

November 25, 2007

Trip Report - Effigy Mounds National Monument

Marquette, IA

Hikers: Vicky, Greg, Andy, Dahly, Jane, Amy, Brady, Tyler, Ted, Tom, and Barb, and Cooper

We met at noon for the hike. The Visitor Center and museum is worth visiting. They have a replica of an Eagles nest outside the building... Man...! It was huge! There's also a shedded snake skin inside from a large "black snake". I saw one once a few years ago here... I wonder if it was the same one?

The trail starts out heading up the hill immediately. I don't know about anyone else, but I was gasping for air on this hill. The railings along the steep parts were made of branches and small trees... Very cool! At the top, there were a variety of effigy mounds, many sizes and shapes. I particularly enjoyed the Great Bear mound. To see and experience the history of the area is truly amazing. There were mounds along the whole trail along the top of the river bluff. Some of the mounds are 2500 years old! How awesome is that?!

The trail itself is very well maintained, and an easy walk through the park. The interpretive signs along the trail helped us learn about the area. We enjoyed the overlooks, even though the weather was a little windy and gray. The sun peeked out briefly once or twice, but it was hiding the rest of the time. At the Twin Views overlook, an eagle took off and soared along the edge of the cliff, right past us. Everyone was speechless for a moment as it glided by, above the Mississippi River.

Brady found a tree stump with a hole in the middle... Hmmm... A toilet Tree? Amy was so proud of her son... What a great sense of humor! Newlyweds Andy and Daly enjoyed the romantic overlooks. Tyler did a great job, setting a quick pace at the head of the group, even with a bad cold. Ted got excited to see a large SUV enter the parking lot, but was disappointed when it wasn't his buddy, Jerry. Jane, who is used to hiking in the mountains on a weekly basis, enjoyed the trail, was barely warmed up when we quit. Greg gave Tom the thumbs up on the new 12-string guitar Tom got for his 50th birthday this week, and the 2 swapped stories of music and guitars. Vicky teased Barb with stories of the Grand Cayman Islands that she visited last week. Who needs warm balmy breezes when you have 30 degree weather with a wind chill?!

We hiked as far as "Third Scenic View" overlook before turning back. We had intended to do the full trail (7 miles round trip), but with a couple of us fighting off severe colds, we decided not to push it. It was about 4 miles total for us, at least 2 hours, with stops at each overlook.

This was definitely one of the easiest trails we've done, even with the one big hill. We browsed the museum and gift shop after the hike, and then a few of us stopped at Latino's Restaurant in McGregor for a late lunch and beverage. Yum!

Here's some pics from the trail: Enjoy!

<http://community.webshots.com/album/561590176cwXdZr?vhost=community&start=12>

Barb

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Forestville State Park

Hikers: Jerry, Monica, Rebecca, Steve, Greg, Vicki, Michelle, Bob, Ted, Tom, Barb, and Cooper

Early in the week, the forecast predicted rain, but we sure lucked out! Clear blue skies, temps near 50, with a breeze that felt a little chilly in the open areas. We parked near the old Meighen Store, and walked past the historic buildings, stopping to see the foundation of an old house from the 1800's. We continued up the road to Sugar Camp Hollow Trail, passing by the spur trail to the old cemetery due to time constraints (for me). The trail follows a small creek along the bottom of the valley for a short ways before heading up and over a hill. We eventually swung back towards the creek again and had to cross the shallow water on flat rocks strategically placed as stepping stones. Cooper zipped back and forth through the water several times before we all made it across; almost like he was laughing at how slow we crossed! He's a happy dog by nature, but being in the woods makes him ecstatic!

After the stream crossing we had a steady climb for a few minutes, where everyone began to peel off their jackets towards the top. We made one out-and-back trip to the overlook above the old store, where we took a rest break for a few minutes. The leaves didn't have much color left, but the oak leaves that were still on the trees gave the valley a muted brownish orange tint... a subtle late fall color... Enough to cause a few Ooh's and Ahhh's from hikers. We also saw 2 eagles soaring on the breeze. Awesome!

