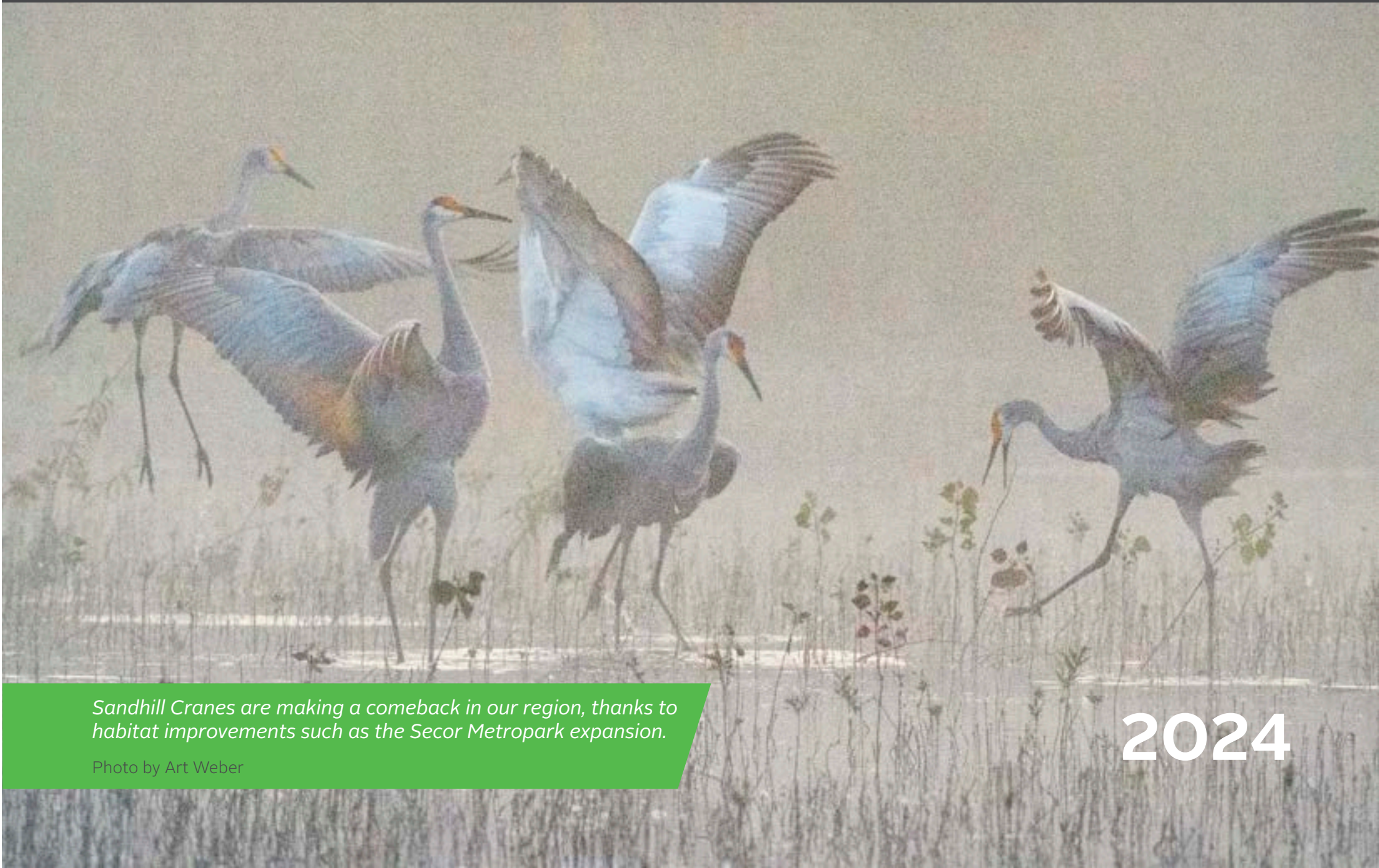




METROPARKS
TOLEDO

BUILDING COMMON GROUND...
TOGETHER



Sandhill Cranes are making a comeback in our region, thanks to habitat improvements such as the Secor Metropark expansion.

Photo by Art Weber

2024

Building Common Ground... Together

Common Ground. A space where all are welcome. Where friends, family and neighbors can gather in community to walk, run, laugh, break bread or sit quietly and watch a sunset. The Metroparks are Common Ground.

