

Wilderness Trail - a National Natural Landmark - features 50 rare plant and animal species. The 2.5-mile loop is part of the 13,000-acre Edge of Appalachia Preserve in Adams County in southern Ohio.

Wild

Parker House, Quilt Barn Loop on tour

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(postage and handling). Requests should be sent to 3223 Maggonner Riffle Road, West Union, OH 45693; 937-544-2188. It can also be ordered from the gift shop at the Cincinnati Museum Center at 513-287-7022.

For more information, contact the Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, 1301 Western Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45203; 513-287-7041. The Internet site is www.cincymuseum.org.

You can also contact the Ohio chapter of the Nature Conservancy at 6375 Riverside Drive, Suite 50, Dublin, OH 43017; 614-717-2770; www.nature.org.

The preserve can be reached at 937-544-2880 or 937-544-2188.

Formation of trail

The birding-history trail was created by General Motors, Audubon Ohio, the Nature Conservancy, the Ohio Arts Council, Cedar Works, LPK and the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio.

It was created to showcase the natural and historical treasures and was designed to be traveled in a weekend.

The brochure calls for discovering birds and going back in time.



Akron Beacon Journal

The trail begins at Interstate 275 and U.S. 52 on the eastern edge of Cincinnati and stretches eastward along the Ohio River to Shawnee State Park and state forest near Portsmouth.

44 attractions

The brochure lists 44 attractions, local stores, restaurants and overnight accommodations.

Attractions include East Fork, Adams Fork and Shawnee state parks, along with boat launch spots along the Ohio River and nature preserves.

Rankin House

Historical sites include the Rankin House State Memorial, the Ripley house of anti-slavery leader John Rankin and an important stop on the Underground Railroad.

A candle in the window of the hilltop house signaled it was safe for escaped slaves to approach.

An estimated 2,000 slaves passed through the farm of Rankin, a Presbyterian minister who left Tennessee because of his anti-slavery views.

The house, built in 1828, housed Rankin, his wife and their 13 children. Several family artifacts are displayed in the house.

Rankin's sons helped guide slaves to the next stop on the Underground Railroad, and none of his escaped slaves was captured.

You can climb the steps that lead from the Ohio River to the Rankin House. They are dubbed the Stairway to Liberty. You can look into the basement and the eaves.

The house is at 6152 Rankin Hill Road, Ripley. That's off U.S. 52. Admission is \$3. It is open from June through October. Call 937-392-1627 or 800-752-2705. The Internet site is www.ripleyohio.net/rankin.htm or www.ripleyohio.net

ohiohistory.org.

Also in Ripley and closer to the river was the home of John Parker, a slave who bought his freedom in 1845. He settled in Ripley and ran an iron foundry.

At night, he risked his freedom by rowing across the Ohio River in a small rowboat to ferry escaped slaves back across. Slave owners put a \$1,000 price on Parker's head.

More historical sites

The Parker House is at 330 N. Front St., Ripley. Hours vary. Call 937-392-4188 or see www.johnparkerhouse.org or www.ripleyohio.net/parker.htm.

Another spot on the tour is the Serpent Mound State Memorial near Peebles, where you will find the largest serpent mound in the world.

Other sites include the birthplace of President Ulysses S. Grant in Point Pleasant, the Ripley Museum and the Ohio Tobacco Museum at Ripley.

Quilt Barn Loop

The trail serves up birding attractions throughout the year.

Spring migration produces the greatest number of species. That can include 30 warbler species in one day. In breeding season, you may find the blue grosbeak, chuck-will's-widow and prairie and yellow-throated warblers in Adams County.

The drive also includes an optional Quilt Barn Loop in Adams County.

Local residents, helped by the

Ohio Arts Council, created heritage quilt squares on barns, in much the same way that Mail Pouch chewing tobacco signs used to be painted on barns.

It is off state Route 247 and north of U.S. 52.

For information on the Appalachian Discovery Trail, check out www.appalachiandiscovery.com.

For information on local restaurants and accommodations, see www.adamscountytravel.org and www.browncountyohio.org.

Winter woods

Two Ohio state parks will present winter tree-identification workshops on Jan. 22.

The programs will be held from 10 a.m. to noon at the day-use lodge at Mary Jane Thurston State Park near McClure southwest of Toledo and from 1 to 4 p.m. at the nature center at Van Buren State Park near Van Buren in Hancock County.

For more information, call Mary Jane Thurston at 419-832-7662 and Van Buren at 419-832-7662.

Nordic tops

The site www.xcskiresorts.com has a list of favorite cross-country ski trails.

The top nine trails, compiled by ski experts, are:

- Beetlejuice, Silver Star, British Columbia.
- Valley Trail, Methow Valley, Washington.
- Farwell Mountain Trail, Carter's Cross-Country, Maine.

• Mountain Road, Bretton Woods, N.H.

• ABR's River Trail, Ironwood, Mich.

• The Wave, Jackson Ski Touring Center, N.H.

• Rodeo Yellow Jacket, Sun Mountain Lodge, Washington.

• Vasa Pathway, Traverse City, Mich.

• Vista's Trail, Boyne Nordic, Mich.

Best for backpacking

California was voted the No. 1 backpacking state in the country in Backpacker magazine's survey of readers.

California got 29 percent of the vote, edging out No. 2 New Hampshire.

New preserve

Ohio's Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District has established a 350-acre biodiversity reserve at Piedmont Lake.

Plans call for managing the land at the eastern end of the lake in Belmont County to attract and encourage birds and other wildlife species.

The Piedmont Lake site is first biodiversity reserve among the 38,000 acres managed by watershed district.

Most development is restricted; shoreline development, staking, and gas and oil drilling are barred.

Bob Downing can be reached at 330-996 or bdowning@thebeaconjournal.com