We back tracked to the spot we veered off, and took the Oak Ridge Trail all the way back down to the South Branch of the Root River, stepping aside to let some horses pass mid way down. At the bottom, Cooper took the opportunity to dive in the river for a quick dip! When we reached the river crossing, we discovered the cement bridge slabs were under water, so we had to walk about 100 feet to a tree that had conveniently fallen across the river. It was actually 2 trees, and provided a very stable crossing point. Some crossed on one log, and some of us "balance-challenged" hikers used both logs to stay steady. We all made it across safely... Yeah!

When we got back to the cars, 2 people decided to continue the hike and explore the old cemetery and a couple others were going to take the tour of the historic buildings.

This is a very pretty park and the trails are fairly easy. Once again, it was great company, and a great hike!

Here's a link to some photos:

<http://community.webshots.com/album/561212190Tenhdd?vhost=community>

Barb

September 22, 2007

Wildcat State Park

Here's a trip report from Jerry (Thanks!) from our Sept. 22 hike at Wildcat State Park and a link to some photos. We took Mount Pisgah Trail, Ice Cave Trail, and Old Settlers Trail. LOVE THIS PARK!!!

Barb

Here's some pics:

<http://good-times.webshots.com/album/560834326DqKJrn?vhost=good-times>

What a great drive from Rochester to Ontario, WI was on Saturday Sep.22. Clear sunny day all the way. After leaving 190, I wound through farm country including a stretch where the Amish children were busy gathering and transporting corn on very large horse-drawn wagons. What a sight!

Camping at the park for the weekend in their new camper, Barb had said Tom was going to enjoy an equestrian outing with friends and it would be just she and I afoot on the trails. SO I was surprised to find them both in the park office area and ready to hike. The horsy plans changed so it was Tom, Barb, Cooper and I who had a fun trek about this very woods-like park.

Cooper is a fabulous mix of Lab and something else and he was off-leash to enjoy the park to his heart's content. He always returned and was polite when we came across a "Mini Cooper". The family who had Mini Cooper in tow were not as amused as we were with our tagging their dog with our newly minted name. Cooper was way less concerned about being on a ledge than Barb was for him. He sought out water and took a couple of dips followed by the obligatory shakeshakshake.

Being the rookie, I get to learn from Tom and Barb. This time they taught me that a little railing across a trail just meant that beyond it might be something worth seeing ~~ lesson learned.

We took one trail that didn't quite satisfy our need for activity so drove to another trail head that promised an ice cave. I think Tom and Barb were disappointed that it was more of a huge rock out cropping and not an entity to be crawled into. I was glad it could be observed from outside! Barb climbed atop it and gave an interesting pose which was captured on my camera. Barb especially appreciated a smell familiar to her of the newly fallen and slightly wet leaves.

When that short trail wasn't quite "it" for us, we drove to the camp office and took a 3rd trail. Near the end of that excursion which was somewhat longer and had several uphill inclines, Barb exclaimed that had she known how long it was, we wouldn't have taken the first two or something to that effect ~~ I'm not sure now why we laughed so hard about it at the time ~~ but we did!

There were some tall pines through which Barb took artsy-fartsy photos of the sun and at one point there was a great view of the Ontario. Tom always takes time to enjoy the views. Mosquitoes were a little extra pesky in spite of repellents.

Can't wait to do it again and hopefully Tyler, Ted, Joanne, Andy and new bride as well as others can join in the fun.

Jerry

Superior Hiking Trail Trip Report

Date: August 18th, 2007 10:30am - 5pm (6 1/2 hours!!!)

Hikers: Jerry, Joanne, Tyler, Ted, Tom, and Barb

Plus about 25 Superior Hiking Trail Association hike participants

Photos: <http://community.webshots.com/album/560430167JFLmaC?vhost=community>

We hiked from the wayside south of Split Rock Lighthouse State Park to north of Beaver Bay on a trip organized by the Superior Hiking Trail Association. I noticed several of the hikers had "Ironman" or "Marathon" T-shirts on... Which explains why I never saw them again once we left our cars at the parking lot.

