

A Different Take on Winter

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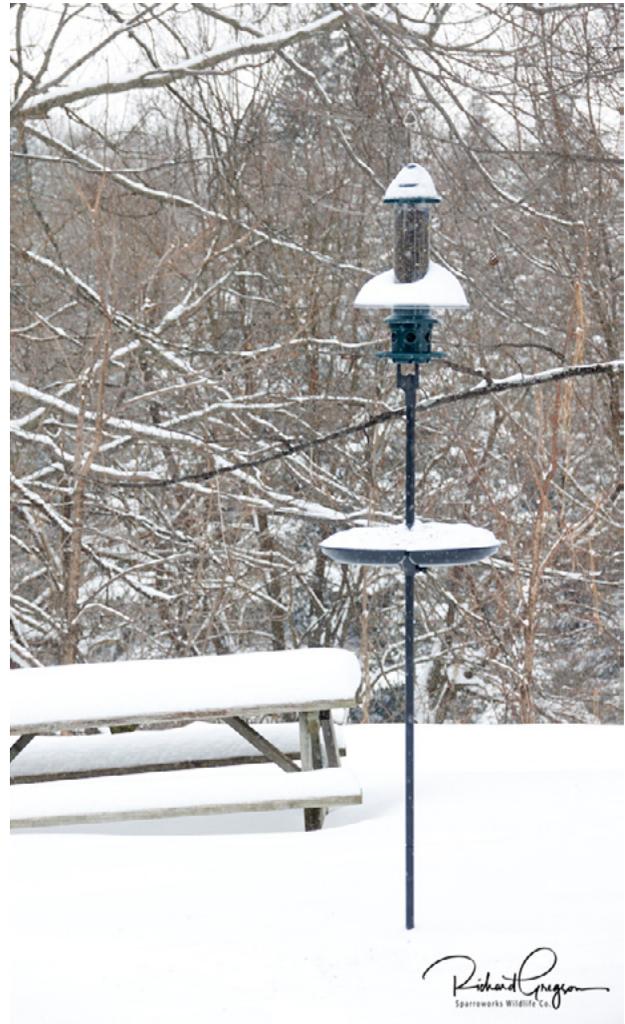
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As winter settles in, the temperatures drop, the snow piles up and there is a great lull. A “battening down of the hatches” occurs, so to speak, and we prepare to endure whatever winter has in store for us. This endurance manifests itself in many ways: a Netflix-inspired semi-dormant retreat into the sofa; for students, the McGill library and a mountainous workload provide all the necessary inspiration for hibernation; whereas for some, enduring winter looks like a plane ticket to Hawaii. Regardless of one’s preference, the accompanying tonic of choice is almost always grumpy grumbling about how hard it was to drive in forty-plus centimetres of snow, how one’s beard froze their lips shut in minus forty degrees or how no footwear properly survives slush, even Uggs. Justifiable grumbings in many cases, except...when at the Arboretum.

At the Arboretum, snow is gleefully anticipated, and the more the better. Back in November, Ski Patrol Team Leader, Robert Prairie, looked me straight in the eye and declared quietly and seriously “They are forecasting twenty-five centimeters of snow next Tuesday”. As he said this, his eyes lit up in flashes of fiery excitement like I rarely see. Frankly, I thought November was a tad early for twenty-five centimeters of snow, and most people cringe at the thought of an impending snow storm, but not Robert, nor any of the Arboretum skiers.

Members regularly drop by the office and say with giddy excitement “Thirty centimeters of snow coming tonight! Ten the next day, can’t wait!”. Better yet, I’ll be in before dawn with the snow removal teams and a member will arrive. “Heck of a storm last night, am I right?” they say cheerfully, (Arboretum members are nicest people you’ve ever met). “Yessir” I’ll respond “Have a great time snowshoeing!”. All the while I’d be thinking, “How did you even get here, none of the highways are clear... and you drive a Toyota Camry!?”.

Arboretum volunteers are no different. George Panciuk leads the volunteers who maintain Arboretum bird feeders and no matter what the weather, they’ll be out there once a week, ladder in one hand and birdseed bucket in the other. With donations from Bird Protection Quebec and Brome Bird Care, these



The new feeders and accessories donated by **Brome Bird Care** stand tall on poles and anchors provided by **Bird Protection Quebec**.

Photo: Richard Gregson

volunteers have replaced all of the Arboretum feeders with beautiful new feeders this January. “It’s a cold one” is something George would say with a big grin “But that’s OK”. He never seems that cold or bothered by anything. Maybe all it takes to warm up is watching tiny hardy Black-capped Chickadee feeding on the seeds you’ve brought them. Then again, with a heart as big as George’s, no wonder he’s always warm.

The Arboretum has no hibernation period. Winter is actually one of our busiest times. The ski trails are open, including our new Skate-Ski trail, the Snowshoe trail is better than ever, and there’s a bunch of activities going on all winter including Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Winterfest, Sugaring Off afternoons, March Break Activities and plenty more. Check out the [Arboretum website](#) or follow the [Facebook page: Friends of the Morgan Arboretum](#) for more information.