

Calendar of Events

Monthly Club Meeting
Jordan Community Center
Tuesday, Feb. 3rd at 7:00
P.M.

Great Eastern Whiteout
Warm Up
6:00-10:00 P.M.
Friday, Feb. 6th

Great Eastern Whiteout
Vintage Show & Races
Rolling Wheels Raceway
Saturday, Feb. 7th

Great Eastern Whiteout
Vintage Ride leaving from
Rolling Wheels Sun. Feb 8th
9:00 A.M.

Amsoil Eastern National
Snocross at Fingerlakes
Gaming Center
Feb. 13th -15th

Port Byron Curley Maple
Classic Sled Drag
Feb. 14th

Ridge Runners Spaghetti
Supper on Feb. 14th

IMSA Take a Friend
snowmobiling week starts,
Feb. 14th

Cayuga County Association
Ride – South on Feb. 15th

Ohio Ridge Runners Annual
Fun in the Field Day
on Feb. 15th

Cayuga County Association
Ride – North on Feb. 28th

Weedsport Winter Wanderers

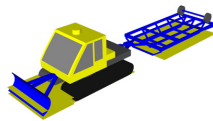
Snowmobile Club Founded 1971

January Newsletter

Welcome:

You can find us on the web at www.weedsportwinterwanderers.org
This is a change from the address listed incorrectly in last month's newsletter.

The month of January has been a busy one. Our chicken barbeque was a great success. Even as cold as it was, lots of people, riders & vintage sleds showed up. Everyone seemed to have a great time, some beautiful sleds were on display, and we sold 450 chicken dinners as well as lots of hot dogs, hamburgers & raffle tickets. A **BIG** thank you goes out to all the club members, spouses and children that helped make it so fun and well organized. A special thanks to Dave Tripp of Owen's Orchards for the use of his fine facility.



The groomers are up and running, we are testing a loaner drag behind the Kubota at this time. Larry Olivia and the operators are evaluating it as compared to some other types. Hopefully over the next two weeks we can get plenty of use out of it. The guys over at the groomer barn have been working hard to keep everything repaired & running. We found out the hard way that the diesel tank in the groomer barn is contaminated with bad fuel and are working on a solution. We work on the groomers every Wednesday night at 7:00 P.M. and are always looking for help. Also anyone wanting to train on the groomers to be an operator, please contact Larry Olivia. Currently there are only 4 active groomer operators, we need more help to keep our trails in top condition.

The Great Eastern Whiteout is our next large event, February 6th – 8th at Rolling Wheels Raceway. Hopefully there will be lots of vintage sleds on display, vendors & parts, as well as sleds on the ice oval.



Rob Weatherstone and his crew are already working hard on the track to make sure there is plenty of ice for racing. As this is a very large event we are asking for everyone's help, so

if you can volunteer even a few hours that weekend it would be appreciated. There are all kinds of things to do and lots of help needed. Anyone willing to help; contact Joe Rachael or any of the club officers.

NYSSA has been working on their new website and it is currently up and running. They have lots of good info. on the site including links to many other club websites. Contact them thru the link on our website or go to <http://www.nyssnowassoc.org/>

Club Webpage

Donna Arpino, our webmaster, has been working hard on our new website. If it's been awhile since you have checked out our website, you just might be surprised at how informative it is with lots of exiting news and photos.

Club officers name and contact information is there as well as large calendar of events. You can list snowmobile related items for sale, find stolen sled alerts & updates on trail info.

Contact Donna at darpino@weedsportwintewanderers.org

On a personal note, John Arpino has stepped down as Trail Coordinator, effective immediately. John has done an outstanding job making sure our trails were ready for the riding season and he continues to help wherever possible. Thank you John for your dedication and hard work. Anyone interested in helping with the trails or a trail related question, contact a club officer or email John at snow@weedsportwintewanderers.org

Safety on the trails is our number one concern. Recently we had a rider hurt on one of our trails and was taken to a local hospital. Please obey the signs on the trails and be alert to hazards in and around the trail. Conditions change daily and the ride you took last week may have a different ending this week. If you should come upon a bridge or any other part of the trail needing maintenance, please bring it the attention of one of the club officers for immediate attention.

