

THE STORY OF TURTLE ROCK

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Listen children and I will tell you a story, about once upon a time, long, long ago when the land was new, there was a box turtle, a simple box turtle that lived a simple box turtle's life in what is now the Meigs Soil and Water Conservation District's Conservation Area.

Like all other box turtles, he had a high shell with a hinged bottom that he could close up tightly to "box" himself up safely inside his shell. His shell was colored dark brown and had yellow blotches, which helped him hide among the leaves covering the forest floor. At that time, he was just like any other box turtle.

Of course, being a box turtle, he didn't have a name because he didn't need one; he knew who he was and everything else in the woods knew he was just a little box turtle.

This gentle turtle spent his days crawling through the woods, or hiding under rotten leaves, looking for insects and other types of food to eat, and this turtle loved to eat; in fact it was his favorite thing in the entire world.

Oh, I forgot to mention that this was a lazy turtle, so lazy that when he wasn't eating all he would do is lay there on the forest floor, sleeping and basking in the sunbeams he loved that filtered through the forest canopy. He also enjoyed letting the leaves fall on his shell, covering him up, until he got the urge to eat again, and he was content with this life of eating and sleeping.

Well we all know what happens when some one, or a turtle even, just eats and sleeps? As the years passed, the turtle just grew and grew, and moved slower and slower; slow even for a turtle, and got even lazier.

Turtles, as you know, can live for a very long time, so our turtle got bigger and bigger, until he was big enough that he didn't have to worry about being eaten – there was nothing in the woods that could harm him, and in time he got so big that even a car or truck couldn't hurt him, but of course this was all long before cars came around which was a good thing, because I would pity the poor driver who had the misfortune to find this massive turtle on the road. It would be the car that got smashed, not the turtle!

The years passed, and sometimes the turtle would sleep so long that trees would even begin to grow on his back, their seeds taking root in the layers of dead leaves that accumulated on his shell. Other animals would even forget the turtle was there, until the rare occasion that the turtle would move, carrying his little forest around on his shell.

The turtle saw everything going on around him; he was there when these two-legged animals began moving in his woods, red skinned at first, and then white skinned, but still he kept growing.

He noticed when some of the two-legged creatures began cutting trees and building houses; he was bemused by these animals that had to build their own shells from wood which could not be easily moved. He saw cows and horses that grazed where the trees had been.

However, the massive turtle was distressed when large yellow machines began eating his hillside, exposing and removing the black rocks that had been in the woods even longer than he had been, but the turtle was patient, he could wait and he knew that things would change yet again.

Eventually the day came that the machines were gone, and then the woods began to grow back again, and by this time the large, lazy had grown so big and moved so infrequently that he

was like part of the earth itself, his shell covered with trees and his skins as hard as rock and even the same color!

So now he just lays there sleeping or hiding in the woods, watching the years pass by like we watch the hours, until the next time he gets the urge to move.

We like to think that the lazy box turtle is happy with the Conservation Area and approves of us protecting that land, and if you pay close attention, you just might see him there, looking like a part of the hillside and wearing a permanent grin as he keeps watch over the Conservation Area.

And if someday, you should ever feel the earth shaking around the Conservation Area, it might just mean that our turtle is moving around; probably trying to find a more comfortable spot.