

# Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, VA Day Hike, Leesburg, VA

*This 2.5 to 3 mile loop hike occurred on Saturday, February 1, 2020. Participants were Tom O'Brien, Katy DeFonde, her son ZZ and Mike Calabrese.*

Yes, it was another cold morning as I waited for someone else to join me on this hike. Tom showed up at about 7:49. Then we waited and were about to take off at 7:59. That's when Katy and ZZ rolled into the church parking lot. They elected to follow us to Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve near Leesburg, VA. The distance between the church and the preserve was about 28 miles and it took close to an hour to get there. But we made it before 9:00 AM. No one else was there waiting for us.

So we went into the visitors center, used the facilities and talked to the volunteer that was working there. He was very nice and mapped an interesting loop hike for us that he said was between three and four miles. It turned out that it was only between two and a half and three miles but that's OK. I learned that a Banshee is not a real animal but a mythical creature in Irish folklore. Banshees were also mentioned in the Harry Potter book and movie series, which I didn't read or see. The volunteer told us the story about a man that lived on this preserve when it was a farm and worked at the nearby Oatlands Plantation. One night he was coming home in the dark when he heard a horrible sound that scared him. He thought that it was a Banshee reeking. Though it was probably another animal or just the wind. Anyway, that is



*Entrance sign.  
By Mike Calabrese*



*Beginning of the hike.  
By Mike Calabrese*



*Along the Beaver Pond Loop.  
By Mike Calabrese*

how this park got its name.

We then started out on a counterclockwise loop trail in this park consisting of a portion of the Beaver Pond Loop, a portion of the Old Field Loop, the Old Log, Bankbarn and Greenway trails. The trail was dirt and dry in the beginning. But it got extremely muddy by the last mile or so. There were a few ups but they weren't too bad. We had two stream crossings that were interesting. And we kept seeing closed off trails with signs in front of them saying "Not A Trail". We knew what that meant but joked that it was a strange name for a trail. This trail was very well signed (PWC, please take note).

We saw some interesting things while hiking this loop. We found the bottom of a turtle shell with the front legs still attached. We found the remains of a hornets nest that had fallen from a tree. We also found some strange looking fruits the last mile or so on the ground. They looked like huge walnuts but were soft and green. Also, the fruit inside of them looked like yellow grapefruit. It was obvious that some animals were eating these fruits. They must have fallen from one of the trees last fall. Katy googled this fruit when she got home and informed me that it was a osage orange or hedge apple.

We saw a number of animal tracks along this stretch of trail. ZZ knew all of them! These sightings included raccoon, fox, deer, dog and possibly even bear. ZZ also knew the names of many of the trees and cautioned Tom to be careful handling a poison ivy vine along the trail. We paralleled Goose Creek for a time along this loop. We had two stream crossings. ZZ loved the first one as he was able to



*Along the Bankbarn Trail.  
By Mike Calabrese*



*Along the Greenway Trail.  
By Mike Calabrese*



*ZZ @ Stream Crossing 1.  
By Katy DeFonde*





shimmy across a log. He was disappointed that we only had stepping stones for the second stream crossing.

We got done around 11:00 AM and got back to the church around 12 noon. I would like to thank Tom for driving on this hike as well as bringing my cell phone to my house after I left it in his car. And I want to thank Katy and ZZ for hiking with us for the first time. ZZ was only eight and three quarters but did a great job on this hike and impressed this author with his knowledge of various facets of the outdoors. At 695 acres we only did a small portion of this preserve. I think that we can get at least three or four more good sized loops out of this park. I can't wait to hike it some more!

Mike C

[Map of This Park](#)

*Osage Orange or Hedge Apple.  
By Katy DeFonde*



*Ice on the Greenway Trail.  
By Katy DeFonde*

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