

Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition

Delaware Reservoir Lake

June 6, 2007 9 AM to 1 PM

It was a very pleasant trip on Delaware Reservoir on June 6, 2007, D-Day (Delaware Day) starting with a visit to the eagles nest just south of St. Route 229. She(?) wouldn't leave the nest, so I assume there were babies. Every time I tried to get nearer than 100 feet, she would set up a yell, and I didn't want to make her nervous, so I just paddled on.



The day had dawned in a thick fog. My plans to leave from the north end of the reservoir at 6 AM were nixed in favor of a nice breakfast at the Diner just north of Delaware on Route 23. By 8 AM the fog had begun to clear, so I made a last reconnoiter to the top of Delaware Dam to scout my landing place at the end of the trip. The west side of the levee has a little fisherman's trail leading over to water's edge and around the rip-rap limestone chunks that protect the base of the dam. I decided that was the shortest route to haul the kayak up and over the levee. I called Trella from the top of the dam, and even though the fog covered the lake, it was beginning to break up and the day promised to be a gorgeous "rare day" in June. She graciously agreed to come pick me up at the dam around 9 AM and ferry me to St. Route 229 boat launch area. So I headed up there to drop off the Ocean Kayak (Drifter model), and then got back to the dam just before she arrived. The short 6 mile ride up US 23 and over 229 allowed us a little discussion time.



After the obligatory pictures and farewells, I finally managed to push off (after some false starts!) from the landing area, and was on my way again! This trip had been long delayed

because of a torn rotator cuff sustained last June at Terradise while building a dock (which floated away in a winter flood - but that's another story). I managed to paddle all last summer from Terradise to St. Route 229 at the head of the reservoir with a torn rotator cuff, but the operation to repair it in September made that arm immobile for the rest of the season.



I soon realized I was going to get no help from the river current, as that had been stilled in 1948 when this reservoir was created. It took 4 years to fill it, so by 1952 the once wild Olentangy (Whetstone) river would forever be captured and tamed for flood control. Skunk Hollow and other favorite birding, wildflower and butterfly haunts are now memories. The places are no doubt covered with several feet of silt washed in by almost 60 years of floods. The upper 1/3 of the reservoir is very shallow, with a mud bottom exposed every winter when they draw down the level in preparation for the spring thaw and floods. But, there are some new habitats giving us cause to celebrate! The bald eagle population is back, Great Blue Herons abound everywhere, and 60 years of growth has made the banks of the once barren Delaware Wildlife Refuge into an almost mature woods, with a diverse set of wildflowers and fauna.

We had seen Canada Anemone at the launch site, so I watched for it along the bank. Saw some great expanses of Wild Geranium, but did not get close enough to see other wildflowers. I had the lake to myself, except for the occasional jumping fish and numerous Great Blue Herons. I was in no hurry, and not being a physical fitness specimen, I just paddled a while, then drifted a while. I am not interested in the sport aspect of this trip - I just want to see the river! One heron just north of the junction with the East Branch of the Whetstone (which runs through Cardington) gave me a bequest of a gorgeous blue feather as he (she?) lifted off in anticipation of my encroachment on her fishing area. I stuck it in my cap, and called it macaroni.



As the sun brightened, I donned some sun screen (forgot my white ankles, sticking out below my too short khaki pants) and enjoyed the warmth. The day had started at 43 degrees, but promised to warm to my ideal 70 degrees by afternoon.

Further paddling brought me to the marina, then on to the swimming beach, and finally to the dam itself, hidden for a long while around the last bend of the former river.



I stumbled out of the sit-on-top Ocean Kayak and dragged it on shore, unloading and preparing for the drag across rocks and grass and up the levee.

It wasn't nearly as bad as it looked from the top, and in a few minutes I was up and over, with the easy part going down the other side. I loaded up the kayak on the ladder rack on my old Nissan pickup, took a call from Trella checking on my status - and headed to Cincinnati.

