

SNOW EVOKES VARYING EMOTIONS DUE TO ITS PARADOXICAL NATURE

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Snow. Few things can boast of as many connotations. To Adirondackers, it may be summed up as an obligatory condition, endured by all and enjoyed by some. Its possible to lend validity to the contentions of both camps as to whether its a liability or an asset.

It is the demanding child clamoring for and receiving attention, an impediment that has to be removed to facilitate nearly all outdoor activities. It acerbates all such activities with the exception of those directly related to snow-mandated recreational pursuits.

Snow is the death knell to those species of wildlife dependent on unfettered access to their habitat and food sources. It can reach depths that coupled with subzero air temperatures and elevated wind speeds can be fatal to grazers such as deer and many species of birds and turkeys in general.

Its the grim reaper to many species of aquatic and plant life by concentrating inordinate and fatal amounts of harmful chemicals and minerals into the soil and water. To a thinking and analytical mind, it is reasonable for one to strongly suspect this may pose similar dangers to humans as well.

It is the Grinch that steals our time and taxes our resources, restricting our movements, presenting real dangers to life and limb, interrupting the natural progression of normal everyday functions. It is a thief taking our money, demanding more tributes for our yearly living expenses. It costs everyone money to mitigate the above effects by shoveling, blowing or plowing it from our pathways, driveways, highways and roofs.

Based on the above facts, it is easy to agree with the camp that views snow as detrimental to all resident life forms.

The following observations however, suggest it's benefits may actually outweigh their objections when compared with the positive effect it has neutralizing our normal subfreezing temperatures.

Snow is nature's insulation, its overcoat protecting the earth and it's inhabitants from the accompanying cold of the air. As an insulator it benefits the soil, lesser vegetation, our water lines and denizens of the duff.

Humans have long utilized snow to isolate and preserve the warmth of the hearth from what my great-grandfather referred to as "the Lord's Barn." It was annually used to bank building foundations, especially in rural areas where homes were not privy to central heating.

Surface-dwelling animal species partially immerse themselves into its protective mantle using it in much the same manner we do our comforter-covered beds. Proper conditions often allow grouse to dive-bomb their way under its surface deriving the same benefits mentioned earlier for smaller mammals – safety from the elements and the hunter.

Snow is the poor man's manure; it evenly deposits beneficial nutrients to the soil and releases them in a manner that assures maximum retention.

It is the surgeon, pruning and culling dead and diseased limbs from trees and shrubs.

Snow is the Renaissance artist painting in indescribable beauty a world of pristine white covering a multitude of sins.

It is a vast reservoir replenishing earth's invaluable fresh water resources.

Snow is nature's department of public works, cleansing and flushing the previous season's dirt and grime away.

It is the highway that never ends, accommodating skiers, snowshoers, foresters and snowmobilers, to name but a few. They enlist its aid in traversing unstable terrain such as tundra, marsh and blow-down timber by allowing the traveler to pass over and around their natural obstacles and inconsistencies more easily.

Snow is the logging engineer's gravel and roadbase. Combined with accompanying cold temperatures, it levels and stabilizes natural irregularities in ground surfaces quickly and cheaply with minimal disturbance to the permanent base.

For generations winter roadways have been a traditional and practical way to harvest timber in areas where it would not otherwise be feasible. It protects the forest floor from the effects of heavy equipment needed to move timber from stump to roadway. In much the same way as the float plane, it leaves little or no trace of the intruder.

It is the bread and butter of a large percentage of area residents and businesses

who depend on its duration and abundance for their recreational based industry. This is a dependence shared by a great many others far removed from our environs as well.

Snow is the guest, pleasing all – some by its coming and some by its going.