

TIMES OBSERVER

COVID-19 not slowing forest recreation

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It was one of those absolutely perfect early spring days with temperatures in the 60s, puffy clouds and rich blue sky that we have seen often this year. Jeri and I took a drive up Pleasant Drive and through the Allegheny National Forest to Endeavor, then up-river to Tidioute for take-out chicken wings and french fries at Tippecanoe. It was even more pleasant than it may sound.

Even before we started climbing the hill it became obvious that Warren County is not taking the current medical crisis laying on the couch. Several families were out for a stroll in the fresh air.

Not being a medical professional I would not suggest that this is necessarily good advice, though I have read and heard similar advice from professionals. It seems to me that staying indoors is not the best way to avoid contacting a virus. Not all of the time anyway. Good health calls for considerable exposure to sunlight. Certainly any virus is less concentrated outdoors than indoors, once it is introduced to any given area.

In New York State, the covid 19 problem has been in New York City, not in the Adirondack Mountains.

Just about every pull-off up the hill was occupied, with people obviously trying to keep safe distances.

Trailheads were different. There vehicles were sometimes crowded. At the Hickory Creek Trail the parking lot was full and vehicles were parked in the driveway. Even if 100 hikers were on that trail, each could have 586 feet of trail to themselves. That's like a football field in each direction. You can not get that far from other people in a house unless you are alone and have no neighbors. That's unsociable separation. Past the Hearts Content Road intersection along the top of the plateau, we spotted a grouse on the berm. Jeri was driving slowly anyway, so she slowed just enough to keep pace a little behind the grouse, which tolerated us. For whatever reason, some grouse are very

sociable. A few guys have told about grouse landing on their ATVs on a regular basis. On occasion while grouse hunting, grouse have walked so close to me that any thought of shooting them was lost. It just did not seem right to shoot a bird that wants to be friends.

But it is such a delicious bird. Our state bird by the way. Try them deep fried, or roasted with some Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning and a slice of Smith's Smoked Bacon cut in half and laid across the breast. If you use an injector, try apple juice.

For the past few years I have been watching what appears to be an increase of grouse numbers on the ANF. These grouse are mostly around the recent timber cuts. Wild turkey also seem to be most abundant in the same areas, though ranging farther into neighboring habitats. Wild turkey need those openings where they eat insects for maximum protein for the poults.

Wednesday was a special day because it was an 'emergency' early opening day of trout fishing season. It was a great afternoon for fishing while we visited Chapman Dam. We fished hard after finding a place to ourselves. This little bit of looking around gave me the impression that the nearly complete work at this beautiful state park was well planned. We spent most of our time along a newly made series of small, rip-rap points that should be excellent habitat of a kind that had been absent except for the dam itself.

Unfortunately, while fishing was good catching was not. We had a couple of hits and misses, but the only fish we saw caught was by anglers in a boat trolling in the middle of the lake. We did not visit other anglers, though, as I would usually do to see the big picture.

Thursday was the real spring show time in Beautiful Kinzua Country. Jeri and I took a drive in McKean County to pick up a trail camera on the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative, one used in a study I plan to report on in the near future.

Sun shined brilliantly during the drive east on Route 59, but somewhere along the top of the plateau clouds moved in, then very quickly snow mixed with rain. After picking up a take-out order of chicken McNuggets and french fries we drove to Marilla Reservoir for a picnic. That was an indoors, in car doors that is, picnic because by then snowflakes the size of half dollars were falling straight down, then and there still not sticking to the ground but sticking to tree limbs. Very pretty.

Ten cars belonging to trout anglers were parked there. Well, nine with trout anglers and one with picnickers.

Forty minutes later on top of the highest point in the upper Sugar Bay area, it was still snowing hard and there it was sticking to the ground, to everything, and it was blasted along by 40 mph steady wind that of course gusted harder while I was in an open field on the peak of the hill retrieving the trail camera with 529 hits since being set out last August. It will take a few hours to determine how many were not just wind trips.

Source: <https://www.timesobserver.com/sports/outdoor/2020/04/covid-19-not-slowng-forest-recreation/>