

Cannonball Prairie Metropark Highlights



**METROPARKS
TOLEDO**

Messages for Interpretation

Conservation, history and recreation combine at Cannonball Prairie Metropark for a unique Oak Openings Region experience.

- With its pond, restored prairie and woodland habitats, Cannonball Prairie supports diverse native plants and wildlife all within one small Metropark
- Railroads, music and agriculture enrich Cannonball Prairie's history.
- This park makes a great stopover for distance hikers and cyclists using adjacent regional trails, and it offers exceptional recreational opportunities for everyone.

What's In A Name?

The word cannonball references a historic song, the Wabash Cannonball, as well as the Wabash-Cannonball Railroad that passed through here. The word prairie promotes its niche within the Oak Openings Region and alludes to restoration efforts at this site.

Natural and Human History

As part of the Oak Openings Region, Cannonball Prairie Metropark offers exceptional biodiversity. Aquatic, prairie and woodland habitats here all support a large variety of native plants and animals. Dragonflies, turtles and frogs are featured near the constructed pond. Van Fleet Ditch, a former tributary that was part of the historic Swan Creek watershed, also passes through this park. The variety of native flowering plants in the restored prairies south of the Wabash Cannonball Trail provides high quality nectar sources to many kinds of pollinators, and bird diversity includes every group, from shorebirds to grassland nesters, warblers and woodland species. Finally, the upland woods habitat supports many kinds of spring wildflowers as well as tree species preferring sandy Oak Openings Region soils.

North of this Metropark, a regional, all-purpose trail will connect Secor, Wiregrass Lake, Westwinds and Cannonball Prairie Metroparks in the near future. Called the Moseley Trail to honor Edwin Moseley who compiled the first 'Flora of the Oak Openings,' it passes through some of the richest and rarest plant communities of this region. Its southernmost terminus is this park, where it then connects to the Wabash Cannonball Trail, allowing hikers and cyclists to continue west to Oak Openings Preserve Metropark or east to Fallen Timbers Battlefield Metropark.



Cannonball Prairie pond



Campsite



Spicebush swallowtail



Blue vervain

Prior to becoming a Metropark, this site was known as Springer Farms and for nearly a century was a very successful agricultural operation. During its height, over 1,000 acres of corn, soybeans, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers were cultivated. The park's past is also rich in transportation history. Built in 1855, the northern leg of the Wabash Railroad ran from Toledo to Chicago until 1969. This historic railroad had a musical connection. Folklore suggests that "Cannonball" comes from a fictional train created in 1882 by the song writer J.A. Roff. The song was so popular that the rail line named a passenger train after it – the Wabash Cannonball. Finally in the mid-1990s, this abandoned line became part of a rails-to-trails project, and it is now known as the aforementioned Wabash Cannonball Trail.

Metroparks acquired this property in 2013 from Springer Farms, L.P. using funds from an unprecedented land levy that Lucas County voters passed for Metroparks in 2002. Seven years later, in the midst of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, this small, multi-use Metropark opened to offer the community yet another fantastic outdoor destination with incredible recreational opportunities. Primitive woodland camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing programs for youth, and distance hiking and cycling can all be a part of the Cannonball Prairie Metropark experience.

Plant Life

Trees and shrubs include:

Red maple	Eastern cottonwood
Green ash	Willow species
Sassafras	Witch-hazel
Elderberry	Box elder

Woodland restoration involved planting many kinds of trees, including native oak and hickory species, Black walnut, Black cherry, Black gum, American sycamore, Northern hackberry and American basswood.

Garden plants and native wildflowers include:

Spring beauty	Wild geranium
Jack-in-the-pulpit	Common blue violet
Virginia bluebells	Common cleavers
Virginia knotweed	Virginia creeper

Notable native plants include:

Blue vervain	Black-eyed Susan
Swamp milkweed	Dense blazing star
Mayapple	Pennsylvania sedge
Bigleaf aster	Common white aster species
New England aster	Goldenrod species
Scouring rush	Common dogbane
Water hemlock	

Wildlife

Birds include:

Blue jay	Northern cardinal
American goldfinch	Hairy woodpecker
Red-bellied woodpecker	Downy woodpecker
Bald eagle	Red-tailed hawk
Cooper's hawk	Red-shouldered hawk
Red-winged blackbird	Song sparrow
Tree swallow	Barn swallow
Baltimore oriole	Killdeer
Eastern kingbird	Green heron
Spotted sandpiper	American woodcock

Grassland birds such as Dickcissel, Henslow's sparrow, and Grasshopper sparrow are ground nesters depending on the prairie habitats at this site.

Mammals:

Red fox	Coyote
White tailed deer	Eastern fox squirrel
Raccoon	Virginia opossum
Eastern mole	Weasel species
Meadow vole	White-footed mouse
Mink	

Fishes:

Largemouth bass	Crappie
Bluegill	Channel catfish
Fathead minnow	

Amphibians/Reptiles:

Mole salamander species	American toad
Gray tree frog	Spring peeper
Western chorus frog	Green frog
Eastern garter	Eastern ribbon snake
Eastern hognose	Common water snake
Midland painted turtle	Snapping turtle

Insects:

Eastern bumble bee	Praying mantis
Clouded sulfur	Silver-spotted skipper
Spicebush swallowtail	Spring azure
Firefly species	Calico pennant
Common whitetail	Black saddlebag
Common baskettail	Eastern pondhawk
Widow skimmer	Familiar bluet
Variable dancer	

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

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



Widow skimmer



Elderberry



Scouring rush



Mayapple



Spotted sandpiper



Dickcissel