

# Side Cut Metropark Highlights

## Messages for Interpretation

Side Cut's rich river community is the ideal backdrop for past and current human interactions with nature.

- Called the Mississippi of the Great Lakes, the Maumee River's force is evident in this park's natural history.
- This Metropark boasts some of the best wildlife habitat and unsurpassed viewing opportunities.
- Steeped in history, lands around Side Cut have witnessed early Native American tribal gatherings, influential battles and slowly passing canal boats.
- Side Cut has always connected people to nature through recreational pursuits.

## What's In A Name?

Side Cut's name refers to its history as part of the Miami-Erie Canal, where a branch of it once cut into the Maumee River.

## Natural and Human History

Rock, water, land and ice define the river community at Side Cut Metropark. The foundation is sedimentary limestone (dolomite) bedrock – about 400 million years old – that can be viewed during low water at sites near Bluegrass Island and the Fallen Timbers Rapids. The park also features the mighty Maumee River, whose 6,000+ square-mile watershed is arguably the largest of the Great Lakes. The land on either side of the Maumee is called floodplain. It is essential for holding floodwater, slowing erosion and cleaning water that filters back through the earth into the mainstream after floods. Finally, ice actually builds the river community, too. When large chunks of ice crash against trees during thaws, numerous cavities form to become wildlife homes. Floodplain tree species are well adapted to such dynamic processes and re-sprout easily with new growth that helps stabilize the river's banks. All of these elements work together to create a rich river community that includes a priceless migratory bird pathway, some of the best walleye fishing in the country and critical habitat where watchable wildlife abound!

A section of river through Side Cut – known as the Foot of the Rapids – has been an important crossroads and meeting place throughout history. Early records suggest that native people farmed and fished these fertile lands and waters seasonally but moved to higher grounds, such as the Oak Openings Region, to pass the winter. The Battle of Fallen Timbers, fought just upriver in 1794, changed land use dramatically because it opened up the area for settlement. Evidence of another war is visible from Side Cut's Orange Trail. Looking southeast across the river towards Perrysburg is the Fort Meigs Monument, commemorating The War of 1812 between the British and United States.

Opening in 1842, the Maumee Sidecut was one terminus of the Miami-Erie Canal, where it cut into the Maumee



*Bedrock at Fallen Timbers Rapids near Jerome Road*



*White snakeroot*



*Common milkweed*

River. Here, a series of six locks raised and lowered boats where land elevations fluctuated. For awhile the Maumee Sidecut bustled with boats. Since Perrysburg boasted a very large port on Lake Erie, it proved valuable for unloading lake boat passengers and cargo for inland passage on the canal. But as 1850 approached, Toledo and its waterfront were growing rapidly too. Within the next decade, canal activity at the Maumee Sidecut became virtually obsolete.

In 1930, Side Cut Metropark was leased from Ohio to preserve the remnant canal lands. It became our first Metropark with just two picnic tables and a well. Today, locks 2, 3 and 4 can still be appreciated along the Blue Trail, and the park has several entrances, two covered picnic shelters, a popular playground, a meeting room, a Window on Wildlife, tennis courts and a peace garden, designed to create a serene environment where visitors can reflect and find peace in a noisy world.

## Plant Life (\* = state-listed rare species)

### Native wildflowers include:

Green dragon	Canada anemone
Wild ginger	Wild onion
Wild bergamot	Common milkweed
White snakeroot	New England aster
Leafy blue flag*	

**Trees/shrubs include:**

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Box elder          | Silver maple      |
| Eastern cottonwood | Ohio buckeye      |
| Hackberry          | Honey locust      |
| Willow             | River locust      |
| Black walnut       | American sycamore |

The white limbs and trunks of the American sycamore tree helped guide fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad.

**Native grasses/sedges include:**

- |              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Big bluestem | Gray's sedge             |
| Cordgrass    | Indian grass             |
| Switchgrass  | Flat stemmed spike rush* |

**Wildlife** (\* = state-listed rare species)

**Fish include:**

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Walleye             | White bass       |
| Smallmouth bass     | Channel catfish  |
| Common carp         | Longnose gar     |
| Common white sucker | Freshwater drum  |
| Bluegill            | Spotfin shiner   |
| Logperch darter     | Bluntnose minnow |

State endangered Lake sturgeons were common here historically.

**Amphibians include:**

- |                           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Blanchard's cricket frog* | Bull frog |
| Green frog                |           |

Common mud puppies have been known to occur in the Maumee River at Side Cut.

**Reptiles include:**

- |                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Snapping turtle                 | Midland painted turtle |
| Eastern spiny soft shell turtle | Common water snake     |
| Northern brown snake            |                        |

Note: No venomous snakes occur at Side Cut.

**Mammals include:**

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Red squirrel      | Coyote               |
| White-tailed deer | Mink                 |
| Ground hog        | Muskrat              |
| American beaver   | Eastern fox squirrel |

You can find evidence of the red squirrel along the Orange Trail, where it caches nuts in tree notches and builds middens (piles of seeds) on large logs.

**Birds near the river include:**

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Great blue heron  | Ring-billed gull |
| Belted kingfisher | Bald eagle       |
| Green heron       | Osprey           |
| Great egret*      | Killdeer         |
| Wood duck         | Mallard duck     |

**Birds of prairies, woods and edges include:**

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Baltimore oriole    | American goldfinch |
| Eastern screech owl | Red-tailed hawk    |
| Indigo bunting      | Chipping sparrow   |
| Field sparrow       | Carolina wren      |
| Orchard oriole      | Northern cardinal  |
| Great-horned owl    | Barred owl         |

**Insects include:**

- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Common white-tail dragonfly | Monarch butterfly |
| Hackberry emperor           | Cicada killer     |
| Firefly species             | Spittlebug        |

Macroinvertebrates such as mayfly nymphs and caddisfly larvae live under the rocks at rapids and riffles. Monitored for water quality, a higher variety of species indicates healthier water.

The crayfish is a crustacean that makes quarter-sized burrows, sometimes with 'mud ball chimneys,' along muddy river banks at Side Cut.

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.)



*Wingstem*



*Great blue heron*



*Red squirrel*



*Blanchard's cricket frog*



*Common whitetail dragonfly*



*Meadow spittlebug nymph*