

THE ROOKERY is a 603-acre tract located in southwest Munson Township. The Chagrin River, the Interurban Railroad Junction and one of the largest nesting colonies of Great Blue Herons in the county are all special features of this park. It is Geauga Park District's intent to protect this natural area in perpetuity.



"THE JUNCTION" ON THE INTERURBAN RAILROAD

HISTORY

From the early days of Geauga County, farming has been the predominant occupation for many land owners. Much of The Rookery property not considered wetland has reforested itself from pasture or crop land. The silo stands as a monument to this past era.

From 1899 until 1925, the Cleveland & Eastern Traction Company operated an electric-powered interurban railroad from Cleveland to Geauga County. Located at The Rookery is The Junction, a wye in the tracks where interurban passengers coming from Cleveland could either continue northeast to Chardon or wait for a connecting trolley to Burton and Middlefield. This very remote area had a power substation and a passenger/freight station.

To alleviate flooding and drain standing water, much of the Chagrin River was channelized in the late 1960s. In 1968 TRW, Inc. bought more than 1,000 acres intending to build a



BIRD WATCHING DURING A NATURALIST LED HIKE ALONG THE INTERURBAN TRAIL

professional 54-hole golf course for its employees. By the late 1980s however, TRW's focus had changed and many of its employees moved from Geauga County. There was no longer a need to complete the entire course or maintain the property. The 27-hole golf course and surrounding acres were sold.

In April 1991, Geauga Park District purchased some of the surrounding land and named the property The Rookery. Trails and facilities were established, and the park opened in October 1997.

Additional acreage was added in 2003; that untrailed forest preserve is accessible only during park-guided programs.

NATURAL HABITATS

Located in an old glacial lake bed, much of the land within The Rookery is wetland. Open marshes and swamp forests are found throughout, enhanced by the work of beavers.

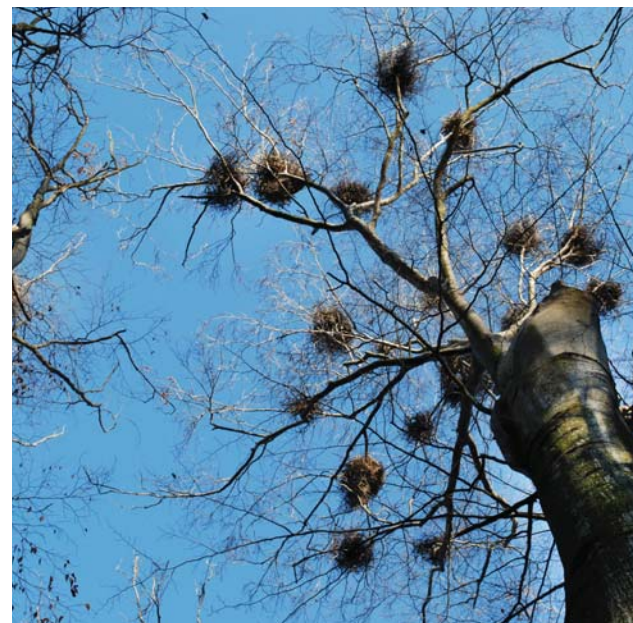


VIEW OF THE WETLANDS FROM THE INTERURBAN TRAIL

Meandering its way through the park is the Chagrin River. Having been channelized in the past, several abandoned oxbows of the original channel are now isolated wet pockets.

The property around the Silo Picnic Area is brushland – a transition from agriculture to woodland. A beech-maple forest and several red maple stands are also found, providing habitat for a variety of animals including songbirds such as Wood Thrush and Veery.

A large forested preserve in The Rookery provides cold water habitat for state-threatened native brook trout, introduced by the Ohio Division of Wildlife.



HERON ROOKERY

One of the largest Great Blue Heron rookeries in Geauga County is located within the preserve section of the park. The herons nest in tree-top colonies of a few to several hundred nests. This isolated colony is known to have been in existence for more than 60 years and has more than 150 active nests. During the critical nesting stage, herons are apt to abandon eggs or young if disturbed; therefore, the heron rookery itself is only accessible on naturalist-led programs when the herons are not nesting.

TRAILS

Hikers, bicycle riders and cross-country skiers can follow the Interurban Trail, a long-abandoned section of the Cleveland & Eastern Railroad along wetlands, over the Chagrin River and past the Junction.

The Woodcock Trail, a shorter loop trail, features a deck overlooking an abandoned oxbow of the Chagrin River.

FACILITIES

Park visitors may enjoy a picnic lunch at one of the tables in the Silo Picnic Area with water and restrooms available nearby.

For larger groups, the enclosed Great Blue Heron Lodge with its stone fireplace and beautiful wood paneling is available by reservation or on a first-come, first-served basis.

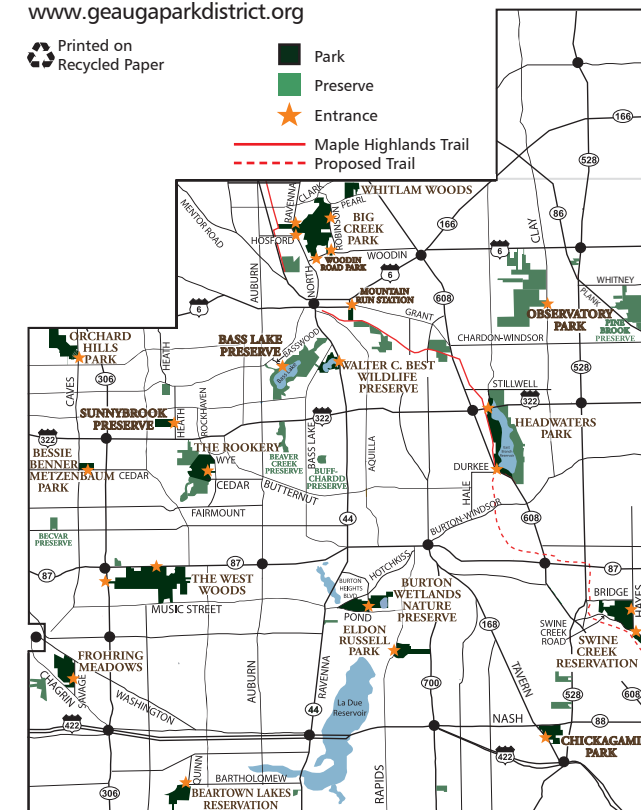
The Rookery

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT

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MAP KEY

- Park Entrance
- Woodland
- Mowed Areas
- Wetlands
- Shrub/Meadow
- Preserve
- Restroom Location
- Observation Deck

AMENITIES

Silo Picnic Area

TRAILS **MILES**

Woodcock Trail 0.4

Interurban Trail 1.0

