

Hi All,

My LS Trail walks will be ending soon as I get ready to "retire" from my LS retirement at 80 YOA and join my wife Karen (and family and grandchildren) in the suburban DC/MD area 200 miles SW of here.

[All of us have gotten some of our formal education in that area, and I met Karen there (she was born there) 49+ years ago. It also has lots of parks and woods and water and wildlife, much like this area of the Jersey shore. I have also walked and biked and birded much of that area (often with a dog) - and will be doing more of that again, with grandchildren. And I somehow suspect you will occasionally be hearing more from me on those subjects for at least a few more years.]

And since I have too much yet to tell about this summer and this week in the outdoors of this town, I will likely make this "little" report less than complete at this time. So you will probably hear some of that later at well.

But at least one more walking tour of this town and its nearby trails and wild places and wildlife seemed necessary - and I've done that during a few days of this past week. And so yet just a bit more about our trails and walks and outdoor things nearby.

A check of some on-line rain gauges during the rather showery past week shows variations in different spots - with between 1.2 to 1.9 inches in local areas, mostly between two and nine days ago.

So how was/is the woodsy-parky walking of late? Not bad for mostly wetlands areas, but I would suggest good trail walking shoes - at least until another dry spell.

The same applies to the park walks in Memorial and Sickles Park.

The Memorial Park gardens were certainly well tended and enjoyable to visit.

The Sickles Park walks remain good exercise for

both youngsters and adults. (But might somebody improve the confusing and askew distance markers?) I did note a few of those decorative cherry trees may need replacing soon, especially near the child playground areas. (Tho when I was near those playgrounds, they were very busy and active with both kids and parents.)

It's Now Early Summer

And serious Summer plant growth has begun, and will likely continue for at least 10 more weeks. So a little more trimming support is beginning to be necessary (maybe with some string trimmer or trail mower support from the LS DPW? - including even the sidewalks near the stream bridges, overgrown with knotweed).

I note, by the way, that DPW has done good work recently clearing a trail bridge problem near Branch Ave and clearing an under-bridge debris blockage in the same area.

[There is now one very recent tree fall somewhat blocking the trail fairly close to the the Willow Drive trail sign. 15 minutes with a chain saw would quickly clear it away.]

Some comments re the Challenger Field area with short "dog" walks:

Saw an adult red fox near the trail bridge visible from the road at Eastview.

Saw some very mature cattails in the wet spots near the east side of the ball diamond - interesting in that most of the native cattails in town have disappeared, replaced by invasive phragmites weeds - except here.

Reports are that the LS EC has won a small grant to improve the flooding/drainage problem near the field side of the parking lot using some environmentally constructive rain-garden methods.

More fox stories:

Stare-down with a fox on the "Cooper's Loop" section

of trail just a bit north of the pond beside Parker Homestead. My head is between woods and wild shrubbery on the trail just west of the little stream. His big-eared head is in swampy stream-edge growth (including blooming irises) about 50 feet across the stream from mine. It was an interesting, short observing drama for both of us - tho I'm sure he/she/it would win the beauty contest.

(Not exactly my drama of encountering a bear under similar circumstances in Glacier National Park 50 years ago - tho I might have been more competitive in that quiet, short beauty contest.)

Little fox scampering thru the driveway in early PM at Parker Homestead as Keith Wells and I chatted there on Sunday. Then under the shrubs next to the west side of house and over to the front porch. So keep your fox eyes open.

Later nights, earlier mornings, and longer daytimes as we approach the Summer solstice now. Why not get out and enjoy some of the nice weather and very active plant and animal life out there?

Deer, Deer, Oh Dear - and Ticks:

Yup, most of us know that all the deer in town mean the day lilies (and other, more expensive lilies) can no longer survive without deer fences. And our hostas are hard to preserve anymore as well. And some of our evergreens are getting nasty trim jobs. And the deer droppings are no fun in our yards.

And then there are the ticks the deer distribute, in the woods and along the trails and even in our yards.

You should wash and inspect the children and your dogs and yourselves after spending much time outdoors. Also consider tucking in your shirts and wrapping those socks around pant legs.

Yes, many insects carry diseases, but Lyme disease is not carried by dog ticks or lone-star ticks -- only by deer ticks.

So take heart - my semi-researched (PhD) view - those ticks may be a more serious concern than needed. Researchers find ticks need to bite and stick on/in

for more than 24 hours before they transmit Lyme's disease to human hosts - even if they are carrying the disease. And with modest precautions, you will likely notice the deer tick sooner than that. But do take care and be alert.

Flowers?

When you get out for a stroll, how many different kinds of yellow flowers can you find? There's dandelions of course, but what else in your (neighbors') yard or the sidewalk edges? I'll mention buttercups as well. But you should try for at least four more.

And blue flowers? I'll mention wild "wet" irises near the pond at Parker Homestead. (Oops! Also home to a Mama snapping turtle.) And how many others can you find on trails or in grass?

The catalpa trees are not yet blossoming but look for them soon near the Eastview trail entrance, and on Point Road and S. Prospect near the sidewalks where those roads intersect. Blue-purple flowers or white flowers?

And about those Bald Eagles:

The count of eaglets in the "bowling alley" nest at the Fort location is now TWO! That nest has better stick camouflage this year, so the second eaglet was not obvious until very recently. Now both can be seen occasionally, sometimes stretching and testing their wings. One is a medium brown and the other is darker, almost black. (don't expect much white on those birds for at least three years).

Mom or Dad is usually nearby (with very white head) typically on a communications tower observing them from above.

I'm fairly sure there is also at least one brown immature (3 years old?) bald eagle on Oceanport Creek hanging out near the NJ Transit train track bridges (and probably visible from LS waters on Parkers Creek).

Ospreys

They seem to be having a good year. They are filling the empty platforms and other good spots around this "fishy" area. I have also seen them back on the cell tower (overlooking Builders' General) from which they were chased away a few years ago.

I'll mention that absent ospreys, that great view of the south side of LS has been borrowed by a few red-tailed hawks and goshawks and vultures. And I'll spare you much talk about other raptors for now.

Other birds in town:

Doves, purple finches, house finches,
"Carolina" wrens, robins - what else in your yards?
How many are forming nests on your window sills or under your eaves?
Where have all the Chimney swifts gone (Short time passing) from downtown LS? Or maybe I'm just not looking sharp enough? I see their "chattering flybys" are still happening at places in Oakhurst and Oceanport. Oh well, guess in LS we'll just have to live with the bugs and insects and flies the swifts were keeping out of our air (and the barn swallows and purple martins still in town won't mind).

There are issues and topics I have attenuated or not yet written to. But maybe for later, mixed with some Maryland and Potomac "fall line" outdoor activities I will very soon be moving into.

Everybody needs to visit D.C., and not just for the buildings and museums and zoos and very-equivalent traffic.

Let's try to keep in touch. All the best.

-- John Heidema

PS: The muskrat (platypus?) dramas in LS Creek are among those things that must wait for later.