

Lauder Hills Hike Sunday October 4th 2020

The gods of Autumn favoured us with sunshine, light winds and temperatures in the high teens.

The group consisted of Jennine, Judy, James, Olwen, Jude, Ron and Neil.

A pleasant one-hour drive toward Hartney and the Lauder Hills allowed for a view of the countryside wrapped in golden-leafed white aspens, rush-filled ponds where snow geese and mallards lingered, harvested fields and autumn-rust coloured pastures. Nearing the Lauder Hills entry area, we passed the tiny settlement of Grande Clairiere with its white steepled church and several houses; a reminder of the area's connection to a historical past where Metis hunters and their families often settled to wait out the winters.

At the west entry point to the Hills, an ATV-trail and a hydro line greeted us to provide guidance into the unmarked terrain and a reminder of the intrusive but seemingly necessary advances of modern life. Our intrepid group of seven meandered along the ATV-trail and the ridges of hills and coulees. The crisp sounds of our boots on the sun-dried grasses, sages, and remnants of flowering plants, the occasionally panting as yet we climbed another hill and the light wind hissing in the aspens and gnarled oaks reminded us of the peace that exists in a natural environment and the importance of seeking such areas to soothe our bodies and minds.

The focal point of our hike was the bowl, a gravy-boat shaped hollow nestled between the ridge of hills that traverse east and west. The sandy soil in the bowl has been stirred-up by both ATV and wind and is marked by a series of short hollowed trails that extend from the hill-ridges to the centre. Following a brief respite for light snacks and refreshments, the hike continued eastward along another ridge of hills before catching a minor trail that led back to the main ATV trail and a return to the parked vehicles. On the return we were greeted by a young white-tail which after briefly gazing at us, gave its low guttural sound, flipped its tail – white underside on display – and bounded into the low bushes.

A slow-paced hike with plenty of stops to gaze at the autumn scenery and soak the serenity and peace found in this corner of southwestern Manitoba.



Link to James photos:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/mL9hdyR8cU8mdCZK7>

The hike is also now in AllTrails:

<https://www.alltrails.com/explore/map/track-2020-10-04-133601-e9b73bc?u=m>

WESTMAN WILDERNESS CLUB ONLINE:

<https://www.westmanwildernessclub.ca>