

# WILDLIFE OF VICTORIA PARK

by John Serrao

## TIGER BAY STATE FOREST

My last article in this column described Lake Colby in Cassadaga, one of many beautiful natural areas that can be visited to lift your spirits, relieve boredom, and reduce stress at this time. On the last Sunday in April, I visited another one of my favorite places — the Indian Lake Area of Tiger Bay State Forest. About 16 miles from Victoria Park, this area is easily reached by driving east on International Speedway (rte. 92), turning left on Indian Lake Road (the intersection with a traffic light and a sign, “Rima Ridge Unit”) and taking this road straight to its end where there is a parking area at the lake.

Tiger Bay State Forest comprises more than 27,000 acres, and there are several other

entrances that are passed along route 92, and these dirt roads can also be driven to experience nature and look for wildlife. The Indian Lake area has a wonderful 2-mile nature trail, the Buncombe Hill Interpretive Trail, that passes through forests of slash pine, sand pine, and 7 species of oaks, as well as scrub areas with gopher tortoises and prickly pear cactus that showed big, beautiful yellow blossoms when I visited in late April. The forest is far enough from any roads so that the only sounds that I heard were the songs of birds, the taps of woodpeckers, and the breezes through the pines. The trail itself is clear, level, and very well marked with bright yellow blazes on the trees, and there are informative interpretive signs on posts that describe many of the trees and shrubs encountered. Wherever the trail crosses a dirt road or turns direction there are very visible arrows that make it impossible to get lost (even for me).

If you're a runner, I highly recommend this trail

— it's level, with no roots or rough spots. But for everyone, this trail is a very pleasant escape from the house and an opportunity to relax and experience nature.

(Park in the main parking area near the lake — the day-use fee has been waived — and not at the trailhead kiosk)