

Wonderful Fall Day

Since I joined the YMCA (Anyone Feel like dancing here???, not me thanks!), Thursdays has been one of the days I stop after work to get a little exercise in. Today I just could not see dropping in. It was just too nice out. Still I needed to get a little exercise in and still enjoy the fall evening.

My youngest and I took a quick trip to [Harrison Lake State Park](#) and took a stroll around the lake. Roughly 3.5 miles of hiking. Not a bad way to spend the afternoon. There was a cross-country meet going on, so we had to find an out of the way spot to finally park. We were able to avoid most of the runners (not get in their way) and we had a good time walking.

The walk around the lake reminded me of the last time I took the full trip around the lake. It was quite a few years ago. My daughters always liked picnics at the park for birthdays and such. Since 3 out of 4 were born in months when picnics are in season, we did it quite often. Harrison Lake was one of the many parks we went to (They have swimming there). My wife and I made the trip around that lake once. That was some 15 or 16 years ago. I'm not sure why we never made the walk again, but we didn't. I remember that walk because I had 1 of my daughters in a baby carrier on my back. One of the best ways ever devised to carry children (except for the hair pulling). When the 2 in the middle were young enough, I remember having one in the back pack and one in a front carrier. That actually made it easier to walk. More balance.

Anyway back to the first walk some years ago. I remember we didn't know the park very well, and at one point we thought we were going through peoples' back yards. At the time we may have been, but as of today, the park seems to own most of the trail around the lake. There were two stretches of the walk when we had to walk on the roads around the park. Slight safety issue for those trying this walk with children, but it

is minimized.

One more thing on the runners, that will never be me...

Watchout for falling rocks

In the State of Utah, a rock arch in [Utah's Arches National Park](#) collapsed. Now I never have been to the state of Utah, and therefor have never been to this park. From pictures I have seen, it looks like a place I would like to visit. The pictures made me think of one of my favorite places that I've ever been is in South East Ohio. A wonderful State Park area called [Hocking Hills](#). As a family we've had many great vacations there.

The story of the collapsing arch, made me remember the rock falls around the hiking trails of Hocking Hills. Going back time after time, you can see how the rock falls change the area. Trails are closed or rerouted and each trip can be different than the last.

The thing is that even with this arch fall, people didn't see it happen. With all the times at Hocking, I never saw a rock fall but have seen the results. I know people do occasionally see them, most of the time they fall unnoticed. I would like to talk to someone who saw a large rock fall.

One thing I just thought about was the fact that these rock falls occur quite often, but people will go right to the edge of the cliffs, even if they don't know what is or what isn't under them. Oh well, I guess if they haven't seen a rock fall, they don't know the danger the could be in. And I guess I never saw anyone fall off either.

Signs of Spring

Have you noticed that spring is in the air? At least in NW Ohio it is. Warmer temperatures, spring flowers blooming, and of course the robins are back.

Being a country boy, I look for a few different signs of spring than most. I noticed that the vultures are circling road kill again. The ducks and geese are congregating in the flooded fields. Animals are out scrounging for food after a having a harder time of it in the winter. And of course the chorus of frogs in and around this areas ponds and swamp area.

I live on the outer edge of what used to be [the Great Black Swamp](#). To the south and east was the main portion of this swamp that covered most of the area around Toledo and Bowling Green Ohio. I live in an area with more high ground than they have in the areas east. There are still places to find some of the swamp that was NW Ohio.

The acreage around my house is one of those places. Just north, as in a few hundred yards, of my house there is about a 6-10 acre area of swampland. This used to be my parents property. I spent many a day in high school trying to explore it. One very hot and dry summer, I was able to make my way deep into the heavy brush. If I could have gotten my hands on a machete, I would have blazed a good path through it. Even without rain for most of that summer, there were still places in that swamp that held a foot or so of water. From what I could tell the deepest parts of the swampland may only be 3 feet deep. These were little pockets about 3 or 4 feet in diameter. My guess is that there were large trees there at one point, and they were blown over by the wind or fell with age. I really don't know since I don't remember seeing any downed

trees.

This small swamp holds a variety of small animals. Mostly frogs and toads, but there are snakes and salamanders, birds of all sorts, various members of the rodent family (Large rat with bushy tale type), raccoons, possums, fox, rabbits, muskrats, deer and of course the insects, lots and lots of insects. Seeing these animals out and about more than usual is a good sign that spring finally made it to NW Ohio. They tend to be less visible in the winter, and when the leave finally fill the trees, they are harder to spot as well. So spring in the swamp is the time to see the wildlife come to life.

Where can you go to see it? Well there is a new state wildlife area (Williams Co Rd J between Co Rds 8 and 9. This is an old stone quarry that is now a fishing and wildlife area. I have been able to see many animals in the early morning or dusk around here. It is only open during daylight hours. You want to be careful because it is a public hunting area (check local hunting seasons) And of course you don't want to bother the fishermen/women. Other good spots are [Goll Woods](#) in Fulton County, [Independence Dam State Park](#) near Defiance OH, Toledo area Metro Parks. The [Toledo area parks](#) are wonderful. It is worth the time (if you are ever in the area) to check them out.