

STOUFFVILLE RESERVOIR

by Ohan Stambouljian

Approaching the dam from its Millard Street entrance, the Stouffville Reservoir is more than a simple line of trees surrounding a pond and has three trail options for hikers of all abilities to choose from. What is typically a muddier walk spent dodging surfaced roots in the summer is a smooth hike in the winter, with the winding trails consisting of hard-packed snow over well-loved soil.

For 10:00am on a brisk Wednesday morning in February, the trail traffic was very light as I had almost the entire conservation area to myself. Hiking all three loops took approximately two hours total, allowing time to stop and enjoy the sights of laughing children playing pond puck, a stream of running water under my feet at several bridges, and a nice (distanced) chat with two lovely jacket-wearing dogs and their humans. I encountered only one other walker on my hike, but we had plenty of space to pass each other, twice. There were no cars along the road when I arrived and only one when I left, though the hockey players were likely either parked in the adjacent subdivision or came by foot like I did.

This trail system is very simple to follow and would be difficult to become lost, but I did use a trails app to track my analytics. Starting at the reservoir dam, walkers can take the shortest route which does not enter the forest (1.0km), the middle trail (1.9km), or the longest trail (2.4km) which is always my preference. If you're looking to get your heart rate going with altitude you may want to consider another featured tract, as the highest elevation gain you'll get here is an intangible 12-meters. Trail routes within the forest are narrower but stepping aside to let others pass is an easy accommodation.

Wildlife during the winter months here is a little tougher to spot, but there are many visible tracks along the way. You may also be lucky enough, should you choose the medium trail, to come across the forest's resident barred owl at the northern section. She isn't shy, but you may need to call back and forth with her until you get her attention.

The Reservoir is the perfect lunchtime outing for those working from home, as these trails are within walking distance for those living within Stouffville and either loop can be completed within the hour. It is also ideal for those looking to spend more time outdoors before or after work and school, or for the outdoors enthusiast who isn't bound by any particular time constraints, as having explored this forest for the entirety of my 26 years, I'm still finding new corners of it. [1]



[above and right] Ohan walks the marsh and visits the lake.

Trail: Stouffville Reservoir
Time: 40 minutes
Distance: 2.4 km
Difficulty: Easy
Starting Elevation: 271m
Elevation Gain: 12m
Forest: Mixed
Highlight: Bridge over creek and tree forts
Traffic: Light this day

