

Description: Edgar Merkle created a resident community of geese by releasing young geese reared from some breeding pairs at his home in suburban D.C. at his summer farm along the eastern banks of the Patuxent River. Today approximately 100 geese live there year round but as the years went by they began attracting 1,000s of migrating geese every winter. Today it is estimated that over 5,000 geese rest and feed there. (I can't begin to comprehend the racket they must make when the population is at its peak). Edgar sold the sanctuary to the Maryland D.N.R in 1970 in hopes that his mission would continue and it has. Corn, millet and other grains are still being cultivated on site to help feed the hungry visitors.

Besides providing sanctuary for resident and migratory wildlife this venue supports a small, albeit pleasant, trail system. Counting the Critical Area Driving Tour (only open to vehicles on Sundays from 10:00 to 3:00, from January 1st to September 31st and **closed to even foot traffic from October 1st through December 31st**. Plan your hike accordingly.) one can create an easy hike ranging from as little as 1.2 miles to as long as 7.4 miles (shown here). All of the trails, except for the Mounds Trail, are relatively flat. It does feature some slightly rolling terrain.

The hike starts at the Oslislo Visitor Center (Open on weekends only until further notice from 10:00 until 4:00.)

Trail Notes: From the visitor center turn left onto the paved entrance road and walk 0.2 miles past a red barn to the primary trailhead. Turn left onto the yellow blazed Paw-paw Trail (at this point a mowed swath). You'll pass the previously mentioned barn on the left and Stump Pond with its Bull Head Lilies on the right before plunging into the woods. You'll find yourself on a wide, sandy lane surrounded by some very large trees supporting a good canopy. In 0.2 miles arrive at a rest area with benches and the junction with the blue blazed Mounds Trail. This is one of two "spoon shaped" trails in the system. Follow "the handle" for 0.5 miles, passing an old community dump (a reminder of how badly man can treat his environment) and crossing an old trench several times. It is too narrow to be a sunken road, often used to move live stock in the old days. It is more than likely an old boundary line. In 0.5 miles from the last trail junction reach "the bowl" of the spoon you can turn either left or right. In either case you will return to the end of "the handle" in 0.4 miles but not after getting close up views of the marsh created by Lookout Creek. If you hear running water look for a beaver dam. Retrace "the handle" back to the trail's intersection with the Paw-Paw Trail. Turn left and soon cross the

creek near its headwaters. After climbing a small hill you'll breakout into a field and follow its edge. In 0.3 miles from the last trail junction turn left onto the red blazed Poplar Spring Trail. (This is where there is a sharp dogleg in the mowed swath. You can't miss it.) This trail is also a spoon type path. It begins as a wide sandy lane, passing an open area on the left that is full of wildflowers, especially Partridge Pea. Closer examination reveals that there are many beech, poplar and maple saplings growing there (some obviously planted) insuring that this spot will one day return to forest. Be aware because in 0.3 miles the trail makes a 90 degree turn to the left, leaving the lane just before it comes to another field. (If you miss this turn I think you'll end up in somebody's back yard.) In another 0.2 cross the entrance road and soon arrive at "the bowl of the spoon". Again it doesn't matter which way you go. You will descend slightly on one side and climb slightly on the other. The trail never quite reaches Mattaponi Creek though you might be able to see it through the trees. Watch for Small Flowered Agrimony near the intersection with the handle on the east side during the summer months. Again retrace your steps back to the Paw-paw Trail. Turn left and in 0.2 miles arrive back at the main trailhead. Follow the paved drive back to the visitor center.

At this point you've hiked 4.5 miles, more or less. If you want to do the rest of the hike shown on the map and the CADT is open to you (See note in the description above.) continue past the center and turn right onto a gravel service road. A sign prohibits vehicles but not hikers. For most of the rest of the hike you will be without canopy so be prepared. Pass the Windmill Pond on your left (The windmill is currently broken.) and Merkle Pond on the right (Blocked from view by trees and shrubs). In 0.3 miles from leaving the paved road arrive at the Critical Area Driving Tour (CADT from here on out) and turn right onto it. The road bisects a cornfield. It makes an obvious 90 degree left hand turn. In 0.3 miles from joining the CADT turn right after the cornfield on the same side. There will be a sign for the white Lookout Creek Trail. This trail is a dumbbell shaped affair. Do not take the first left turn as it will prematurely return you to the CADT. Complete the dumbbell, again, choose you own direction. At the furthest point of the second lobe you'll be rewarded with a view of the mouth of the creek as it flows towards the Patuxent River. As you near the CADT take that spur you by-passed earlier. It will be on your right now. Turn right onto the CADT. In 0.2 miles from rejoining the CADT visit both the Catfish Pond on the left and the Boardwalk on the right. Both will reward you with nice views and, as shown in the photo gallery, all kinds of wildflowers in season. You might also get to see some young Osprey mock fighting or the adults hunting if you are lucky. Return to

the CADT and turn right onto it. You'll pass an opening with a view of the river and a closer Osprey nest. In 0.4 miles from leaving the boardwalk the CADT crosses itself. Cross the triangle shaped intersection, focusing on a large red barn on the horizon, and begin a gradual climb. Make sure you look behind you to get a pretty nice pastoral view of where you had just hiked. Pass the barn on your left and in 0.4 miles from the CADT intersection it ends. Turn left onto the paved drive and in 0.2 miles arrive back at the visitor center.