

## ***M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure***



04-03-2010, Calvert Cliffs State park, MD: Janet and I took the dogs out on this hike to celebrate our anniversary. We were all pleasantly surprised. When we first started hiking there were maybe 10 vehicles in all of the parking lots. By the time we were finished there were cars driving the park loop waiting for a vehicle to pull out so they could take their place. Still we saw very few people on most of the trails. The foot traffic was almost solely concentrated on the red blazed Cliff Trail that follows the edge of Gray's Creek Swamp on its way to the Chesapeake Bay, shark tooth hunting on the beach (Bring a sand sifter if you want to try this out. Just as we arrived at the beach a young gentleman had found a very small specimen.) and the famous orange Calvert Cliffs, recently made even more famous by a legal battle between an almost extinct beetle and the home owners who built their abodes on top of the cliffs. Although this mix of sandy trail and boardwalk was the backbone of our trek we also included the peripheral yellow, blue and orange trails. The latter crosses the seldom visited Thomas Branch Bog on a 150 foot boardwalk/bridge built by Eagle Scouts in 2001 (very impressive work!). Janet rolled an ankle towards the end of this loop so she and Joey headed back to the truck while Precious and I completed a 2 mile "inner" loop connecting the silver and white trails and a short section of the service road that bisects the park before rejoining the rest of the family. With the exception of the red trail we saw only 2 other hikers near the end and judging by their pace it didn't seem that they were going to be venturing too far from the parking area. The main loop, including the out and back to the cliffs was a tad under 6 miles. The "inner" loop came in at about 2 miles. Total elevation gain was a bit short of 500

feet. We ran into a volunteer ranger and member of the Friends of Calvert Cliffs who was just finishing clearing a very extensive blowdown area created by this winter's snow storms. Charles Grubby and the other volunteers did an excellent job of keeping the trails in this venue open. Our heart felt thanks go out to them! Without them most of the trail system would be inaccessible.

We had a great time and probably experienced more solitude than one might think possible given the "family friendliness" of Calvert Cliffs State Park. Besides the hiking trails there is a small fishing pond, a large play area, picnic areas and modern rest rooms. It's a great place to take the kids and gradually introduce them to nature.