

Oak Openings Preserve Highlights

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



Spatulate-leaved sundew



Wild lupine



Big bluestem



Prickly pear

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 (federally endangered)	Lark sparrow
Blanding's turtle	Spotted turtle
Antenna waving wasp	Eastern box turtle
	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	Blue-spotted salamander
Western chorus frog	Unisexual mole salamander
Northern spring peeper	Smallmouth salamander
Wood frog	Redback salamander

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 species
Blue grosbeak	Numerous species of nesting warblers
Wild turkey	
Northern finch species (winter)	

Some raptors include:

Barred owl	Cooper's hawk
Great horned owl	Red-tailed hawk

Birds and mammals that can be seen at the Window on Wildlife include:

Red squirrel	White-breasted nuthatch
American goldfinch	Raccoon
Black-capped chickadee	Indigo bunting
Tufted titmouse	Blue jay
Red-bellied woodpecker	Eastern chipmunk

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.)



Blanding's turtle



Blue racer



Eastern bluebird



Red-headed woodpecker



Lark sparrow



Gray treefrog