

# Middlegrounds Metropark Highlights



**METROPARKS  
TOLEDO**

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

## Messages for Interpretation

- The Maumee River and its location are central to the Middlegrounds past and future.
- The river and its historic ecosystems provided the necessary ingredients for wildlife and early people.
- The Maumee River and its location once made Toledo one of the largest transportation hubs in the United States.
- Restoring Middlegrounds improves important wildlife habitat and water quality along the Maumee River.
- Located in the heart of Toledo, Middlegrounds introduces urban populations to Metroparks.

## What's In A Name?

Folklore suggests that this site was once the “middle grounds” or neutral zone between the rowdy canalers and the brawling railroaders, and also contained most of the breweries. Over time, it became known as Middle Grounds.

## Natural and Human History

Middlegrounds Metropark is approximately 28 acres in size, consisting of Maumee River floodplain habitat and restored urban green space. The Maumee River boasts the largest watershed of all rivers in the Great Lakes system, draining over 6,600 square miles of land. The mouth of the Maumee and the original mouth of Swan Creek were historically what researchers call fresh water estuaries. Supporting thousands of acres of native grass called Wild rice, these wetlands attracted remarkable numbers of waterfowl who preferred this nutritious food source. 19th century alterations such as dredging, filling and water diversion caused serious loss of this now state threatened plant, and in turn, fragmented this important migratory stopover habitat.

Since its formation about 13,000 years ago, the Maumee River has enriched human life and served as an important route of travel among native people. Through the ages of nomadic hunters, toolmakers and woodland tribes, Native Americans, made the fertile Maumee River Valley their home. The fur trade, which depended upon navigable waterways such as the Maumee, was one of the earliest and most important industries in the United States. In early years of settlement, two cities, Port Lawrence and Vistula, merged to create Toledo. Toledo's location on the Maumee River made it highly coveted land, and Michigan and Ohio went to war over it in 1833. Holding Michigan's statehood hostage Congress forced the end of the war without any bullets



*Smooth sumac*



*Switch grass*



*Canada goldenrod*



*Biennial gaura*

causing casualties. Ohio kept Toledo, while Michigan was awarded the Upper Peninsula as compensation.

When the Wabash and Erie Canal was mapped out in 1832, the location of Toledo was chosen as one of the termination points. The canal was opened in 1845, and resulted in Toledo as a growing seaport along Lake Erie, with much commerce. In addition to the Wabash and Erie Canal, Toledo was connected to the city of Cincinnati by way of the Miami and Erie Canal.

Railroads signaled changing times for the canals, making them obsolete before some were even finished. In 1848, Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad purchased 30 acres of Middlegrounds for \$70/acre, and there built railroads, docks, the Island House, station bridges, and roundhouses. A roundhouse is a building used for servicing locomotives. These large, circular structures were traditionally located surrounding or adjacent to turntables and facilitated access when the building was used for train repair or storage.

A number of industries began to emerge in the city, including furniture companies, carriage makers, breweries, railroad manufacturing companies, and glass companies. Glass manufacturing requires sand, which was in abundance in the Oak Openings Region west of Toledo – a fact that links some of Toledo's industrial history with its natural history. By the mid-19th century, Toledo boasted a population of more than fifty

thousand people, making it one of the largest cities in the state. In 1888, twelve grain elevators stood on Middlegrounds land and had a capacity of 7.2 million bushels with daily receipts and shipments of 1.2 million bushels.

In 2006, Metroparks purchased the Middlegrounds with funds granted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. The following decade ushered in an unprecedented beautification and restoration initiative. Thousands of tons of dirt and debris were removed, soil was restored, and a creative, eco-friendly plan for cleaning the polluted water from Anthony Wayne Bridge run-off was implemented. Water from the bridge gets collected through pipes and channeled into a series of bio-swales that filter with the help of rocks and plantings. It then flows into a cove designed especially for kayakers before entering the Maumee River. In 2012, Rotary Club of Toledo celebrated its 100th anniversary and presented Metroparks with a donation of \$300,000 for the development of a shelter built in the form of an historic roundhouse. The stone ruins on the far south end of the park – formerly a possible barge dock and grain elevator – have been redesigned as a scenic river overlook. Fossils can be found in the limestone from the original structure there.

### Plant Life

Native plantings of the bio-swales include:

Dense blazing star	Stiff goldenrod
Black-eyed Susan	Cardinal flower
Blue vervain	Tall ironweed
Butterfly milkweed	Swamp milkweed
Switch grass	Little bluestem
Big bluestem	American hazelnut
Fragrant sumac	Buttonbush

Native trees/shrubs/vines include:

Eastern cottonwood	Green ash
Black locust	Mulberry
American sycamore	Hackberry
Weeping willow	Catalpa
Silver maple	Box elder
Gray dogwood	Smooth sumac
False indigo bush	Wild grape
Poison ivy	

Native and non-native wildflowers include:

Thoroughwort	Grass-leaved goldenrod
Queen Anne's Lace	Chicory
Common milkweed	Everlasting pea
Goatsbeard	Common St. John's wort
Red clover	Common teasel
Wingstem	Butter and eggs
Biennial gaura	Evening Primrose
Canada goldenrod	

### Native Wildlife

Northern cardinal  
House wren  
Mourning dove  
American coot  
(our Mud hen)  
Ring-billed gull  
Great egret  
Mallard  
Turkey vulture  
Monarch  
Pearl crescent  
Meadow katydid  
Black saddlebags  
Wandering glider  
Snapping turtle  
Northern brown snake  
Eastern cottontail  
Coyote

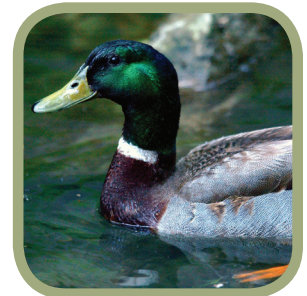
American goldfinch  
Catbird  
Downy woodpecker  
Herring gull  
Killdeer  
Canada goose  
Great blue heron  
Double-crested cormorant  
Clouded sulfur  
Carolina locust  
Goldenrod fly and gall  
Green darner  
Bluet damselfly  
Softshell turtle  
Virginia opossum  
Common water snake  
White-tailed Deer  
Raccoon

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.)



*Snapping turtle*



*Mallard*



*Pearl crescent*



*Great egret*



*Raccoon*



*House wren*