



HIDDEN RIVER – Reflections of Light and Life Along the Black River

Whether you are a birding enthusiast or you just enjoy the natural beauty of the outdoors, you will find what you are looking for along the banks of the Black River here in northern Ohio.

This is a collection of photographs which I have taken over the past few years along the east and west branches of the Black River in Lorain County. The project is a result of my having been a resident observer and canoeing enthusiast on the river for many years. For those who have not yet discovered it, I am happy to offer this glimpse into the nature of the “hidden river.”

Each branch of the river has its own character. The west branch meanders slowly through meadows and muddy banks. The east branch streams through old forest and tumbles over sandstone and shale bedrock as it nears the confluence of the rivers in Elyria. Both are scenic and provide habitat for a diverse variety of plant and animal life.

The river is rich in the colors, sounds and smells of its seasons.

Spring is vibrant with tiny leaves of bright green and pastel wildflowers. The sweet smell of black locust blossoms and pungent odor of wild ramps are in the air. Geese honk their territorial warnings and American toads trill in chorus on warm, rainy nights.

Summer steams with the warm, humid scent of mud and plant life. Morning is a cacophony of bird song and the pterodactyle “grawk” of the great blue heron in flight. Deer cross the river quietly against the red haze of sunset and raccoons raise a nightly racket digging and fighting over mussels.

Autumn is a slow burn under azure skies. Crows caw in the distance and red tailed hawks cry “keeer-r-r” as they circle over the river. Squirrels forage for acorns and brightly colored insects investigate plants and flowers for a spot to hibernate or a last taste of nectar.

Winter puts on the muted colors of an Andrew Wyeth painting. All is still except for the sound of ice piling up on the river, the soft hoot of an owl or the singing of coyotes at 3:00 in the morning.

The Wyandot had another name for this river, the Canesadooharie, which means “stream of fresh water pearls.” As that name implies, our river is a treasure committed to our stewardship. We should do our utmost to protect and preserve the natural and historical legacy of our Black River for those who follow in our footsteps.

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