When the Metroparks Toledo Foundation relaunched in 2017, we were hopeful that the community was ready for us to reignite the spirit of public-private partnership and philanthropy in support of our great park system. We had no idea how much the community would embrace our efforts. Over the last 10 years, that common ground has grown by leaps and bounds. Thanks to taxpayer support, individual and corporate gifts, and state and federal grants, there are now 19 Metroparks – there is one just five miles from wherever you call home in Lucas County.

In these last seven years, Metroparks has won numerous accolades, including being the recipient of the 2020 National Gold Medal Award for excellence in parks and recreation management, the most prestigious honor in the industry. Such honors are a testament not only to the park system, but to the community that supports it.

Our newest Metropark, Glass City, opened in 2023 in East Toledo, and in its first year garnered several accolades including two prestigious best-of-show honors: an Innovation Award from the National Recreation and Park Association and the Governor's Award from the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association.

Construction on Glass City Riverwalk is well underway and on track to be about 50 percent completed by the end of 2025.

Our vision doesn't end with Glass City and Riverwalk, though. Plans include connecting parks to parks and parks to people by improving access and accessibility across Lucas County. With your support, we will achieve that vision.



THANK YOU
for being part of the Metroparks Toledo Foundation's mission. We can't wait to show you where we're going next. Together.

COMMON GROUND
For You. For Us Forever.



BUILDING, CONSERVING & SUSTAINING OUR NATURAL WORLD

The mission of Metroparks Toledo for 95 years has been to conserve the region's natural resources. Metroparks does this through a unique public-private collaboration that allows us to go beyond what taxpayer dollars can support -- to elevate our conservation efforts to national award-winning levels. The last year has seen outstanding progress in conservation, from expanding one park to seeing sections of another park designated as a State Nature Preserve.



SECOR RESTORATION

Restoration of a significant addition to Secor Metropark's natural area thanks to outside funding through grants and donations. A prairie, wetlands and tens of thousands of trees now thrive on a former golf course. Because of these habitat improvements, we have already seen nesting sandhill cranes on the property.

BLUE CREEK GLADE

Membership annual fund support ensured that Blue Creek Limestone Glade would have its final restoration complete before being officially dedicated as the 145th official State Nature Preserve by the Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves on December 20.

RESTORATION AND REFORESTATION

A notable result of donor support is the number of native trees and plants Metroparks has planted to support natural areas. Glass City Metropark and Riverwalk are recent examples of Metroparks' restoration efforts. What was once brownfield today is habitat for wildlife, a filter for runoff water into the Maumee River and a serene environment for recreation and contemplation.



BUILDING
A WORLD-CLASS RIVERFRONT PARK



A year after its official opening in 2023, Glass City Metropark has proven to be a beacon of recreation, drawing more than 600,000 visitors last year. Eighty acres are already open, offering year-round access to trails and green space, as well as family-friendly attractions such as adventure play. With features like interactive water play, equipment share programs for paddling sports, expanded boat access and roller and ice-skating at The Ribbon, there's something for everyone to enjoy, year round. And it's only the beginning.

With another 220 acres of riverfront green space in development, Metroparks will continue to invest in public spaces where our residents can gather to build life-long connections to each other and to nature. There will be more than five miles of new mixed-use trails and paths to connect communities on both sides of the river.

None of this could happen without the unique public-private investment that brought the park and Riverwalk from idea to reality. Beginning with the approval of a levy in 2020 followed by an outpouring of support from private and corporate donors as well as state and federal grants, Glass City has reclaimed our riverfront for local residents while attracting national attention for northwest Ohio.

The next phase of Glass City Riverwalk has begun in earnest on both sides of the river, while a privately funded pickleball and entertainment facility is a welcome addition to the historic Vistula neighborhood. Dave Zenk, executive director of Metroparks Toledo, said the hope is to continue drawing more people to the downtown riverfront.

"We think this is one of the most exciting projects going on in northwest Ohio today," Zenk said. "It's really about, at the end of the day, at the end of this project, fundamentally changing the regional identity of northwest Ohio by activating and improving a region's most significant asset, which is our downtown riverfront."



