

Wana Bear Tales

Snowshoe and Charlotte Find a New Home

Wana Bear stretched. It was a good nap on Lookout rock in the warm spring sunshine. His stomach was full thanks to Rusty, who shared a big store of acorns, and a nearby dead log full of beetles. Now all he needed was a good drink of sap water. Hopefully Phil hadn't emptied the buckets yet. He decided to take the Yellow Trail down to the ropes course and then to the farmhouse lawn. There was still snow in places but it was much better than walking on the icy snowmobile road.



Just as he was coming out of the trail on to the camp road, he heard Rusty talking with Hootie up in the tree.

“Hootie, do you know where Wana is? We've got a terrible problem and I need Wana!”

Hootie was about to answer when Wana spoke up. “Rusty, what's the problem, I'm right here!”



“Oh Wana,” Rusty shouted as he ran down the tree and jumped on Wana's back. Then he climbed up and sat down on Wana's head between his ears. “Dusty and Karri have some white furry animal with big ears trapped in the brush behind the farmhouse and I think they hope to eat it.”

“Did you say white, with big ears?”

“Yup, big ears and large feet. Never seen anything like it.”

“Sounds like a snowshoe hare,” replied Wana.

“Never heard of it, but whatever it is, it's about to be eaten,” Rusty commented.

“Well, that's not good, show me where they are.”

“You better hurry, or it will be one dead snowshoe hare. They're in the field beyond the farmhouse.”



“Well hang on, little buddy.” Wana took off in a dead run, racing across the parking lot, almost running over Ray and Beth who were out walking. “Sorry guys, I'm in a hurry,” Wana called back over his shoulder. Down in the back corner of the snow-covered field, Dusty and Karri were closing in on the white ball of fur.

Coming to a sliding stop, and sending Rusty flying into the air and landing right in front of the hare, Wana bellowed, “Don't you even think about it. That creature is very rare, so leave it alone!”



Dusty and Karri stopped, almost in mid leap. "We found it up on the back side of the hill on the snowmobile trail. When it saw us, it took off and so we figured it was up to no good. Strangers can be dangerous."

"No worry there," Wana said, "I'm glad to see it. I haven't seen one in years, they died off years ago. I thought they were gone for good"

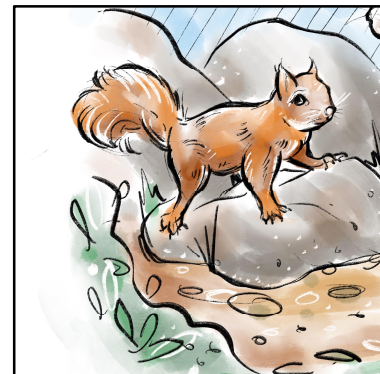


Wana turned and stepped closer to the hare, "Well hare, what do you have to say for yourself?"

The hare just stared at Wana and the foxes, ears twitching and shaking with fear

Rusty said, "Wana, it's not going to say anything as long as you big guys are around. Why don't you go over to the Giant's Ladder. Let me talk. I am small and I think it might talk with me. Besides I am right here next to it, thanks to you. You didn't need to stop so fast."

"Good idea, come on Dusty and Karri, let's leave it to Rusty."



As they were leaving, Hootie who had been watching everything from a nearby tree said, "Looks like we need a team meeting. I'll find TK and send out the call."

"Do it!" said Wana, as the three headed for the Giant's Ladder.

As Hootie took off, Rusty turned to the hare and said, "You're safe, no one will hurt you. So first tell me your name and why you are here."

The hare looked at Rusty and asked, "Are you sure? You're not afraid of those guys? Bears, foxes and owls are all your friends, and you talk to each other?"

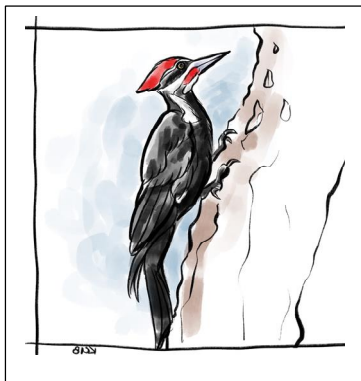
"Yup, we are and we do," replied Rusty. "This is Wanakee and everyone is safe here, humans and animals. Now how about you answer my questions."



"Wanakee? You said this is Wanakee? Then I am here! I had heard a rumor that Wanakee was a safe place. I can start a family here with Charlotte, my mate. Wow, I can't believe it!"

Rusty, scratching his ear, said, "Then welcome, glad you made it safely, but still no name. What do I call you? Hare, Snowshoe, or what?"

