

Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve

Introduction

Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve is a 970-acre area that was dedicated as an interpretive nature preserve in 1975. This dedication process ensures that the area's scientific, educational and aesthetic values will be preserved indefinitely for use by all Ohioans.

Topography

The prime feature of the preserve is a narrow east-west gorge cut by the Licking River through the Blackhand sandstone formation. This cross-bedded, conglomeratic sandstone, well exposed in many places, creates a rugged topography. The dry hilltops are dominated by oak, hickory, Virginia pine and mountain laurel. Mixed hardwoods and a lush spring flora abound on the wooded slopes and ravines. The flood plain is predominantly sycamore, cottonwood, willow and box elder.

History

The name "Blackhand," for which the preserve is known, originated from a large, dark hand-shaped petroglyph that was engraved on the face of the sandstone cliff. Many Indian legends were passed on to early pioneers about the origin of the "black hand." Possibly the most prominent is the one that says the hand marked the boundary of a sacred Indian territory where no man was to raise his hand against another. The engraving was destroyed during the construction of the Ohio-Erie Canal tow-

path in 1828 when canal builders dynamited the cliff face.

Historically, the area around the gorge was very important to both the modern Indian and the prehistoric Mound Builders. The rich deposits of flint found nearby at Flint Ridge made the Licking River system a strategically important transportation route even before the advance of white settlers. By 1929, the gorge had witnessed the passing of the Ohio-Erie Canal, the steam powered Central Ohio Railroad and finally, the electric inter-urban trolley car.

Today the canal boats, trolleys and steam locomotives are gone, but a modern railroad has been relocated to higher ground and the stark remains of old canal locks dot the preserve. The inter-urban tunnel is on private property.

Visit Ohio's preserves

State nature preserves, like Blackhand Gorge, are open all year, from daylight to dusk. Notices about regularly scheduled hikes or programs are posted on bulletin boards in parking areas. Special programs or guided interpretive walks are available for groups upon request.



Rules and Regulations

1. Stay on designated trails.
2. Picking wildflowers or collecting rocks or other natural features is strictly prohibited.
3. Picnicking, camping and building fires within the preserve is prohibited.
4. Horses and motorized vehicles are not permitted on the trail. Bicycles, skates and skateboards are only permitted on the paved Blackhand Trail.
5. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
6. The preserve is open from + hour before sunrise to + hour after sunset.
7. Pets are only permitted on the paved Blackhand Trail and must be controlled on a leash not more than 6 feet in length.
8. Fishing is permitted in the Licking River in designated areas (please see map).

