

Klondike (Lake Trail and Hogsback Trail)

December 8, 2025

What? No Species List? Nope. We usually don't make species lists for our winter hikes because most plants are dormant. Trying to determine the species of a dormant plant from its dried-up remains is not always reliable. It serves little purpose to create unreliable species lists. So, we'll just give an overview of things that happened on our walk today.

NOTES

QUARRY LAKE: It was cold today – below freezing. We parked near the lake and walked the Lake Loop Trail. This area around the lake (an old silicon quarry) is especially fascinating during the summer because the bright white sand from the Saint Peter Sandstone looks like snow. People seeing it for the first time on a hot summer day can't help but exclaim: "Wow, it looks just like snow!" But today, with some actual snow still on the ground, the white sand didn't pack the same delightful punch. One of us joked: "Wow, our snow looks just like St. Peter Sandstone!"

Our trail becomes a bridge as it crosses a section of the lake. It was Len who asked: "Do you know why the bridge planks are made of concrete?" It was a good observation. Bridge walkways are usually made of wood. Len went on to explain that the concrete serves as ballast to keep the bridge stable and to keep it from floating away in rough weather. (We then got into a discussion of bridges.)

We finished walking the Lake Loop Trail much sooner than expected. There are a couple of reasons why we probably finished so quickly: 1.) it was cold, and 2.) there weren't many plants growing in the St. Peter Sandstone because it doesn't hold nutrients well.

HOGSBACK TRAIL: Since it was too early for lunch, we drove to the Conference Center's parking lot to walk on a different trail: the "Hogsback Trail" (1.2 miles). The Hogsback Trail isn't built on St. Peter Sandstone, so we had plenty of plants to observe. Here are just a few of the plants that we paid special attention to:

- a Virginia Creeper vine was growing up a tree next to a Poison Ivy vine. This allowed us to compare them and note the "suction cups" on the Virginia Creeper tendrils.
- we talked about the spurs on a Deciduous Holly tree
- White Bear Sedge is always a pleasant find

After botanizing a section of the Hogsback Trail, we walked up to the overlook. John was hoping to find some remnant of his favorite plantain, *Plantago aristata* (the Bracted Plantain), but winter had left no survivors. However we did get some good views of Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures on the nearby bluffs.

PARTICIPANTS:

There were 12 of us botanists today, who are (in alphabetical order):

Prem Barton, Jerry Castillon, Tina Cheung with Keith Woodyard, Wayne Clark, Michael Laschober, Sharon Lu, Len Meier, John Oliver, David Steinmeyer, Kathy Thiele, and George Van Brunt.