

Cannonball Prairie Metropark Highlights

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

Messages for Interpretation

Conservation, history and recreation combine at Cannonball Prairie Metropark for a unique Oak Openings Region experience.

- With its pond, restored prairie and woodland habitats, Cannonball Prairie supports diverse native plants and wildlife all within one small Metropark.
- Railroads, music and agriculture enrich Cannonball Prairie's history.
- This park makes a great stopover for distance hikers and cyclists using adjacent regional trails, and it offers exceptional recreational opportunities for everyone.

What's In A Name?

The word *cannonball* references a historic song, the Wabash Cannonball, as well as the Wabash-Cannonball Railroad that passed through here. The word *prairie* promotes its niche within the Oak Openings Region and alludes to restoration efforts at this site.

Natural and Human History

As a part of the Oak Openings Region, Cannonball Prairie Metropark offers exceptional biodiversity. Aquatic, prairie and woodland habitats here all support a large variety of native plants and animals. Dragonflies, turtles and frogs are featured near the constructed pond that is being managed to become a future fishing hotspot. Van Fleet Ditch, a former tributary that was part of the historic Swan Creek watershed, also passes through this park. The variety of native flowering plants in the restored prairies south of the Wabash Cannonball Trail provides high quality nectar sources to many kinds of pollinators, and bird diversity includes every group, from shorebirds to grassland nesters, warblers and woodland species. Finally, the upland woods habitat supports many kinds of spring wildflowers as well as tree species preferring sandy Oak Openings Region soils.

North of this Metropark, a regional, all-purpose trail will connect Secor, Wiregrass Lake, Westwinds and Cannonball Prairie Metroparks in the near future. Called the Moseley Trail to honor Edwin Moseley who compiled the first 'Flora of the Oak Openings,' it passes through some of the richest and rarest plant communities of this region. Its southernmost terminus is this park, where it then connects to the Wabash Cannonball Trail, allowing hikers and cyclists to continue west to Oak Openings Preserve Metropark or east to Fallen Timbers Battlefield Metropark.



Cannonball Prairie campsite



Spicebush swallowtail



Blue vervain

Prior to becoming a Metropark, this site was known as Springer Farms and for nearly a century was a very successful agricultural operation. During its height, over 1,000 acres of corn, soybeans, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers were cultivated. The park's past is also rich in transportation history. Built in 1855, the northern leg of the Wabash Railroad ran from Toledo to Chicago until 1969. This historic railroad had a musical connection. Folklore suggests that "Cannonball" comes from a fictional train created in 1882 by the song writer J.A. Roff. The song was so popular that the rail line named a passenger train after it – the Wabash Cannonball. Finally in the mid-1990s, this abandoned line became part of a rails-to-trails project, and it is now known as the aforementioned Wabash Cannonball Trail.

With funds made available from an unprecedented land levy that Lucas County voters passed for Metroparks Toledo in 2002, this property was acquired in 2013 from Springer Farms, L.P. Seven years later, in the midst of the

2020 Covid-19 pandemic, this small, multi-use Metropark opened to offer the community yet another fantastic outdoor destination with incredible recreational opportunities. Primitive woodland camping, canoeing, kayaking, and distance hiking and cycling can all be a part of the Cannonball Prairie Metropark experience. In just a short time, state-of-the-art fishing for youth will be added to that list of adventures.

Plant life

Trees and shrubs include:

- | | |
|------------|--------------------|
| Red maple | Eastern cottonwood |
| Green ash | Willow sp. |
| Sassafras | Witch-hazel |
| Elderberry | Box elder |

Woodland restoration involved planting many kinds of trees, including native oak and hickory species, Black walnut, Black cherry, Black gum, American sycamore, Northern hackberry and American basswood.

Notable native plants include:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Blue vervain | Black-eyed Susan |
| Swamp milkweed | Dense blazing star |
| Mayapple | Pennsylvania sedge |
| Bigleaf aster | Common white aster sp. |
| New England aster | Goldenrod sp. |
| Scouring rush | Common dogbane |
| Water hemlock | |

Wildlife

Birds include:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Blue jay | Northern cardinal |
| American goldfinch | Hairy woodpecker |
| Red-bellied woodpecker | Downy woodpecker |
| Bald eagle | Red-tailed hawk |
| Cooper's hawk | Red-shouldered hawk |
| Red-winged blackbird | Song sparrow |
| Tree swallow | Barn swallow |
| Baltimore oriole | Killdeer |
| Eastern kingbird | Green heron |
| Spotted sandpiper | American woodcock |

Grassland birds such as Dickcissel, Henslow's sparrow, and Grasshopper sparrow are ground nesters depending on the prairie habitats at this site.

Mammals:

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|-------------------|----------------------|
| Red fox | Coyote |
| White tailed deer | Eastern fox squirrel |
| Raccoon | Virginia opossum |
| Eastern mole | Weasel sp. |
| Meadow vole | White-footed mouse |
| Mink | |

Fishes:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Largemouth bass | Crappie |
| Bluegill | Channel catfish |
| Fathead minnow | |



Widow skimmer



Elderberry



Scouring rush



Mayapple



Spotted sandpiper



Dickcissel

Amphibians/Reptiles:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Mole salamander sp. | American toad |
| Gray tree frog | Spring peeper |
| Western chorus frog | Green frog |
| Eastern garter | Eastern ribbon snake |
| Eastern hognose | Common water snake |
| Midland painted turtle | Snapping turtle |

Insects:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Eastern bumblebee | Praying mantis |
| Clouded sulfur | Silver-spotted skipper |
| Spicebush swallowtail | Spring azure |
| Firefly sp. | Calico pennant |
| Common whitetail | Black saddlebags |
| Common baskettail | Eastern pondhawk |
| Widow skimmer | Familiar bluet |
| Variable dancer | |

Please stay on trails to protect plant and wildlife and stay out of poison ivy, ticks and other insects.