2009 maps of the Central NY trails including our trail system are available for sale. You can purchase them at Bibbens Sales, Jordan Big M or from the membership secretary Kim Rinaldo.

Raffle ticket sales are going well for the 2 sleds and four wheeler. Please bring any sold or unsold tickets to the February meeting and give them to Steve Baird. We are close to the break even point and are hoping to sell more at the Great Eastern Whiteout. If you haven't already purchased your ticket, time is running out.

Vintage Calendar

*Boonville Snow Festival
Boonville Fairgrounds
Jan. 31st – Feb. 1st*

*Great Eastern Whiteout
Vintage Show & Race
Feb. 6 Warm Up
Show & Race at Rolling Wheels
Raceway Feb. 7th*

*Vintage Snowmobile Triathlon
Drag, Oval & Cross Country
Race
Feb. 14th Ulysses, PA*

*Annual Party & Vintage Ride In
Feb. 14th Edinburg, NY*

Vintage Corner

We are going to add a Vintage section to our newsletter, hopefully some will enjoy it. If you have any suggestions, comments for something you would like to see, please let us know.

The 1974 Arctic Cat Panther VIP

David Wells

Snow Goer

In early 1972, I had the opportunity to ride a brand new Arctic Cat Panther 440 that looked externally just like any other '72 Panther. But under the hood, this Panther didn't have the usual clutches and drive belt. Instead it had a little automatic transmission — the same type found in automobiles — that used fluid to transmit energy within the device.

It was smooth, quiet and behaved just like any other Panther, seamlessly rolling off idle and cruising smoothly. I thought this was an interesting idea, as drive clutches and drive belts were notorious weak links in all the snowmobiles of the day. Maybe this was the key to power transmission reliability that the snowmobile industry desperately needed.

A few months later Arctic Cat was talking about a forthcoming new model, the 1973 Panther VIP. It would be a fully-loaded, top-of-the-line luxury sled featuring the automatic transmission.

Something Special

Promoted as “a machine built only for the man who recognizes and appreciates unqualified excellence,” the VIP was much more than just a 1973 Panther with a few add-ons.

The new Cat-A-Matic hydrostatic transmission was the centerpiece. Engineered by Kawasaki specifically for this application, the new fluid drive was said to virtually eliminate transmission service problems and provide constant torque to the track under all snow and terrain conditions. The fluid coupling isolated the driveshaft from the crankshaft, thereby eliminating a source of vibration. And with no exposed moving parts, it was also said to be safer for users.

Power came from an upgraded Kawasaki 440 axial fan (“the D model”) that featured oil injection, a huge convenience previously exclusive to Yamaha snowmobiles. The VIP also had capacitor discharge ignition (CDI) with surface gap spark plugs that were said to virtually eliminate fouling, another significant problem of the era. This ignition technology, which also eliminated the tuning and occasional problems with breaker points, was just starting to make inroads in the sport and was already available on other Cat models. Electric start was standard equipment on the VIP instead of a dealer-installed option for the first time on any Cat.

Full instrumentation including speedometer, odometer, tachometer and dual cylinder head temperature gauges was also included and space for an optional cigar and cigarette lighter was provided on the dash. The VIP retained all the normal 1973 Panther features like a kill switch, non-slip footrests, new fully enclosed hood for noise reduction and new internal drive 2/3-cleated track that promised to reduce cleat breakage as well as put more power on the ground. It was all topped off by Arctic's clearly superior and highly protective windshield, superb overall ergonomics and smooth-riding, slide rail suspension.

This engineering tour-de-force was wrapped in a new color and trim execution of the standard Panther exterior. A rich chocolate brown base color set the tone, with a wood-grained dash and gold filigree trim decals on the hood. Even the traditional leopard print seat cover was discarded in favor of a simple brown one. Details like the color stripe in the front bumper and the handlebar pad were also design coordinated. Finishing touches included chrome ski shocks — instead of the black ones on the standard Panther — and a personalized nameplate on the dash for owners who ordered their VIPs in advance.

