

## Eagle Bluff and Simenstad Trails in Osceola

### Ginny Gaynor

If it were the 1890's, you might descend the train in Osceola and hike up the bluff for a picnic and dancing at the bluff top dance pavilion. The pavilion is long gone, but today hikers can make the trek up the hill and revel in this amazingly still intact forest. Some go for the vertigo-inducing view from the cliff overlooks, which one local photographer calls the "best view of the St. Croix River Valley." Some go for the spring display of wildflowers - carpets of trout lily and a nice assortment of ephemerals like hepatica, Dutchman's breeches, rue anemone, and bellwort.

**Bloom status:** On May 8, 2020 hundreds of trout lily buds dangled, closed against the chilly day but ready to open as soon as the temps warmed. The bellwort, on the other hand, were in full display. And the wild ginger's hearty blooms, tucked beneath their stout leaves, were open for pollination.

**Website:** [www.myosceolachamber.org/hiking.html](http://www.myosceolachamber.org/hiking.html)

**Location:** In Osceola WI, near the junction of Hwy 35 and 243 (bridge to MN).

**Parking and amenities:** Park behind the BP gas station, or if there are no parking spots, park just south of the BP in the train depot lot.

**Public status, fee:** City of Osceola site. No fee.

**When you're there:** From the BP station, slip around the gate behind the station and take the service road/trail up the hill. (Or you can start from the small picnic area on the west side of the BP station.) A minute or so up the trail, a side trail with rock steps will take you up to the bluff top. The trail also connects under the 243 bridge to Wilke Glen and Cascade Falls.

## Simenstad Trail (Eagle Bluff Overlook)

### Mike Chrun

This trail leads to the **best view of the St. Croix River Valley**. Easiest path is to park right behind the BP station on the corner of Hwy. 35 and Hwy. 243 in Osceola. The path is beyond a gate easily walked around. The uphill is gradual. The Simenstad Loop is about .5 mile and is through a **mature maple forest**. If you hike the trail counter-clockwise you soon come to several overlooks a little past the tower. A couple of them have branches obscuring a clear shot. One of them provides a wonderful view to the north. I love being there when the fog starts to clear in the valley. In the morning, if you're lucky, you also might have an opportunity to photograph **swans at eye level** as they make their way usually down the river. Another bonus up there might be a chance to get the sun coming through the fog and leaves and giving you a chance at **foggy sun bursts**. None of the overlooks have a barrier; you are on the edge so please be careful!