It was a stunningly beautiful trail, with a variety of terrain. The trail was mostly passable, but there were spots that were treacherous with boulders and large rocks to scramble over (FUN!). We hiked up and down some major hills as we hiked up and over Lake Superior's famous "mountains" and ridgelines. WE LOVED THIS HIKE, but were utterly exhausted that night. The next day my calves were rather sore, but not too bad. As you will read below, Jerry learned the importance of consuming enough food and water for energy, and stretching and cool down to recover after a strenuous hike. Everyone wants to go again!

Barb

Here's Jer's trip report: (Thanks a bunch Jer!)

August, 18 2007.

One of my favorite parts of life is the digesting and processing an unusual experience.

Part of the process this past week reveals to me that this hiking trip was not so UN usual to most of those approximately 25 people who finished the II.3 "challenging rocky" trail hours ahead of me. Our volunteer "sweeper", Michael Pagelkoff, was the only person behind me for the last number of miles. My other good company included Barb, Tom and Ted ~~ I viewed all of them as my own personal angels.

We all found our way to the trail end, Beaver Bay for a 10AM shuttle-style departure to Split Rock Way Side, our trail head. The Schramm household and I rode together and flagged Joanne into the caravan from her place on Highway 61. Her drive from Duluth was more time consuming than planned. Thank God for cell phones!

Just as the last hike, I rarely looked up from the path on which I was walking, stumbling and eventually falling. Thanks Michael and Barb, they provided the "lot of help" I requested to get back on my feet.

Joanne was not slowed by her back brace and finished way ahead of the Liking Hiking pack.

The steepness of this trek had me "in over my head" early on. I found myself watching the Schramms, Ted and Tyler and just kept on keeping on.

Barb showed way too much energy in the great photos ~~ I didn't recall any point when I felt like throwing my hands over my head for a photo op on top of a boulder.

With Tyler, I had the pleasure?? of hiking as he finished a packet of tuna and continued to hold it in his hand for, I don't know how far. We did joke that a bear might think it was "already dead fish" and I put that out of my mind immediately. Tyler led me the right direction when we were atop a rock and I had no idea where to go ~~ he pointed out the trail marker and I gained a pearl from him. Thanks Tyler.

Ted read his map every inch of the way and I'm going to join him in that on our next outing. Ted started the trail with me and for my own personal reasons, that tickled me.

Tom serenaded Barb and they never seemed to run out of things about which to talk to each other.

As well, they seemed able to stop and enjoy the scenery ~~ I aspire to do that too.

Barb's encouragement of Ted demonstrated her Mother's love and special knowledge of her own child.

Terrain was rockrootrockrootrock and what seemed at times to be straight up and straight down. However you can see from the fabulous photos Barb shot, there was much more for a person to enjoy.

As a rookie hiker, my learning curve is very steep and several lessons were well learned.

1. EAT even when not feeling hungry.
2. Have EXTRA H2O so if you spill a bottle in your car on the way to the hike, there is still enough.
3. Stretch at the end.
4. Severe (pain-scale-10) cramps does not mean one's heart is going to fibrillate and stop at any moment ~~ it's probably just over use. You can learn that in the local ER if you are scared enough to take it that far!
5. I want to do this again and again!!!

With shared love,

Jer

July 29, 2007

Great River Bluffs

Here's a trip report for the July 29th hike at Great River Bluffs hike from Jerry (Thanks a bunch Jer!) and a link to some photos: <http://outdoors.webshots.com/album/560088925obhmVA?vhost=outdoors>

At the risk of this appearing to be all about me, let me qualify that I don't know enough about the noteworthy events of hiking to measure up to your standard of reporting ~~ yet.

As the newest member of Liking Hiking, I had the pleasure to meet up with Tyler, Ted, Barb, Tom, Andy and Joanne on July 8 for my maiden hike in Perrot State Park near Trempealeau WI. I'm hooked.

Being welcomed into this group was a delight as everybody included me in the circle of the already-acquainted. Barb's sons, Ted and Tyler are incredible pals, I'm grandma vintage to them and they could not have been more hospitable

So, that brings us to 28 July when nearly the same group met at Great River Bluffs State Park in SW MN. Joanne could not join us but we were treated with Brooke, cousin to Ted and Tyler.

