

Choose A Different Path

By Robin Volker

One afternoon last week, I was walking on a concrete path that ran beside a toboggan run at Pokagon State Park in Northern Indiana. It was mid-week of the Great Lakes Unity Regional Conference, and I had spent the last three days sitting in seminars and sessions with no opportunity for exercise. The weather had been mild for mid-October. The sun was shining and temperatures were in the low sixties. It was a perfect afternoon to enjoy the sights and smells of autumn in the woods. The colors were at peak display. The critters in the forest were frisky due to the unexpected warm temperatures. Squirrels and chipmunks were running in front of me along the path, chasing each other and enjoying an occasional acorn for a snack.

The path I was walking was strewn with twigs and leaves that crunched beneath my feet as I walked. Suddenly in front of me, one of those twigs moved and poised for a strike attack. It was a small snake. Yikes! "Okay, now fella," I said, "I know this is your homeland, but no need to get nasty with me." I thought at the time that this was a copperhead. Its appearance fit what I know about copperheads. However, upon returning home and using Google, I learned that copperheads are not found that far north in Indiana. Whatever kind of snake it was, I chose to take a different path. The snake showed up at the intersection of an adjoining sidewalk, so instead of challenging it, I turned right.

Nature speaks to us in random ways, but on purpose. When a wild animal, bird, or reptile shows up in my life, I take notice. What is the message that the natural world is bringing to me? More than any other message I feel I got from the snake that day, I took away this one: Be aware and alert. Be flexible and willing to choose a different path.

What wildlife has crossed your path lately? Did you feel the animal, bird, or reptile brought you a message? I would love to hear about your totem adventures.

With love and blessings,

Rev. Robin