Although six prototypes were built for the 1973 season, delays piled up upon delays. Eventually the 1973 Panther VIP became the 1974 Panther VIP. Nothing changed except the model year.

The Tail Of The Top Cat

Buyers receiving their VIPs began to discover some less-desirable aspects of the sled. They already knew it was really expensive. At a time when snowmobilers could still buy a decent snow machine for less than \$1,000 — few models topped the \$1,500 mark — the VIP went for close to two grand, a ton of money for something frivolous like a snowmobile.

The brown Cat was also “Oh my God” heavy due to the weight of the transmission, electric start, oil injection and other extras piled onto what was already a big, hefty sled.

“It was a dog,” said a dealer who must remain anonymous. The prodigious poundage overwhelmed the modest available power, restraining the VIP to fairly sedate performance on the trail. It wasn't as bad as the now-forgotten 1972 four-stroke Panther 305, but it wasn't going to give anybody whiplash, either. And many owners experienced fluid leakage problems with the automatic tranny, too.



Snow Goer

Still, Arctic built and sold almost 4,000 of these big brown beasts in the one model year that it was available to the public.

Much of the relatively unique technology in the VIP was shelved, at least temporarily. The Cat-A-Matic fluid transmission never saw the light of day again. Too heavy and too expensive, advancements in clutch and belt technology rendered it unnecessary. Oil injection didn't appear again on another Arctic Cat until the 1979 Trail Cat, and it took even longer before another full-production Cat had electric start installed at the factory.

CD ignition became an industry standard, but without the surface gap spark plugs. The brown color scheme re-appeared on some later Cat models like the Panteras and Cheetahs, but never really caught on with the snowmobiling public no matter how hard Arctic and some other manufacturers pushed it.

Many VIPs were stashed away in barns and sheds in good condition with relatively few miles on them. Because of relentless searches from vintage enthusiasts, they are now emerging more often at snowmobile shows as these collectors rediscover this unique and interesting Cat.

1974 Arctic Cat Panther VIP

Manufacturer: Arctic Enterprises, Inc., Thief River Falls, Minnesota

Powertrain Specs

Engine: Kawasaki T1B440D1A axial fan-cooled piston-port twin with chrome-lined cylinders

Displacement: 436cc

Carburetion: One Walbro diaphragm pumper

Compression Ratio: 6.8:1

Ignition: Capacitor Discharge (CD) with surface gap spark plugs

Lubrication: Oil injection

Power Output: 36 hp

Exhaust: Single pipe into Arctic muffler

Transmission: Kawasaki Cat-A-Matic hydrostatic drive

Chassis Specs

Type: Riveted aluminum with welded steel sub-frame, aluminum belly pan and fiberglass hood

Weight: 430 pounds

Front Suspension: Single leaf springs with chromed hydraulic shock absorbers

Ski Stance: 26 inches

Rear Suspension: Aluminum slide rails with adjustable torsion springs and hydraulic shocks

Track: 17-inch wide internal drive fiberglass-reinforced tri-belt with 2/3-width hot-rolled steel cleats

Brake: Mechanical disc with parking brake

Fuel Capacity: 6.25 gallons

Standard Equipment: Personalized owner nameplate, electric start, speedometer with odometer, tachometer, dual cylinder head temperature gauges, wood grain dash, fuel gauge, model-specific handlebar pad and seat cover, kill switch, console storage compartment, tow hitch

Options: Cigarette lighter, rear view mirror, compass

Price: \$1,895 MSRP This article was reprinted from Snow Goer magazine.



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The Panther VIP was the first Cat application of oil injection. Full instrumentation included gold-trimmed head temperature gauges. Louvers on the side of the bellypan aided cooling to the unique Cat-A-Matic hydrostatic transmission.

Please come and support your club at any of our functions, we need your involvement to help us grow and improve. See you next month, Steve Brown, Club Secretary. Contact me at snowsledder@hotmail.com

Remember to Respect the Landowners, stay on the trails, and please ride safe.