

Cold weather doesn't mean all spots are safe for a skate

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Recent winter storms and cold temperatures have helped form ice over North Jersey lakes, making them ideal for skating, fishing, and other winter recreation.

But the snowfall in some areas of [Bergen County](#) has also prevented smaller ponds from opening for ice skating.

“We have to have several days of sustained below-freezing weather, and we also need to have days when we are not getting snow,” said Debora Davidson, director of education at the [Tenafly](#) Nature Center, where a pond hasn't open this season, or last. “If you have snow on the pond, it can actually prevent the ice from becoming thicker.”



AMY NEWMAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Wolfgang Albrecht, left, director of parks for Bergen County, decided it was too warm on Sunday to allow skating on Wild Duck Pond.

On Sunday, [Bergen County](#) officials measured the ice over the Wild Duck Pond at [Saddle River](#) County Park. Although the ice was nine-inches thick, officials kept the pond off-limits to skaters.

Wolfgang Albrecht, head of the county's parks department, said while five inches is the required minimum, other factors are considered.

“Given the temperatures, it was too warm,” he said. Temps hovered around 40 degrees Sunday.

Albrecht said the warm temperatures kept county ponds in [Glen Rock](#) and [Wallington](#) closed. Both have been open at times this season.

[Ridgewood](#)'s Twinney Pond has been open to skaters for the past several days, according to the town's website, but King's Pond and Graydon Pool — also in Ridgewood — have been closed.

Timothy Cronin, Ridgewood's director of Parks and Recreation, said the ponds need at least six inches of ice before officials consider opening them.

Cronin said the snow and freezing rain in recent storms hasn't helped.

"You need cold temperatures, no snow, so you can get that clear ice to form," Cronin said. "Snow is an insulator; it insulates the ice, so when you have snow over the ice, it melts the ice." Officials said they post signs when both county and municipal ponds are closed.

But it's been a good winter for recreation enthusiasts at [Ringwood](#) State Park, where Shepherd Lake has been open nearly every day for anglers since mid-December, said Kristen Brandt, visitor service assistant at the park.

"We will get the die-hard people who go out there in all kinds of weather," she said.

She said the park doesn't measure the ice, a responsibility that falls on the users of the lake

Andrew and Barbara Goranson and their son, Connor, of [Closter](#) were among the anglers at the lake Sunday. Wearing warm clothes and carrying their gear, which included barbecue equipment, the Goransons said they've been out to the lake at least four times this season and that the weather has been perfect.

"We've had so many days that it's been below freezing," said Barbara Goranson, who often checks websites to make sure conditions are safe.

Before venturing out onto the ice, Andrew Goranson pulled out an auger from his car which he uses for both drilling and to measure the ice's thickness. He said the last time they were at the lake the ice was a solid 12 inches.

The couple said they also enjoy cross-country skiing and snow shoeing around the lake.

"All of our friends think we are crazy," Barbara Goranson said of their ice-fishing hobby. "But we love it. We are outside, and it's a good family activity."

In [West Milford](#), snowmobiles were cruising on Greenwood Lake Sunday, and a handful of anglers could be seen at nearby Monksville Reservoir. Larry Hanja, spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Protection, said skating is not permitted on the reservoir and that fishing is allowed, at the person's "own risk."

Albrecht, of [Bergen County](#), said he will notify residents on the county's website when ponds are open for skating.

"The season is young, and there will be cold weather in coming days and we will have skating again," Albrecht said.

The National Weather Service is forecasting highs near 40 with a small chance of rain Monday, but is expecting a blast of cold air from Canada that will bring below-freezing weather from Wednesday through Friday, said Meteorologist David Stark.

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