

Description: The term Hashawha is Native American for "Old Fields". This is a very apt term although there is also a fair amount of mature second growth timber in this 340 acre Environmental Education Center. Besides being the home to Carroll County's Outdoor School for sixth graders it offers the superb Bear Branch Nature Center with live exhibits, The Raptors' Mews, protecting injured specimens of Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Horned, Barred and Screech Owls, Eastern Kestrels and, I believe, a Sharp Shinned Hawk. As if that wasn't enough, approximately 6 miles of well marked trails await you. The trail system is laid out as an interconnecting series of loops allowing the hiker, mountain biker or cross country skier to customize their outing. The system interconnects with even more trails in the adjoining Union Mills Homestead. Described here is a 4.3 mile perimeter hike. For the most part the terrain is relatively rolling although there is one steep but short climb along the way. This might be avoided by utilizing a short section of the Union Mills trails but we've yet to confirm this.

The hike starts at the back of the Bear Branch Nature Center parking lot.

Trail Notes: Trails are marked with painted metal arrows on wooden posts.

From the parking lot descend down a wide gravel/asphalt trail to a large pavilion. Turn sharp right here and then make a left onto the white blazed Vista Trail. Climb gradually through a stand of hardwoods before walking through a pleasant pine grove. In 0.79 miles from the parking lot the trail makes a left turn and takes you to the Raptors' Mews. Here the Vista Trail continues straight and follows park road back to the Nature Center. Follow the green blazed Stream Trail. Turn right onto the road for just a short distance before turning right off of it at the Residential Complex boundary. Descend for 0.20 miles through the woods to the Martin Cabin (circa early 1800s). The Martins were the last folks to live here. According to Dawn Harry, Park Naturalist, when this area became a part of the Carroll County parks system in the 70s workers began demolishing what was then thought to be an old farm house but found the old cabin behind it. It is now in the process of being restored. The green trail continues past it. Turn right onto the beginning of the yellow blazed Wilderness Trails. There are four potential options although only three are labeled by the park. The longest is described here. After leaving the cabin climb slightly through another stand of pine and cross an open field. At 0.21 miles from the cabin the Loop 1 spur splits off to the left. Stay straight for 0.19 more miles. At this point you are on an old woods road. Loop 2 spur will go to the left. Stay straight again. Climb slightly before the trail turns left onto another old road and begins a gradual descent. In 0.08 miles another blazed but unnamed trail is on the left. This is the last chance to shorten the loop. Going straight for another 0.26 miles reach the boundary with Union Mills. Turn left onto a footpath but in a short distance turn left onto another old road. This is the Loop 3 option. This area appears to be an old field that is slowly reverting back to forest. Some saplings have been planted. In 0.24 miles the last spur rejoins the route. The trail then re-enters the woods and climbs a bit to follow picturesque Big Pipe Creek from above. Arrive at another boundary with Union Mills in 0.44 miles. Here the trail turns sharply to the left on a footpath nearly paralleling the old road you had been walking on before turning right and climbing steeply to the top of a hill. This section of trail is the only one marked with yellow paint. In 0.21 miles the Loop 2 spur comes in from the left. The Loop 1 spur joins from the left in 0.37 miles. At 0.25 miles the yellow blazed trail ends in an open field and the green Stream Trail comes in from the left and continues straight ahead. Pass through a small field with Bluebird boxes and in 0.41 miles from the last trail junction arrive at a clearing in the woods. There will be a green metal bridge as well as a cable bridge to the right over Bear Branch Run. There is also another green metal bridge straight ahead. Take neither. Turn left onto another old road and in 0.13 miles arrive at another field. The caretaker's house is straight ahead. Turn right at a large evergreen and descend to the earthen dam of diminutive Hashawha Lake. Don't

cross the dam but turn left onto the boardwalk to visit a wetlands study area. At a large kiosk follow the trail directly in front of it to a parking lot and then the park road. Turn left onto it and in 0.12 miles turn right onto the Nature Center drive, returning to your vehicle.