

No two walks through Towner's Woods Park are ever the same

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT

Oh, to experience the great outdoors through the nose of a dog. Bailey, my chocolate-colored labradoodle, and I particularly like Towner's Woods, which is one of the parks in the Portage Park District.

Bailey, like her predecessor, Molly, loves to sniff her way along the trail discovering who has been there before her. Her pals come in all shapes and sizes, from golden retrievers to basset hounds, and answer to names like Rufus, Karma, Tipper, Montana, Zero, and Bradley. Some can perform like circus dogs while other respond to simpler commands like "sit," if so inclined. No matter their talents, all love to "read" the path through their sensitive olfactory equipment!

From a dog's perspective Towner's is a pretty exciting place with sightings of deer, rabbits, and turtles as well as those pesky chipmunks that dart across the path and occasionally raccoons and possums. And, of course, rolling in the mud is not only fun but helps cover up the smell of the shampoo from yesterday's bath.

Although I have been walking my dogs in the park for 15 years, I never find it boring. From the dogs and people you meet to the changing seasons, no two days are ever the same.

With fall almost upon us, the maples and oaks will soon start to turn from lush green to vibrant yellows and brilliant reds while grasses and bushes gradually transform into beautiful hues of gold and purple. The view of the marsh area off the Rail Trail is truly amazing.

Several years ago my wife and I, after hearing of the fall beauty of the New England foliage, decided to see it for ourselves. Advertising and news stories regale us about when different areas will reach their "peak." Our experience was somewhat disappointing, however, due to distance and a lack of motel rooms.

Alas, when we returned to Northeastern Ohio, we discovered the autumn transformation here was much more spectacular than what we saw in New Hampshire and Vermont.

GREEN PORTAGE

Richard O'Toole



Winter at Towner's Woods is truly fantastic. Dogs love the snow as do the hikers, cross-country skiers, and those of us who prefer snow shoes. You can thrust your head down into the snow, that is, if you have been blessed with the sensitive nose of a dog, to smell the pathways the mice have made. You can hear the kids screaming with delight as they sled down the big hill near the center of the park. Or can just enjoy a quiet evening walk along a snow-packed trail and hear the crunch, crunch of the snow beneath your feet.

About the time you begin to grow tired of the "white stuff," the early signs of spring manifest themselves with the appearance of green shoots, wild flowers, and migrating birds. The view of Lake Pippin and the trees along the shore changes from season to season.

Towner's Woods, which is located at 2296 Ravenna Road in Franklin Township, has a wide diversity of hikers of all ages, occupations, and interests.

We have made several lasting friendships that started from occasional meetings with fellow dog walkers and have found that the park is a great place to bring out-of-town visitors as well.

Whether it's taking your dog out for exercise, exploring the park with friends and family, or just enjoying a quiet interlude with nature, you will find that Towner's Woods, like the other parks in the Portage Park District, is a gem of a place to spend some time. Bailey would definitely agree!

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