

# Boston Sunday Herald

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## B.O.W. wow: Women wild for outdoor forums

By TENLEY WOODMAN

HOLDERNESS, N.H. — Ten years ago I wouldn't have flinched at having to gut a brook trout or eating my lunch next to a pile of animal scat.

But after moving to Boston from my native New Hampshire for college and work, I've become acclimated to city comforts. Flush toilets, hot water and corner stores at my beckon call have nearly eradicated my wilderness survival skills.

To return to my nature-loving roots, I joined a Becoming an Outdoors Woman winter workshop (B.O.W.), hosted by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the New Hampshire Wildlife Federation. Its purpose is to help acclimate and educate women on outdoor recreation.

For \$55, attendees are given snowshoes, cross-country skis and other equipment appropriate for the daylong class of their choice. A bag lunch and homebaked snacks are provided.

Typically, classes meet for a while indoors and then head outdoors; workshops are chosen from a menu that includes ice fishing and winter survival techniques, skiing and shooting, snowshoeing and animal tracking. Think of it as day camp for women 18 and up.

Despite frosty temperatures, winter B.O.W.s are popular. The day I attended, all classes were filled to capacity — 55 women. Forty-eight applicants had to be turned away (we're talking giving up a Saturday, with classes starting promptly at 8 a.m.). Showing up without reservations is not recom-

mended.

I checked out an ice fishing workshop. This is perhaps the most leisurely and social cold-weather sport. With a sturdy 10 inches of ice beneath us, our group lounged on the lake in comfort, with a camper's stove for warm beverages and a few folding chairs. We ate lunch on the ice under a clear blue sky. Paradise, New Hampshire style.

I learned how to "jig" an ice fisherman's word for dangling food toward the bottom of the lake to tempt fish who feed lower in the water. But it's a grungy business. A live, wiggling shiner — a small fish used for bait — must be speared onto the hook. I opted out of this task.

My group included a dogged musher, police dispatcher, crime reporters, schoolteachers and city slickers attempting to get their fish-gutting groove back.

Back on land (while the rest of the group stayed shivering on the ice for the day), I checked out the Winter Survival class, which offered great tips for use not only in the woods but at any outdoor function involving low temperatures.

Laura Alexander, an Appalachian Mountain Club guide, drew from her own experience as an outdoors woman and tutored us on how to prepare for the unexpected, including how to go in the woods. (Trust me guys, it's not as easy for us gals.)

But the main staple of survival in frigid temps is having the proper clothing. I learned this the hard way during a Patriots game on New Year's Day. One Lycra

layer under a cotton sweatshirt and sweatpants under my ski gear wasn't enough to keep me toasty for a 10-hour, below-freezing experience.

Now I know better. Alexander stressed the importance of sweat-wicking layers, wool and dry, equally protective clothing in your pack.

If the chill turns to shivers, a key sign hypothermia is on its way, Alexander recommended imbibing sweet, warm liquids. Coffee, hot

chocolate, black tea and nips of whiskey are out due to caffeine and alcohol's diuretic qualities. Instead, Alexander said she keeps an insulated flask of jello made with two cups of hot water to help warm her body's core and kick-start her natural heating system.

I also looked in on another group doing a ski and shoot program. And though I didn't fire a rifle, I watched the other women learn proper gun safety and etiquette. N.H. Fish and Game's Owl

Brook Hunter Education Center the host site for training, has its own shooting range and challenging trail target-shooting. Safety is a priority — even in the ladies' toilets there are posters illustrating correct firearm use.

B.O.W.s also are offered in the spring and fall. For more information, go to [www.nhbow.com](http://www.nhbow.com) or [www.wildlife.state.nh.us/OutdoorRecreation/bow.htm](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/OutdoorRecreation/bow.htm)



PHOTO COURTESY OF N.H. FISH AND GAME

ICE, ICE BABY: A woman learns how to ice fish at the N.H. Fish and Game's Owl Brook Hunter Education Center.