenge, mostly because they faced the cold temperatures for far longer than most bikers. By midday Tuesday, all but 13 had dropped out due to the conditions. Race organizers said that several of the racers were reporting minor frostbite, but nothing serious, at least as of midday on Wednesday. “We did have to pull one person after we

got a look at her toes,” said Russ Loucks, “but for the most part people came very prepared.”

One of the few runners to finish was Faye Norby, of St. Paul, who was the first female runner to complete the race, having spent over 48 hours exposed to the conditions. While

racers are required to bring a sleeping bag, Norby said she resisted using it, for fear she might fall asleep in the intense cold. Instead, she alternated between running and walking virtually the entire 48 hours to reach the finish line. “I have winter experience, but this is my first Arrowhead race and these were the coldest temperatures I've been in.”

Among the many runners who dropped out was Bill Bradley, who was making his eighth attempt to finish the race. Bradley, who lives in California, had spent more than a month in International Falls trying to acclimatize himself to the conditions. But, he said, the relatively mild first half of the winter didn't do much to prepare him for the conditions that set in this week. Bradley made it 37 miles but acknowledges he was suffering by the time he reached the first checkpoint, at the Gateway Store. “People were discouraging me from going back out,” he said. “I was pretty hypothermic by the time I got there. I was definitely shivering.”

Bradley, however, is nothing if not persistent. He's made multiple attempts to summit Denali and swim the English Channel, but completing the Arrowhead 135 is now his singular focus. “I will definitely be back next year,” he said.

J.B. Barnhouse, from Iowa, was still in recovery mode himself after finishing at about 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. “I don't think I could have made it another mile,” he said. “It was just

Above: Manitoban K.C. Turczak squints in blowing snow as he makes his way across Elephant Lake on Monday afternoon.

Below: A frosty J.B. Barnhouse approaches the finish line on Tuesday morning.



A group of three racers head to the checkpoint at Melgeorge's Resort.



really, really cold and windy. I didn't have anything left.”

Barnhouse, who biked through the night, said he knew the cold would be intense. “It was black and spotless,” he said, as he spent the last few hours

A racer signals no injuries after a support car caught fire on the Sheep Ranch Rd.

submitted

See ULTRA 135...pg. 5B

ULTRA 135...Continued from page 4B – traversing the vast Lost Lake Swamp. “You could see every star in the sky, so you knew the bottom was falling out.”

Judd Rohwer, of New Mexico, said he’s competed in the 350-mile marathon along a portion of the Iditarod trail in Alaska, but said the Arrowhead felt colder than anything he experienced in Alaska. “The minus-30 here is just brutal,” he said.

Fiery mishap
Of all the things that can go wrong during the Arrowhead 135, a burning car would probably not make most lists. But that was the situation for a young woman from Colorado who was assisting another racer. While waiting at a crossing on the Sheep Ranch Road, north of Orr, her rental car caught fire and was completely destroyed in the blaze. She was unhurt, but all of her and companion’s gear went up in the flames.

LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Friday					Saturday					Sunday					Monday					Tuesday				
12 4					24 14					28 10					16 -11					4 -18				
Ely	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Emb.	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Cook	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Orr	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Tower	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.
01/21	-1	-34	0.00		01/21	-4	-40	0.00		01/21	-1	-37	0.00		01/21	10	-20	0.00		01/21	-6	-40	0.00	
01/22	15	-2	0.14	2.6"	01/22	13	-6	0.22	2.5"	01/22	12	-7	0.15	2.6"	01/22	16	10	0.21	2.5"	01/22	12	-6	0.25	3.0"
01/23	17	10	0.05	0.5"	01/23	16	4	0.01	0.9"	01/23	15	6	0.08	0.5"	01/23	12	1	0.01	0.2"	01/23	15	2	0.00	0.8"
01/24	15	1	0.03	1.3"	01/24	12	-4	0.04	1.6"	01/24	12	4	0.06	1.3"	01/24	12	-20	0.03	2.0"	01/24	13	0	0.08	1.8"
01/25	7	-27	0.00		01/25	12	-26	0.00		01/25	13	-26	0.00		01/25	-9	-33	0.00		01/25	2	-33	0.00	
01/26	-7	-35	0.00		01/26	10	-38	0.00		01/26	-11	-32	0.00		01/26	-2	-26	0.00		01/26	-4	-37	0.00	
01/27	1	-39	0.00		01/27	-1	-45	0.00		01/27	-2	-36	0.00		01/27	-4	-38	0.00		01/27	-1	-44	0.00	
Totals 0.42 44.0"					Totals 0.53 36.5"					Totals 0.54 45.1"					Totals 0.48 NA					Totals 0.89 38.3"				

Hit the Trails!

Area Trail Conditions

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