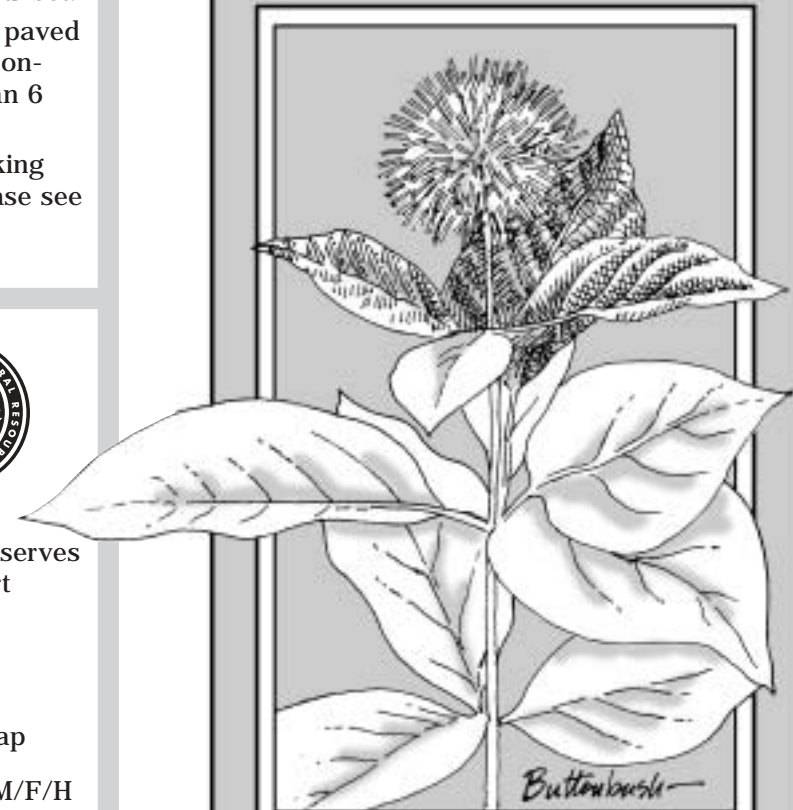


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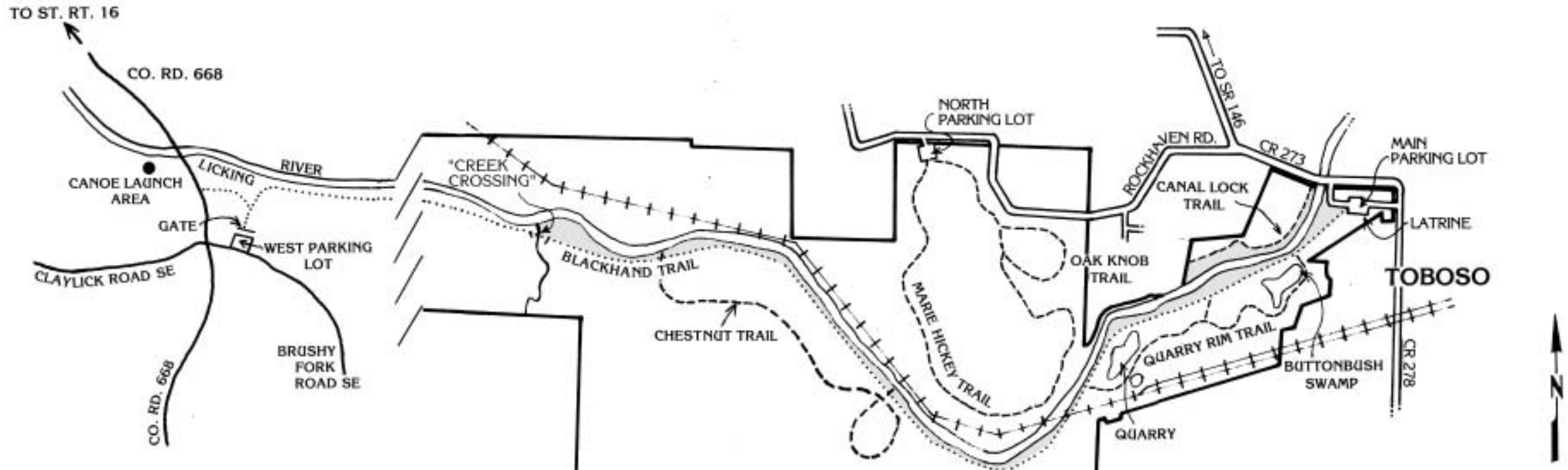
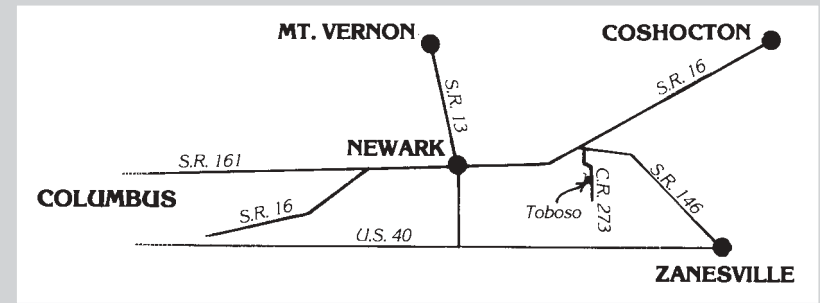
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TRAIL	MILEAGE
..... Blackhand Trail	4.26 Miles
----- Canal Lock Trail	0.4 Mile
----- Chestnut Trail	1.4 Miles
----- Marie Hickey Trail	2.0 Miles
----- Oak Knob Trail	0.6 Mile
----- Quarry Rim Trail	1.0 Mile
===== Private Property	

Fishing is permitted along the south bank of the Licking River from the Creek Crossing east to the Mail Parking Lot and along the Canal Lock Trail on the north shore.