2024 BEST IN INNOVATION AWARD
National Recreation and Park Association

2023 FIRST PLACE AWARD
Ohio Parks and Recreation Association

2023 GOVERNOR'S AWARD
Ohio Parks and Recreation Association



BUILDING COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS

Common Ground means building connections with the community, ensuring everyone has access to their parks and the opportunity to learn about their natural resources. We do this through partnerships with community organizations and schools, whether on site at a Metropark or by bringing nature to classrooms and neighborhoods with educational programs and mini outdoor expos.



GLASS CITY ENRICHMENT CENTER

Fast becoming a hub of activity, Glass City Enrichment Center welcomes local preschoolers and school-age children for educational programs, and community groups that use the space for meetings, events and activities.

CONNECTIONS CAMP

For five weeks each summer, Metroparks Toledo works with community organizations and area schools to bring over 1,000 children from historically underserved communities to Nature Camp, free of charge. The weeklong Metroparks camp provides immersive experiences that:

- Encourage critical thinking
- Build social-emotional skills
- Boost mental well-being
- Promote mindfulness
- Calm fears of being outside
- Establish life-long conservation values

Last year, more than 1,100 children, 90 percent of them who live at or below the poverty level, attended a week of Nature Camp on site at a Metropark, thanks to support from Metroparks Members, corporate support, partners and many individual donors.

YOUTH CONSERVATION AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Over the last three years, Metroparks Toledo has partnered with Toledo Public Schools to host five students from Waite and Scott high schools for a paid internship. The students this year were involved specifically at Glass City Metropark and worked with Park Operations where they learned a variety of skills including landscaping, janitorial operations and maintenance. This program teaches key lessons to be more successful in future careers, and hopefully inspires them to consider a career in parks and recreation.

RAVINE PARK PLAYGROUND

Glass City Metropark includes the Ravine Area in the Garfield neighborhood, across Front Street from the park, where staff intended to remove an aging playground. However, when data showed how frequently kids were visiting the playground, the decision was made to replace the structure with a new, safe, partially-ADA accessible playscape. Ravine Area Playground is now a neighborhood asset thanks to a combination of support from Metroparks Members, the Good Natured affinity group, and private and corporate funding.

BUILDING & SUSTAINING **CLEAN, SAFE, NATURAL**



Individuals can make a difference in helping Metroparks deliver excellence, and last year brought some exceptional examples:

ROCHE DE BOUT

Thanks to a gift from Richard Chechak in honor of his late wife, Laura, the Roche de Bout overlook now provides a safe, accessible space for all to enjoy one of the best views of the Maumee River. For now, the overlook provides a view of the historic Interurban Bridge, which is slated for demolition by the state. When it is gone, the new overlook and interpretive signage will commemorate the bridge while providing incomparable views of the scenic Maumee River in both directions.

STAELIN POLLINATOR GARDEN

To honor their daughter Tiffany, the Staelin's worked with the Metroparks to install a new sculpture in the butterfly garden, which is dedicated in Tiffany's memory.

DOG FOUNTAINS

Individual donors can make a big impact on the park experience. Recently, a couple donated a gift to ensure that pups have access to water while walking through the park. They contributed the funds to install dog fountains at Secor Metropark and Wildwood Metropark. Their pup was very pleased with the results!



Two Names; One Place

Whether called Roche de Bout (foot rock) or Roche de Boeuf (buffalo rock) this massive limestone rock was even larger in years past, and an important piece of history. It was known as the scene of many Native American tribal ceremonies and later marked Anthony Wayne's Deposit, a significant staging site up river from the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers. Later, this rock supported another landscape feature, the Interurban Bridge. Built in 1908, bridge construction removed part of this rock to create the world's largest earth-filled concrete bridge which connected an advanced electric commuter railway.

Did You Know?
And is French for foot
believed to suggest the
location of this feature: rock
at the foot of the rapidly
flowing French River
resembling the rock's
resemblance
to a buffalo.



MEMBERSHIP IMPACT

When you become a Member, you support the four C's: Connectivity; Community; Conservation; and Clean, Safe, Natural parks. Here are a few of the areas that received Membership support last year.



GOOD NATURED SUPPORT OF NATURE EXPRESS

Good Natured is an add-on to general membership, an additional gift that is directed toward breaking down barriers to access that have kept historically underserved communities, groups and individuals from enjoying their Metroparks. The group votes on which of three initiatives will receive support. Last year, members overwhelmingly supported a gift for Nature Express, a bus service that brings students to Metroparks on field trips because the cost of a bus can be a barrier to visiting.

