

Make Your Own Snowshoes

A little time and money puts you on the winter trails.

Life Scout Michael Purdy will tell you about the only thing more fun than being on a winter camp-out after a big snow is hiking on his home-made silver snowshoes.

"The air is real clean and sounds seem super-charged," the 13-year-old says. "I like getting out on the snow because there's so much to see and do."

Affordable Fun

You can spend \$100 or more for a pair of store-bought snowshoes, ones made of costly materials such as aluminum and hardwoods. Or you can make a good pair—and have fun doing it—for less than \$15 in materials.

Michael and two dozen Scouts from Northglenn, Colo., Troop 139 met last January at the workshop of assistant Scoutmaster George Long to do exactly that.

Mr. Long, an engineer and Advisor to Venture Crew 2222, drew up plans that turn

PVC pipe, a handful of hardware, a cut-up inner tube and some cord into surefooted snowshoes. (See sidebar.)

Three Meetings, 35 Pairs of Snowshoes

It takes about three 90-minute meetings to build a pair from start to finish. Troop 139 made 35 pairs of frames that first meeting. The next week they cut out materials. Final assembly took place on the third week.

"It's a lot of fun," Life Scout Jesse Dahl, 16, says. "The hardest part is putting the hot PVC in the jig. Do it wrong and it'll make a big ol' knot in the pipe." (All's not lost if you do. Jesse says he cuts flutes from 'em!)

Jesse also says it's important to pick a good color. While he likes Michael's silver 'shoes, Jesse painted one of his pair a florescent orange and the other pair camouflage.

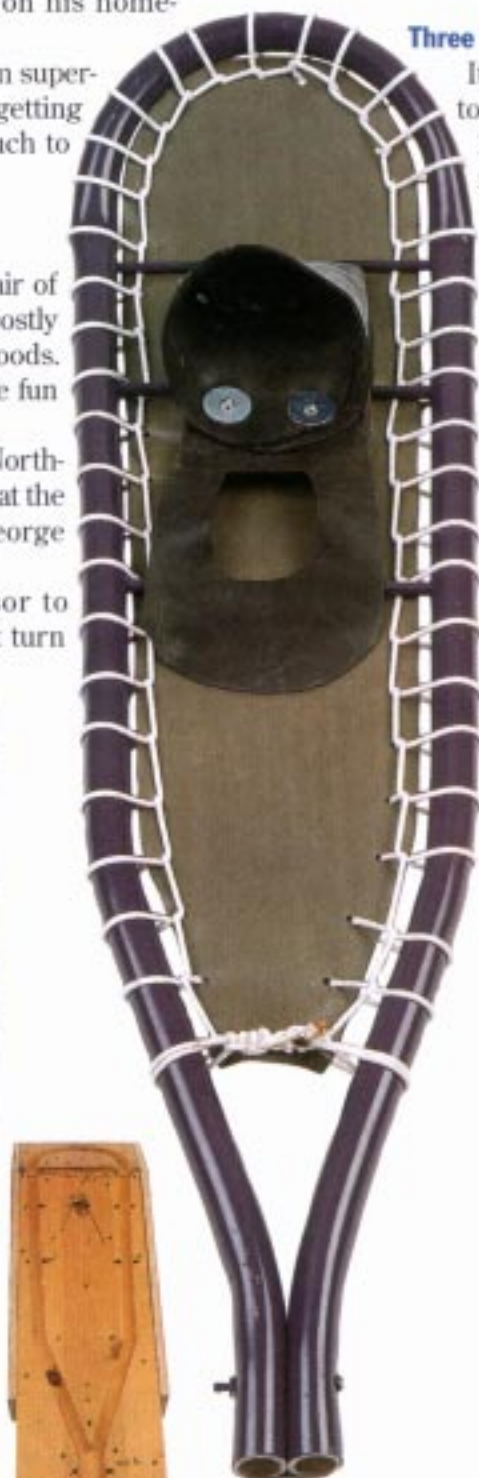
"Don't leave them white," he explains, "so they won't get lost in the snow."+



1 Heated sand gets poured into the length of PVC pipe that Derek Jenkins holds.



2 The hot sand softens the PVC so that David Newell can fit it in the wooden jig. After the sand cools, the pipe keeps its new shape. Compressed air forces out sand for reheating.



3 Richard Parsons, left, and James Chagon fasten the snowshoe frame's back end with bolts and nuts.



4 Chris Jenkins carefully laces webbing to frame during final assembly. Next step: snowy trails!

START WITH A PLAN

Ready to build some snowshoes? You can order the 35-page set of plans (good for one or 100 'shoes) from Venturing Crew 2222 for \$15. That covers expenses of producing the plans and helps pay for the crew's high-adventure outings. Any remaining money

goes to Troop 139 and the local BSA council.

For plans, send a check payable to Explorer Post 2222 (as their bank account is set up) to:

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