Barb, Ted, Tyler and Brooke couldn't help themselves from a hike-before-the-hike while Tom tried to get some much deserved sleep before the remainder of the group arrived to roust him up for the hike

After slathering up with the obligatory sun screen and bug repellent we took to a trail past a toilet that stunk to high heaven. Tom would later try to tell Barb and me that it didn't smell inside. I laughed my head off, I'd been inside earlier!

Here's the rub, I will have to refer you to the official map available at the park entrance for the geology, vegetation and wild life we actually saw, I am still pretty much head-down, although in-awe that I'm really on the hike ~~ If I'm to continue to report, I will be paying more attention to the points of interest and convey them to you.

We took the obligatory photos and Barb did her always-appreciated artsy-fartsy gig behind the lens.

Ted did his best to help me learn to read the paper map and match them up with the posted ones on the trail.

We had a few great look outs including Kings Bluff and concluded about 2 hours later around 3:30PM.

Barb, Ted, Tyler and Brooke were troopers for their extended hiking and Tom gets a good-sport nod for being on the trail at all.

Andy and I were fresh and glad to be there.

There's exciting news of a Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA ~~ those initials make me laugh) event on 18 Aug, Contact Barb or visit their website for more information.

This gang is fun to hang out with and I'm so glad to be looking forward to many more hikes.

Jer

Trip reports: I've been negligent on getting trip reports out for the last 3 hikes, but here's some minimal details: April 29th at Whitewater State Park. Hikers: Denise and son, DaveW., Margo, Joanne, Andy, Trey, Tyler, Ted, Tom and Barb. We did a loooooong hike up and down the bluffs, with some treacherous stretches. It was fun and exhilarating! The leaves weren't out much yet, so you could see clearly for miles from the tops of the bluffs. June 3rd at Forestville. Hikers: Denise and son, Tyler, Ted, Tom and Barb. We hiked the cemetery trail, but had to cut our hike short due to the down pouring rain. We went back to tour the Historic town of Forestville. They have actors playing the part of townsfolk back in the early 1900's. One of our hiking members is one of the actors... COOL! July 8th at Perot State Park. Hikers: Andy, Joanne, Jerry, Tyler, Ted, Tom and Barb. Hot Hot Hot, but we took it slow and steady to the top of Brady's Bluff. Most everyone agreed that this was one of our favorites! Here's some pics:

<http://outdoors.webshots.com/album/559824081KCvgGB?vhost=outdoors>

<http://community.webshots.com/album/558876251wrsuAw?vhost=community>

March 17, 2007

CHESTER WOODS PARK, Eyota, MN

Hikers: Shawn, Steve, Amy, Andy, Tyler, Ted, Tom and Barb

Link to photos: <http://community.webshots.com/album/558223343pUnDxf>

(I hope this works better than sending as pics attachments... I had some problems with that!)

OoooooWeeeeeee What a beautiful day!!! I was a little worried about the ground conditions with all the snow melting, but it wasn't too bad. We started out from the fishing pier parking lot at noon on solid (frozen) ground, but returned through slush and puddles. It was in the mid-30's this afternoon with a very light breeze and lots of sun. Absolutely gorgeous!

The Dam Overlook Trail (1.2 miles) took us across a bridge, where we paralleled the lakes edge, but were up on top the hill for the first part of the hike. We took a brief stroll down the hill to the waters edge to check out the ice thickness. I know I heard "something" like a splash... It could have been a muskrat or maybe just the ice breaking up. The lake was still ice covered, with just a touch of water showing in some warmer spots.

We hiked back up the hill to the dam overlook. It's basically a strip of land that blocks Bear Creek (or is it Bear "Crick"?), and the water flows out on the other side of the dam, to form the creek again. It's neat to see how the lake was made.

We hiked down on the other side of the dam, and over the creek on a cement slab type bridge. We stayed in the valley on the South Sand Prairie Trail (1.4 miles) all the way out. This led us through oaks and along the side of the valley, with gentle hills until the end, where we encountered a little steepness, before heading back down to the creek again. There was a small wooden bridge on that end, large enough to drive a vehicle across. We took a few different trails back, starting on the North Sand Prairie Trail, on the floor of the valley, until we decided to try and find the shortest route back (due to time constraints), heading up another steep hill to the Prairie Ridge Trail, which got us back to the Dam Overlook trail, and back to our vehicles.