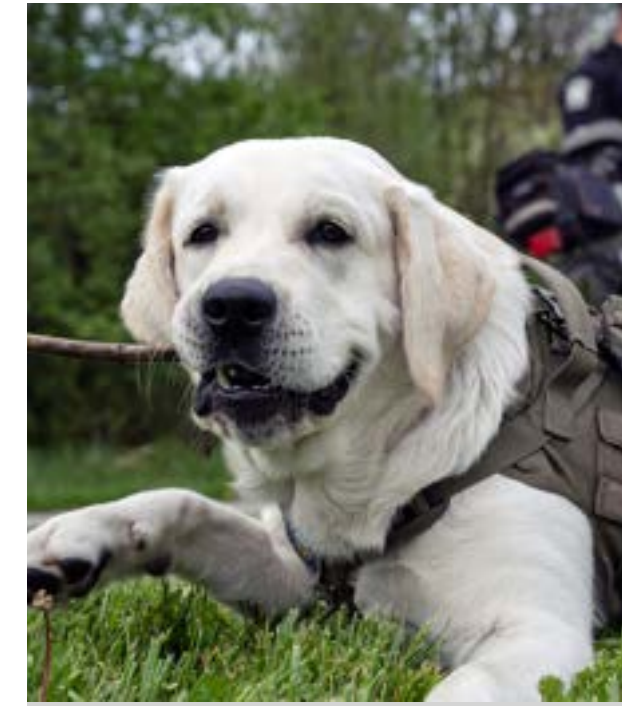


BIRD SAFE APPLICATIONS

Northwest Ohio is on one of the world's most active and diverse bird migration routes in spring and fall, and Metroparks takes the protection and conservation of its bird visitors very seriously. Bird-safe glass applications help ensure that birds, whether migrating through or year-round residents, will safely navigate around glass structures that can injure or kill them on impact. Bird-safe glass applications are also being installed at Windows on Wildlife soon, thanks to membership support.

WILDLIFE TRACKING SYSTEM

Wildlife tracking structures purchased with the help of Member dollars will help the Natural Resources Department track, monitor and contribute to ongoing research about wildlife.



METROBARKS SUPPORT OF TIMBER

MetroBarks is another add-on to Membership, a gift that members often make in honor of their pets, or a pet they know and love. With support from Members, last year Metroparks Rangers brought on board their first wellness dog. His name is Timber and he turned a year old in September. In that time, he has been a positive (and adorable) ambassador for Metroparks and law enforcement.

MANHATTAN MARSH SHELTER

Manhattan Marsh Metropark opening in 2019 was a milestone – it meant there was now a Metropark within five miles of every residence in the county. Thanks to membership and donor support, a picnic shelter at the park will be a new feature to the North Toledo park.



VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Metroparks would not be able to succeed at the level of excellence the community deserves without the time, talent and tireless support of a dedicated group of volunteers. Last year, volunteers contributed thousands of hours of time to the parks, an equivalent of tens of thousands of dollars in time.

VOLUNTEER TRAIL PATROL

Volunteer Trail Patrol (VTP) has accrued almost 10,000 combined hours on the trails this year. Each park had at least 80 hours of patrol time. VTP also assisted staff at events throughout the year and participated in training and educational opportunities with Rangers and other staff.

MANOR HOUSE VOLUNTEERS

Manor House volunteers had another successful year of providing tours of the Stranahan home, researching history and intriguing stories about the house, or serving tea and ice cream to visitors. They dedicated more than 2,000 hours of service to preserving the legacy of the estate and Wildwood Preserve.

BLUE CREEK NATIVE NURSERY

Blue Creek Native Nursery volunteers are invaluable to the seasonal collection and cleaning of seeds used to restore natural areas throughout the Metroparks. Thirty-nine volunteers contributed 1,225 hours of time to complete this hard but important work. This year, the Nursery celebrated its 20th anniversary. Cathy Hodel, who has been helping since 2013, is the longest serving seed nursery volunteer.

VOLUNTEERS OVERALL

More than 700 volunteers gave more than 25,000 hours in 2024. A very special thanks to Carolyn Powers who has contributed almost 2,000 hours of volunteer time -- primarily as a blacksmith at the Isaac Ludwig Mill at Providence. Jim Rejent, Robert Pulhuj and Paul Allen have nearly tied for second place with approximately 450 hours each.



LET'S CONNECT



Become a Member



Become a Volunteer



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