

Blue Creek Metropark Highlights



**METROPARKS
TOLEDO**

Messages for Interpretation

Surrounded by lands rich with cultural and natural history, the unique character of Blue Creek Metropark represents a crossroads of land uses that continuously evolve.

- Blue Creek's natural features tell stories of glaciation, converging eco-regions and habitat biodiversity.
- The choices of land use at Blue Creek Metropark over time reflect changing values in society.
- Resource conservation, community partnerships, and recreation are the primary forces shaping Metroparks initiatives at Blue Creek Metropark today.

What's in the Name?

Blue Creek flows through this Metropark and is a tributary of Swan Creek and part of the Maumee River watershed.

Natural and Human History

Blue Creek Metropark is on the border of the Oak Openings Region and the Maumee River floodplain community. Mosquito Creek is another tributary within the park's boundaries.

Green space and natural areas at this large, multi-use complex include two quarries, several recreation fields, successional woodland, restored wetlands, restored tall grass prairies, a Metroparks native plant nursery, and a limestone glade (see "Plant Life").

Exposed Devonian age limestone (350-450 million years old) at this Metropark is rich with fossils of sea creatures such as Brachiopods, Horned coral, Trilobites and Crinoids (sea lilies). Fossils can be observed best near the large Nona France Quarry and the smaller quarry pond as well as in some of the walls and stone barns of the historic prison area.

Near the quarries are some of the best examples of glacial striations in northwest Ohio. These 'scratches' in the bedrock were created about 12,000 years ago, when glaciers pushed harder granite over the local limestone bedrock.

Two constructed wetlands at Blue Creek Metropark help create more well-balanced ecosystems. One incorporates dikes, outlets, valves and measuring apparatus to reduce sediment, maximize oxygen and maintain the right water levels for deterring nonnative species.

Near the wetland is ditch that was recently restored using a two-stage approach that mimics the shape of natural waterways. It includes land benches or 'floodplains' to slow water flow and improve ecology within the channel.

Blue Creek was once part of the a much larger tract of land in the Oak Openings Region owned by the Ottawa Tribe and home to Chief Ottokee. The Ottawa along with Chief Ottokee were some of the last to leave northwest



Barn swallow



Green heron



American kestrel



Praying mantis

Ohio during the forcible removal to reservations out west during the 1830s-1840s.

In the 1900's, part of this Metropark was the site of a 310 acre-self-sustaining prison county workhouse. Purchased in 1918 by the City of Toledo, it operated until 1991. During operation, rock was quarried, stone walls and barns constructed, cows and hogs raised, a tree nursery maintained, and crops such as tobacco, corn, wheat, hay and oats grown. In 2000, Lucas County and Metroparks purchased the Toledo workhouse site.

The former work house complex included a jail (removed in 2014), a warden's house, an impressive historic 1930 barn, an 8 foot stone wall enclosure, several small stone barns, and a more recent jail annex that now serves as Metroparks native plant nursery headquarters.

Every year, Blue Creek Native Nursery harvests seed locally and propagates thousands of native plants of over 50 species, including a dozen Ohio rare species. Those are then planted throughout Metroparks to enhance native biodiversity.

Substantial acreage on the north side of Blue Creek Metropark is leased to the Village of Whitehouse. This land includes the public library property, the large Nona France Quarry and multiple recreation fields.

Plant Life

Plant life at this Metropark includes a wide variety of wetland, prairie, and fallow farm field species.

One unique ecosystem that occurs here is called limestone glade. Its consistency of sandy, shallow soil on top of limestone bedrock supports many rare and unusual plants. The glade has been enhanced significantly through invasive species control, and is home to at least seven plants that are state-listed as rare in Ohio. In 2023, this glade was dedicated as Blue Creek Limestone Glade State Nature Preserve, giving it additional protection.

Plants of the limestone glade include

(* = state-listed):

Tall cinquefoil*	Hairy pinweed *
Rock sandwort*	Canada and plains
Chinquapin oak	frostweeds *
Fragrant sumac	Hairy woodmint
Nodding wild onion	Violet bush clover
Stiff goldenrod	Hairy beardtongue
Small skullcap	Pasture rose
Prairie thimbleweed*	Pale umbrella sedge *

Plants in Blue Creek's grasslands and fields include:

Big bluestem	Indian grass
Switch grass	Prairie dock
Common milkweed	Canada goldenrod
Catnip	Common mullein
New England aster	Common white aster

Wetland and creek-side plants include:

Tall anemone	Stinging nettle
Common boneset	Joe-pye weed
Bur cucumber	Buttonbush
Gray and Red osier	Sandbar willow
dogwoods	

Wildlife

Insects include:

Praying Mantis	Pearl crescent
Monarch	Bronze copper
Black swallowtail	Eastern-tailed blue
Eastern pond hawk	Widow skimmer
Green darner	Bluet species

Reptiles and amphibians include:

Northern leopard frog	Gray tree frog
American toad	Green frog
Midland painted turtle	Snapping turtle
Common water snake	

Mammals include:

Short-tailed weasel	Fox squirrel
Groundhog	Red fox
Coyote	Raccoon
Striped skunk	White-tailed deer
Muskrat	

Birds of wetland areas include:

Canada goose	Green heron
Great blue heron	Red-winged blackbird
Sandpiper species	Osprey

Mallard

Wood duck

Other birds here include:

Eastern bluebird	Eastern meadowlark
Dickcissel	Cedar waxwing
Gray catbird	Song sparrow
Barn swallow	Rough-winged swallow
American kestrel	Red-tailed hawk

Staying on the trails protects park visitors and pets from:

Poison ivy	American dog ticks
Chiggers	Stinging nettle
Mosquitoes	

Stay on trails and use protective clothing and insecticide to avoid poison ivy, American dog ticks and mosquitoes.

(Note: There is no poison oak in Northwest Ohio.)



Prairie dock



New England aster



Bronze copper



Glacial striations