



Greetings from the Black River State Forest! I recently spoke with someone who hiked the Castle Mound nature trail. They were impressed and surprised with the rugged geographic formations and sweeping vistas from the top of the formation. Living in town for eight years they had no idea something like this was so close. I heard this story many times when I worked at a State Park. Visitors would comment they had lived nearby for decades and never visited the park. They were always very surprised at all there was to see and do and mentioned they would be back soon.

As a property manager I am interested in what prevents people from visiting their local sites. There are several reasons but I think the most common is a lack of awareness of what local attractions offer. I am certain if I stood on a local street and asked people what the forest offers responses would include camping, ATV trails, and snowmobiling. Less common would be the extensive hiking, biking, and skiing trails, scenic touring, canoe landings, swimming, and fishing. Many would not be aware of our group campground complete with a cabin or our horse riding trails and campground.

If you are curious what the State Forest is all about we have a deal for you. On June 3rd the vehicle permit fee is waived for Open House day at all Wisconsin state parks and forests. As part of the 50th anniversary of the Black River State Forest we are having a special program at Castle Mound that day. Displays on forest management, recreational opportunities, and State Forest history will be set up in the historic shelter house. State Forest staff will be available to answer questions from noon to 3:00.

This event will be a great opportunity to learn more about the forest. With gas prices near record level now is the time to recreate locally. In addition to the displays there will be guided hikes of the Castle Mound nature trail at noon and 1:30. The hike will feature information about the geologic formations, beautiful views, plus other facets of nature found along the trail.

The open house is not the only event planned for June. On June 23rd wild foods expert, Sam Thayer, will lead a program on the ancient craft of foraging – the pastime of responsibly harvesting and utilizing wild food. Sam will share his knowledge of foraging at this class and demonstrate techniques. To learn more about foraging and Sam Thayer check out his website at www.foragersharvest.com. The event will be at the Castle Mound Shelter from 9:00 AM until noon. Registration is required by contacting Katie at 284-1484.

Castle Mound Campground is located south of Black River Falls. From the intersection of State Hwy 27 and US Hwy 12, go east on Hwy 12 0.7 miles to the entrance of the campground. If you have any questions about this article or the State Forest please call 284-4103 or visit our website at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver/>.