"Let's make it Snowshoe since I am the first hare here. Now, I have got to go find Charlotte. It shouldn't take long."



Just then the camp bell started to ring, "What's that?" asked Snowshoe.

Hootie had just returned and had heard Snowshoe's name. "Relax," said Hootie, "that's TK letting the others know we have a meeting in a few minutes. And don't worry about finding your mate. I met Charlotte and she is right behind me. Look up toward the road and you will see her."





Snowshoe ran to meet her. "We made it. This is Wanakee. We are safe."

"I'm not so sure," Charlotte said shaking her head, "If you look up you will see you two bald eagles, and that bell ringer is a big red headed bird of some kind, and while this owl seems to be friendly, I am not convinced that we are safe. She told me a bear is in charge."

Looking at Charlotte, Rusty said, "Hi I'm Rusty, I live here with all these animals, and more too, and we are all friends. Give us a chance and we will prove it. Now come on, let's meet the Wanakee team."

Hootie took off and Charlotte and Snowshoe followed Rusty into the woods where they met everyone except Bucky and Bea Beaver. There was still too much ice on the lake for them to make it.



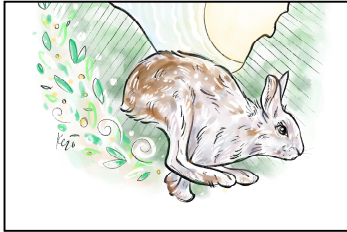
Rusty spoke up, "Everyone, this is Snowshoe and Charlotte. I have just learned that they are hares, and because of their big feet, they are called snowshoe hares. They have come here to raise a family."

As the shouts of welcome died down, Wana Bear said, "Welcome, Snowshoe and Charlotte. It has been a long time since a hare has lived here. In fact I think I am the only one who remembers having one here. I know disease was hard on your folks, as well as more humans moving in, and who knows what else. There were no hares for a long time, so your arrival is good and we will help you all we can. I know you will be able to find a safe place to stay. For tonight, Rusty can show you a wood box and tomorrow you will be able to find your new home."





Hester Skunk looked at Charlotte and asked, "How come you are half brown and half white and Snowshoe is all white?"



Charlotte said, "Thanks for asking. We change colors, we are white in the winter and brown in the summer. It makes us a little harder to see. We are glad to be here, but it will take some time if we are ever to fully trust you. Half of you creatures like to have us for lunch so I hope you will understand."

"Yes," said Karri. "We understand. I'm sorry it looked like we were attacking you."

As the meeting ended, everybody started to head to their homes for it was growing dark. Rusty and Wana Bear walked the hares to the wood box and wished them good night. Before Wana headed up the hill and Rusty to his favorite spot under lower cabin in site seven. Wana stopped and took a drink of sap and set the bucket on the ground. "There, that will give Phil something to think about."



As they were parting Rusty asked, "Wana, how fast were we going when we passed Ray and Beth?"

"Fast," Wana chuckled. "Scared them, didn't we? Good night Rusty and thanks for all you did. You saved those two hares. See you in the morning and thanks again for all the acorns."



Kari Cadenhead is the illustrator

Ed. note. Black bears, although big, can run fast. I am told up to 30 miles per hour. What we call snowshoe rabbits are really hares. They are a completely different species from rabbits.

In this story you have met several of Wanakee's furry and feathered friends. They are a team dedicated to keeping Wanakee and the lake a place of peace and safety.

Wana Bear is a big old black bear who lives on the back side of Look Out Hill. He has been around for as long as I can remember and his calling from God is to watch out for all who come to Wanakee. He makes sure that all are safe and protected.

Hootie Owl is the sky patrol. She flies over Wanakee making note of all that is happening and if a need arises, she reports to Wana Bear.

Dusty and Karri Fox are the ground patrol and have the same responsibilities as Hootie. Their winter home is under the Rec Hall.

Bucky and Bea Beaver are water patrol and have the same responsibilities as Hootie and the Foxes. They report to Wana Bear through Hootie.

Amos and Gloria Raccoon and their family are guardians of the director's house and live close by.

Tree Knocker, the Pileated Woodpecker known as **TK**, is the alarm ringer either in the trees or the camp bell if necessary.

Wesley Groundhog lives under the Barn and helps keep the grass down in Family Camp.

Hester Skunk wanders around keeping unwanted humans away from camp. She lives under the Farmhouse during the off season.

Rusty Squirrel is a friendly little rascal who calls the lower cabin in Site 7 his home.

Baldy Eagle is now a member of the team. He has recently mated with **Rachel** and have made their nest high in one of the pine trees on Monkey Island.

