

Swan Creek Preserve Highlights

Please use this as a supplement to information provided on any Metroparks maps.

Messages for Interpretation

An oasis of natural beauty nestled in south Toledo – Swan Creek Preserve Metropark is a place where wildlife find refuge and people find renewal.

- Complete with oxbows, floodplains and steep woodland banks, the winding Swan Creek is defined by its geology.
- Swan Creek Preserve's meadows and woodlands offer variety to native wildlife with diverse habitat preferences.
- Swan Creek Preserve plays a vital role in maintaining a natural corridor through our city.
- The natural backdrop of Swan Creek Preserve augments any visitor experience, from active recreation to a quiet stroll in the woods.

What's In A Name?

With its headwaters to the northwest in Fulton County and its mouth to the east in downtown Toledo, Swan Creek is the featured attraction of this preserve. Lore suggests that Swan Creek, like the upriver town of Swanton, was named for the numerous swans observed in the area.

Natural and Human History

Swan Creek's sub watershed (part of the Maumee River watershed) is 204 square miles and passes through globally rare habitats of the Oak Openings Region.

This creek is a significant blue-way connector to other Metropark lands such as Oak Openings Preserve, Brookwood, and Middlegrounds Metropark. Preservation of its floodplain (land adjacent to its mainstream) enriches natural and human quality of life in greater Toledo. Floodplains provide space for floodwaters, minimize erosion, filter water and support migratory pathways. A smaller waterway that is visible from this preserve's All-purpose Trail near Glendale Avenue is Heilman Ditch.

In places, u-shaped bodies of water called oxbows can be found. These have formed over time through natural forces of erosion and deposition. Easily recognizable on a map and by foot, some of Swan Creek's oxbows function similar to vernal pools – drying up by late summer or early fall and remaining generally fish-free. Vernal pools are aquatic life hot-spots, supporting organisms such as fairy shrimp, fingernail clams, and dragonfly larvae. Other habitats that add to this park's biodiversity include upland woods, floodplain woods and successional meadows. Entirely within Toledo city limits, Swan Creek Preserve is an important urban refuge for wildlife.



Oxbow



Sugar maple



Green frog



Round-lobed hepatica

Detailed research from one Metroparks Volunteer offers well-documented research of Swan Creek Preserve's land use history. Portions of the land were inhabited by both Native Americans and settlers prior to the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers. Additionally, records from that battle indicate that Native warriors camped along Swan Creek near to the present-day preserve both before and after the fight. However, in the decades that followed the Battle of Fallen Timbers, this land was deeded to United States settlers. From then until the mid-20th century, it became primarily farmland. By the 1960's, the land held over 50 individual plots that would need to be acquired for the park to form. Plots included many small farms, a horse stable, a small market and a sugar shack that used local Sugar maples and Box elders for syrup production. Swan Creek Preserve officially opened as our 8th Metropark in 1973, and today encompasses about 588 acres, some of which are east of Byrne Road.

Plant Life

Common trees and shrubs include:

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| American elm | Sugar maple |
| Box elder | Ohio buckeye |
| American Sycamore | Tulip tree |
| Black cherry | Sassafras |
| Red and White oak species | Paw-paw |
| Spicebush | Bladdernut |

The swinging bridge on the red connector trail is supported by Eastern cottonwoods.

Since 2003, the nonnative Emerald Ash Borer has caused a significant decline of Green and White ash trees in this park.

Spring woodland wildflowers include:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Skunk cabbage | Purple cress |
| Spring beauty | Wild geranium |
| Wild ginger | Jack-in-the-pulpit |
| Green dragon | Swamp buttercup |
| Sarsaparilla | White baneberry |
| Sessile trillium | Early meadow rue |
| Wood anemone | Blue cohosh |
| Round & Narrow-lobed Hepatica | |

Summer meadow wildflowers include:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Common milkweed | Pasture rose |
| Wild bergamot | Black-eyed Susan |
| Showy tic-trefoil | Tall ironweed |
| Canada goldenrod | New England aster |
| Spotted and Pale jewelweed | |

Wildlife

Birds year-round include:

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Tufted titmouse | White-breasted nuthatch |
| Black-capped chickadee | Northern cardinal |
| Mourning dove | American goldfinch |
| Wild turkey | Blue jay |
| Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied woodpeckers | |

Migratory birds include:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Indigo bunting | Baltimore oriole |
| Rose-breasted grosbeak | Song sparrow |
| Red-winged blackbird | Red-eyed vireo |
| Dark-eyed junco (winter) | |
| American tree sparrow (winter) | |

A variety of warblers such as Yellow-rumped, Black-burnian, and Cape May use the creek as a migratory pathway.

Tree swallows, House wrens and Eastern bluebirds use the nest boxes in the meadows.

Raptors include Red-tailed hawk, Cooper’s hawk, Great horned owl and Eastern screech owl.

Some mammals include:

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Eastern fox squirrel | Red squirrel |
| Southern flying squirrel | Eastern chipmunk |
| Woodchuck | Eastern mole |
| White-footed mouse | Short-tailed shrew |
| Striped skunk | Muskrat |
| Eastern cottontail | Raccoon |
| Red fox | Coyote |
| White-tailed deer | American beaver (uncommon) |

Seven species of bats have been recently documented at Swan Creek. All of Ohio’s bats are now listed as rare.

Some reptiles and amphibians that might be observed include:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Eastern garter snake | Northern brown snake |
| Eastern hognose snake | Common water snake |
| Midland painted turtle | Snapping turtle |
| Green frog | American toad |

The animal that makes quarter-sized burrows with ‘mud ball chimneys’ along the edges of Swan Creek is the Rusty crayfish.

Swan Creek is the site of an Ohio Lepidopterist Butterfly Monitoring transect. Noteworthy species are Delaware skipper, Banded hairstreak and Spicebush and Tiger swallow tails.

Gray, football-sized nests – often hidden during the growing season but visible on winter’s leafless branches, especially over trail and creek openings – are the work of Bald-faced hornets.

Fungi

Some often observed fungi include Turkey tail, Sulphur fungi, Giant puff ball, and Artist’s fungi.

A white, showy, mushroom seen late summer in oak woodlands is *Amanita bisporigera*, known as one of the ‘destroying angels’ for its toxicity. Eating it can be fatal.

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.)



Amanita bisporigera



Spotted jewelweed



Rose-breasted grosbeak



Bald-faced hornet's nest