

Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve

Introduction

Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve is a 956-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 Black Hand 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 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 it marked the boundary of a sacred Indian territory where no man was to raise his hand against another. The petroglyph

was destroyed in the 1820s during the construction of the Ohio-Erie Canal towpath when canal builders blasted 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 the electric CN&2 interurban trolley line.

Today the canal boats, trolleys and steam locomotives are gone. A modern railroad has been relocated to higher ground, but the stark remains of old canal locks still dot the preserve.

Visit Ohio's Preserves

State nature preserves, like Blackhand Gorge, are open all year, from daylight to dusk.



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 are prohibited.
4. The preserve is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.
5. Horses and motorized vehicles are not permitted on the trails. Bicycles, skates and skateboards are permitted only on the paved Blackhand Trail.
6. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
7. Pets are permitted only on the paved Blackhand Trail and must be controlled on a leash not more than 6 feet in length in hand.
8. Fishing is permitted in the Licking River in designated areas (please see map).

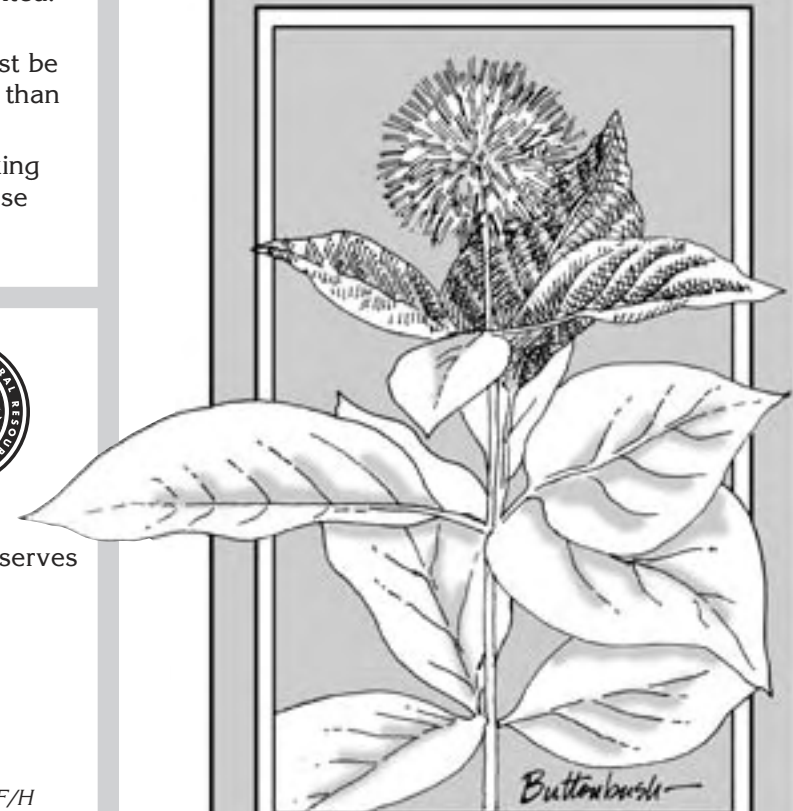


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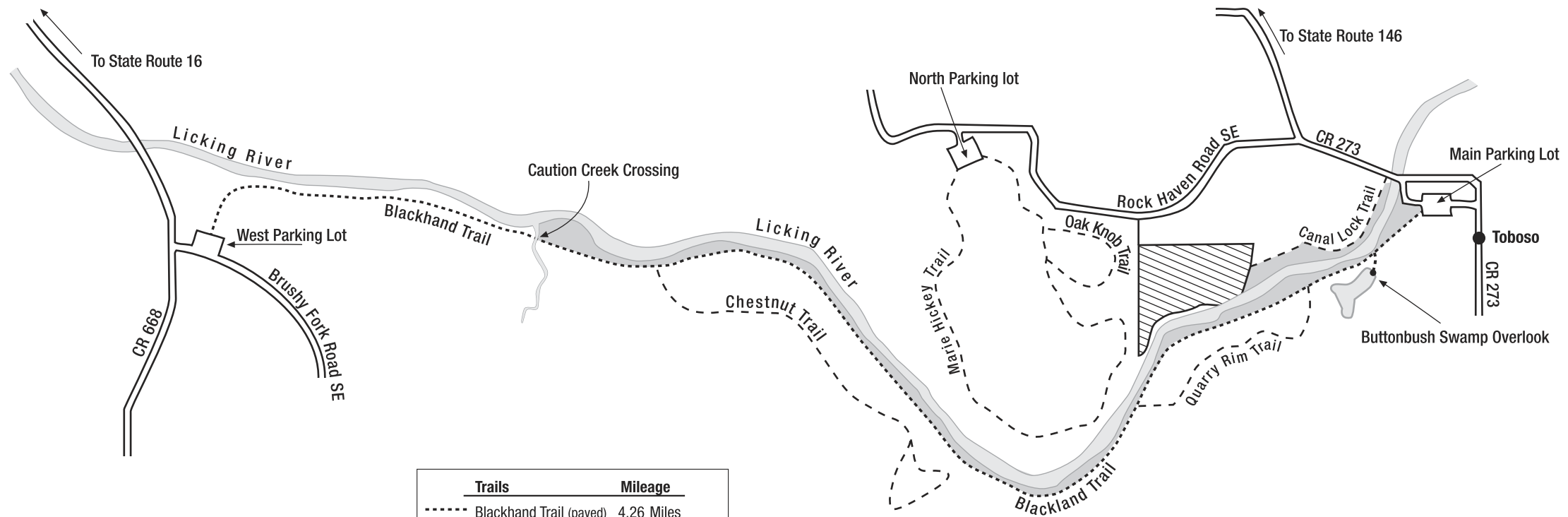
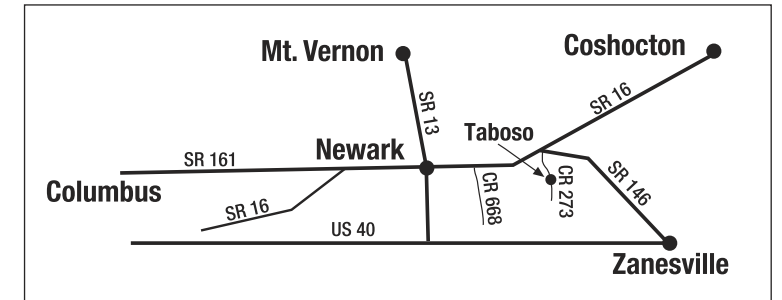
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Trails	Mileage
Blackhand Trail (paved)	4.26 Miles
Canal Lock Trail	0.4 Mile
Chestnut Trail	2.3 Miles
Marie Hickey Trail	2.0 Miles
Oak Knob Trail	0.6 Mile
Quarry Rim Trail	1.0 Mile

 Private Property

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

