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

**Messages for Interpretation**

Protection is paramount as people enjoy one of “America’s last great places.”

- Oak Openings Preserve is part of the Oak Openings region, and its geology and specialized habitats are globally significant.
- The history of Oak Openings Preserve reflects changing needs and values of conservation over time.
- From blue ways to grassland habitats, the trails at Oak Openings Preserve offer recreation to a variety of park visitors while inspiring respect.
- Partnerships, monitoring, stewardship, education and restoration combine to help us preserve Oak Openings Preserve Metropark.

**What’s In A Name?**

The preserve name is reflective of the Oak Openings Region, so-named by settlers because they saw widely spaced oaks growing up amidst openings of prairie wildflowers and grasses.

**Natural and Human History**

The natural history of Oak Openings Preserve is most closely linked to sandy, post glacial beach ridges left behind about 12,000 to 13,000 years ago, when ancestral Lake Warren shrunk to form present day Lake Erie.

Other sites that are also part of the region include Wildwood Preserve and Secor Metroparks, Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve, and Kitty Todd Nature Preserve. Numerous smaller sites owned by Metroparks connect some of the larger tracts of land, and are known collectively as the Oak Openings Corridor.

Swan Creek and its tributary, Gale Run, are two permanent bodies of water in Oak Openings Preserve that are natural (not man-made). Part of the Maumee River watershed, they support significant migratory bird and wildlife habitat.

In the 1940’s and 1950’s, man-made lakes such as Mallard and Evergreen were constructed.

The preserve contains many vernal pools – semi-permanent bodies of water that are very high in biodiversity and critical as breeding habitat for amphibians and macro-invertebrates. Some notable species found there include fingernail clams, fairy shrimp, and salamander larvae.

The Springbrook Area, one of the earliest parts of the preserve, was acquired by Metroparks in 1931, and was then known as Springbrook Park. The preserve has since been purchased parcel by parcel and today it is the largest of our Metroparks.

Much of the stonework seen in shelters and buildings were original Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration building projects.

In the mid-1900’s, about 600 acres of non-native pine stands were planted mostly over sand dune areas. Today, these acres are being restored to their natural state.

The non-native emerald ash borer has destroyed a majority of ash trees in this preserve, leading to changes in its floodplain community.

In June 2010, a tornado tore through 150 acres of the southern portion of the park. Many damaged trees are still standing.

Oak Openings Preserve is the site for numerous research projects taken on by Metroparks as well as other academic and professional agencies dedicated to preservation and restoration efforts in this region.

**Plant Life**

Plant communities designated as globally rare by The Nature Conservancy exist here because of the varied landscape that includes savannas, prairies, floodplains and swamp woodlands. Prescribed burns, mowing, and...
invasive species control are natural resource management tools that help to support this preserve’s rare plant communities.

The region is home to well over 100 state-listed, rare plants – the greatest number in Ohio.

Some state-listed rare plants of interest in the preserve include:
- Wild lupine
- Prickly pear cactus
- Several species of orchids
- Spatulate-leaved sundew
- Many species of sedges
- Gaywings

Many kinds of native grasses include:
- Big bluestem
- Porcupine grass
- Little bluestem
- Indian grass
- Switch grass
- June grass

**Wildlife**

Some animals listed as rare or of concern in Oak Openings Preserve include:
- Karner blue butterfly
- Lark sparrow
- (federally endangered)
- Spotted turtle
- Blanding’s turtle
- Eastern box turtle
- Antenna waving wasp
- Several bat species

Some mammals include:
- Southern flying squirrel
- Coyote
- White-tailed deer
- Virginia opossum
- Red fox
- White-footed mouse

There are no known populations of bobcat or American beaver, although individual American beaver have been spotted recently within the park.

American badger is known in the region, but this ground-dweller is rarely observed.

Notable amphibians include:
- Gray treefrog
- Unisexual mole salamander
- Western chorus frog
- Smallmouth salamander
- Northern spring peeper
- Redback salamander
- Wood frog
- Common five-lined skink

Reptiles known to occur include:
- Snapping turtle
- Eastern hog-nosed snake
- Blue racer
- Common water snake
- Midland painted turtle
- Common five-lined skink

(Note: There are no venomous snakes known at Oak Openings.)

Known as one of Ohio’s birding ‘hot spots,’ some bird species to look for in Oak Openings include:
- Red-headed woodpecker
- Ground nesting sparrow
- Blue grosbeak
- Species
- Wild turkey
- Numerous species of
- Northern finch species
- Nesting warblers

(winter)

Some raptors include:
- Barred owl
- Cooper’s hawk
- Great horned owl
- Red-tailed hawk

Throughout the preserve, wildlife boxes to encourage breeding of native cavity nesting birds might be observed by park visitors. Look for Eastern bluebirds, Tree swallows and House wrens.

Staying on the trails will protect park visitors and pets from:
- Poison ivy
- Stinging nettle
- American dog ticks
- Mosquitoes
- Chiggers
- Poison sumac

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

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