Oak Openings Preserve Highlights



Please use this as a supplement to information provided on the Oak Openings Preserve map.

Messages for Interpretation

Protection is paramount as Metroparks Toledo preserves 'one of America's last great places.' (The Nature Conservancy).

- As the largest preserve in the Oak Openings Region, the geology and specialized habitats here are globally significant.
- Oak Openings Preserve history reflects changing needs and values of conservation and people over time.
- Restoration, education and partnerships combine to help preserve this Metropark and the Oak Openings Region.
- Cutting-edge trails and facilities offer gold-star recreation.

What's In A Name?

Oak Openings was a phrase settlers gave to this region because they observed large, widely-spaced oaks among openings of prairie wildflowers and grasses.

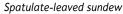
Natural and Human History

The natural history of Oak Openings Preserve is closely linked to sandy, post-glacial beach ridges left behind around 15 thousand years ago when ancestral Lake Erie was shrinking to its present size. These ridges, combined with a unique hydrology that often causes perched groundwater and standing surface water, result in high, dry-loving plants growing in exceptionally close proximity to those that prefer wetlands. This situation causes the biodiversity of the region to skyrocket when compared to other places in the state, country and even world. The region is home to well over 100 state-listed, rare plants!

Additionally, Swan Creek and its tributaries (such as Gale Run and Ai Creek) support significant migratory bird and wildlife habitat, and the preserve is known as a birding hotspot with exceptional numbers of nesting species. Finally, this Metropark contains numerous vernal pools – semi-permanent bodies of water that are critical breeding habitat for amphibians and macroinvertebrates. Notable species include wood frogs, fairy shrimp, and mole salamander larvae – all three of which are obligate to vernal pools, meaning that they can't survive elsewhere.

During the mid-20th century, parts of the Swan Creek watershed within the preserve were dammed to construct aesthetic, recreational lakes such as Springbrook, Mallard, Wintergreen and Evergreen. Acquired in 1931 and known then as Springbrook Park, the Springbrook Lake Area is actually the oldest part of Oak Openings







Wild lupine







Prickly pear

Preserve. While these lakes are still favorite sites to park visitors, they support fewer plant and animal species than their natural counterparts.

Today, the combined efforts of Metroparks staff, partners and volunteers help protect this preserve. Plant and wildlife monitoring helps Metroparks make informed natural resource decisions. Prescribed burns, mowing and invasive species removal support rare communities. Non-native pine stands, planted over half a century ago, are being restored to prairie and savanna communities. Wildlife nest boxes seen throughout the preserve encourage cavity nesting birds. Finally, programming and education promote a strong ethic of conservation.

To protect this preserve and the Oak Openings Region at large, Metroparks partners with state and federal agencies, organizations and universities that collectively make up The Green Ribbon Initiative. Other Metroparks within the Oak Openings Region include Wildwood, Secor, Toledo Botanical Garden, Wiregrass Lake, Westwinds, and Cannonball Prairie. Regional trails such as Moseley and Wabash Cannonball help connect lands through the Oak Openings Region corridor.

Oak Openings Preserve offers its visitors top quality recreation unique to the area. The Beach Ridge Singletrack Trail is a 12-mile, mountain bike trail with three trail heads — located at Springbrook Lake, Buttonbush and Beach Ridge Areas. The Beach Ridge Area

is also home to Mercy Fit Ride, a mountain bike skills development course, the multi-use Wheelhouse with a concession for coffee and micro-brews, and the Cannaley Treehouse Village where guests can sleep in the trees via up-scale camping, tent platforms and hammock sites.

Plant Life (* = state-listed rare species)

Notable plants include:

Cinnamon fern Several species of Aster
*Gaywings *Several species of

Golden ragwort Gentian

Poison sumac *Spatulate-leaved sundew

*Prickly pear cactus *Sweet fern Rough blazing star *Wild lupine

Royal fern

Native grasses and sedges include:

Big bluestem Pennsylvania sedge
Little bluestem *Porcupine grass
Indian grass Switch grass

*June grass *Three awn grass sp.

Wildlife (* = state-listed rare species)

Visit the Window on Wildlife at Mallard Lake Area to observe some of these birds and mammals.

Some mammals known include:

*8 species of bats Raccoon
*American badger Red fox
American beaver Red squirrel

Coyote Southern flying squirrel
Eastern chipmunk Virginia opossum
Eastern fox squirrel White-footed mouse
*Gray fox White-tailed deer

Notable amphibians include:

American toad

*Blue-spotted salamander

Gray treefrog

Green frog

Northern spring peeper

Redback salamander

Western chorus frog

Wood frog

Mole salamander sp.

Reptiles known to occur include:

*Blanding's turtle Midland painted turtle Blue racer snake Northern ring-necked

Common five-lined skink snake
Common water snake Snapping turtle
*Eastern hognose snake *Woodland box turtle

(Note: There are no venomous snakes known here.)

Some of the many birds include:

American goldfinch *Lark sparrow
Bald eagle Barred owl
Black-capped chickadee Numerous nesting
Blue jay warblers

Chipping sparrow Pileated woodpecker
Cooper's hawk *Red-headed woodpecker

Downy woodpecker Eastern bluebird Eastern screech owl *Eastern whip-poor-will Field sparrow Great-horned owl Hairy woodpecker Indigo bunting Red-tailed hawk
Scarlet and Summer
tanagers
Song sparrow
Tufted titmouse
Turkey vulture
Wild turkey
White-breasted nuthatch

Avoid Poison ivy, American dog ticks, mosquitoes and chiggers by staying on marked trails, covering up with lightweight clothing and using insecticide when necessary. (Note: There is no poison oak in Northwest Ohio.)



American beaver



Mole salamander sp.



Blanding's turtle



Blue racer



Eastern whip-poor-will



Red-headed woodpecker



Lark sparrow



Wood frog