

# Blue Creek Metropark Highlights

Please use this as a supplement to information provided on any maps of the site.

## 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 overtime 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.

Green space and natural areas at this large, multi-use complex include two quarries, several recreation fields, successional woodland, sustainable gardens, 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 also near the smaller quarry pond and 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.

In addition to Blue Creek, Mosquito Creek is also a tributary within this park's boundaries.

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 for deterring nonnative species.

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



*Barn swallow*



*Green heron*



*American kestrel*



*Praying mantis*

In the early 1800's, this area was part of a reservation for Native American tribes such as Chippewa and Ottawa, but by the 1840's, most of it became privately owned farmland.

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.

Metroparks native plant nursery operates out of Blue Creek Metropark. Yearly thousands of native plants of over 50 species and a dozen Ohio rare species are propagated, harvested and used to enhance native biodiversity throughout Metroparks at large.

Partners in land use at Blue Creek Metropark currently include Nature's Nursery Center for Wildlife Rehabilitation, Lucas Soil and Water District, and the Village of Whitehouse.

Nature's Nursery uses the former prison warden's house as its headquarters, and also maintains a large raptor

rehabilitation flight cage near Blue Creek's paved parking lot. Park visitors should avoid these areas to best protect the rehabilitating wildlife.

Lucas Soil and Water District maintains demonstrations farm fields and gardens on some of property.

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.

Plants of the limestone glade include (\* = state-listed):

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

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 dogwoods | Sandbar willow  |

**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  
Groundhog  
Coyote, Raccoon  
Striped skunk

Fox squirrel  
Red fox  
Muskrat  
White-tailed deer

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	

Protection also includes covering up with lightweight clothing and using insecticide when necessary.

There are no venomous snakes or Poison Oak here.



*Prairie dock*



*New England aster*



*Bronze copper*



*Glacial striations*