There were nice benches positioned frequently along the route, which we took advantage of occasionally (especially at the top of the big hills!). We were out for about 3 hours, and hiked over 4 miles. We putzed whenever we felt like it, exploring interesting tree formations, checking out the deer and turkey tracks, and just enjoying the day. Great company... Great hike!

Barb

January 27, 2007

Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

Near Lanesboro, MN

Hikers: Sheila, Norm, Julie, Mike, Makaila, Shawn, Steve (and dog), Barb Tom, Mary, Joe (and puppy)

We had a fabulous hike at Eagle Bluff. I was excited to try out some new trails close to home, and they were awesome!!! Joe, the Executive Director of Eagle Bluff, led the hike, selecting trails he traverses regularly... Lucky guy! We met up in the parking lot by the main office at noon, and let the dogs get to know each other before heading out. The weather was around 15 degrees, with a wind in open areas. Once we were bundled up, we took off up behind the main building (north), past the old tree-tops ropes course, along a ridge and down into the valley. Once down the hill, we followed the river back (south) along the bluff, stopping below the parking lot. From this vantage point you could see the crumbling old power plant, usually only seen when canoeing on the river. It stands about 3 stories (?) tall, and towers along the bluff... Very unusual! We stopped for a photo op, and some hot cocoa. (The power plant is visible in the background of the group photo.) The hot cocoa was a special treat using my new Jetboil backpacking stove (love it!).

At this time, Mary and Steve (and 1 dog) left the group, heading straight up the bluff, back to the starting point. It looked very steep! The rest of the group backtracked (north) a bit until a split in the trail, where we followed the river to the right, heading northeast. This trail is a large loop along the river bottoms. This hike took us out of the wind for a while, and then back into it for a little bit, where scarves were pulled up to cover exposed skin on cheeks (for those of us without beards anyways!) There were so many neat things to see along this trail, but by far the coolest was the number of eagles we saw soaring above us or taking off from the trees near us. I think we saw at least 10 bald eagles on this trip.

About an hour into the hike, Joe gave us the choice of heading back or going a couple miles further. The group unanimously voted to keep going. This trail led us along the river again, and we saw a glimpse of an Indian burial mound across the river, through the trees. The river was frozen over in spots, but had a main channel open down the middle. We trekked over some ski tracks, which surprised us when we saw the tale-tell signs of side stepping up some very steep hills.

We eventually headed back up a hill at the end of the ridge, through a beautiful wooded area. This was my favorite part of the trail. Joe pointed out an old Fillmore County road that came up along the hillside. Was this an old stage coach road? Around this time, little 8 year old Makaila's legs starting giving out, so Tom and I took turns giving her piggy back rides up and back down the hill. We ended up at the Shiitake Mushroom demonstration building, slightly west of where we started. Sheila expressed gratitude for the hiking poles (ski poles) she borrowed from me, saying "I couldn't have done it without them!" Trekking poles really help when the trails are slippery! At the bottom of the hill, Joe called for transportation, which several of us willingly took up the big hill, back to our cars. The hike lasted about 3.5 hours, and was stunning. The company was fun, and we all shared stories of other hikes and times.

This is a definite "do-again" hike!

Oxbow Park

Jan. 6, 2007

Hikers: Linda, Amy, Gunnar and Jayne, Tyler, Trey, Andy, Joanne, Barb and Tom

Whoo hoo what a nice day! Is it really January? With weather in the 30's, we trotted off across the footbridge over the Zumbro River and into the woods around 1:20pm. We chose the trail that wound along the river instead of going up the hill into the wind. We encountered very few spots of mud or ice, and generally had dry trails.

It just felt so good to be out in the woods today! I would recommend this trail to anyone needing a "comfort" trail... No major hills and nice scenery! We visited the zoo, fox, raccoon, cougar, bear (hibernating), eagles, hawks, owls, deer, buffalo, elk, otter, coyote, wolves, porcupine, and other?

Then instead of taking the longer trail back, we took the trail that paralleled the road, and got back by 3:00. Since most of us had skipped lunch, we met at the Bears Den in Byron for food and beverages. Nice Day!!! Definitely check out these trails!!!

Barb