

# Guide to the Edge Trail

at Cincinnati Nature Center's Rowe Woods

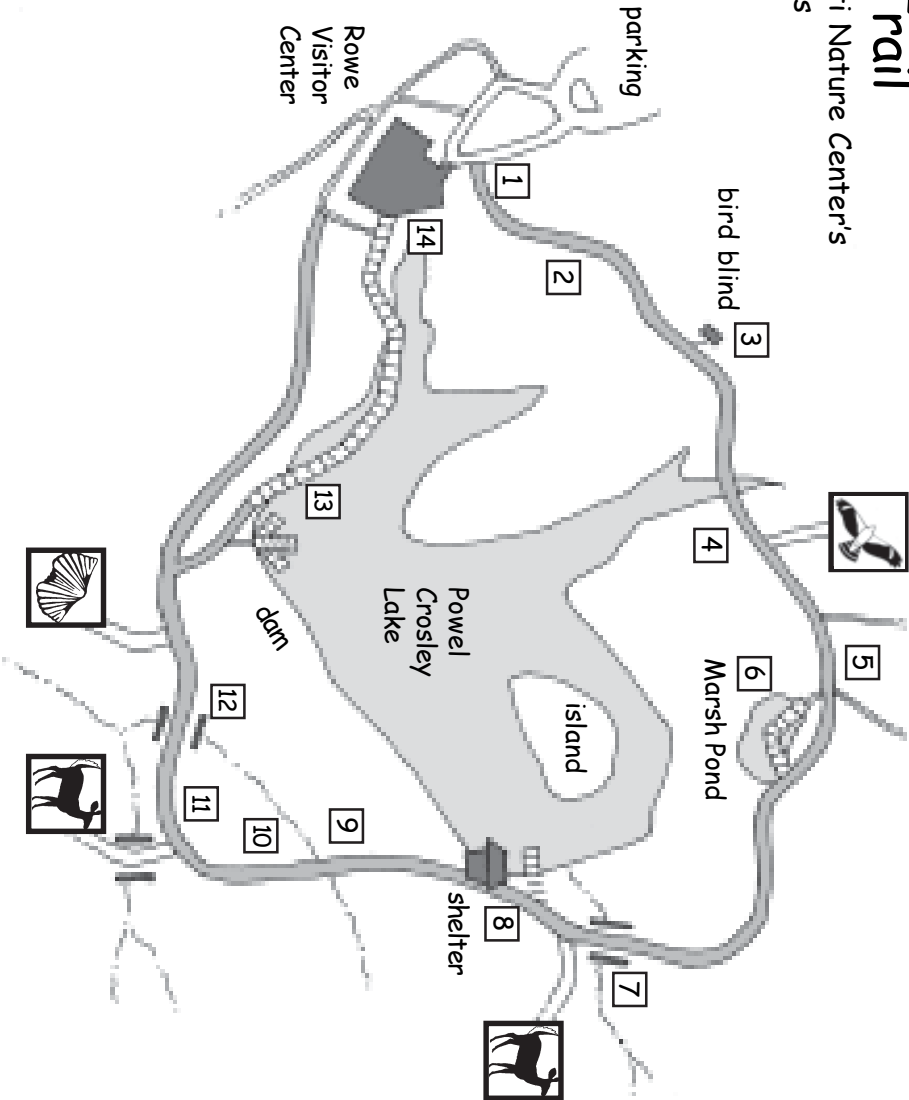
The Edge Trail guides the visitor through overlapping habitats of field, forest and pond. In each habitat you'll find plants and animals specially adapted to live there.

This easy .6 mile loop trail can be hiked in about 45 minutes. Follow along with a Rowe Woods Trail Map or the map on the back of this guide. Enjoy the diversity and beauty of the Edge Trail in all seasons!



## Edge Trail

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1. *Leaves of Three, Let Them Be.* Sun-loving Poison Ivy, *Toxicodendron radicans*, thrives along the trail entrance. It's identified by alternate compound leaves composed of three leaflets. Leaflet shapes may vary – from smooth (entire) edges to toothed or lobed edges. After turning brilliant orange and red in autumn, the leaves drop, making leafless stems difficult to see. Mature vines with dense hairy roots cling to tree trunks. Because touching any part of this plant may cause severe skin irritation, it is best to avoid all contact. A variety of wildlife enjoys eating the clusters of cream-colored berries that ripen in fall.



Poison Ivy



Cincinnati Nature Center

Rowe Woods

4949 Tealtown Road

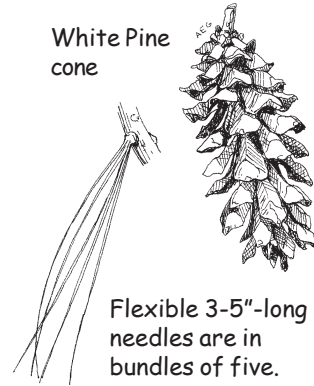
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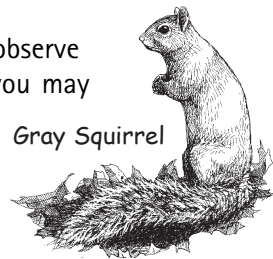
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2. Your nose may inform you that you have entered a small grove of White Pine trees, *Pinus strobus*. The tall, straight trunks are circled with horizontal branches. Each year a new whorl of branches emerges from the tree top to absorb the energizing sunlight. Shaded by tiers of upper branches, lower limbs often die and fall to the ground. To estimate the age of a White Pine, simply count the whorls of branches from the base of the trunk to the tree top.



The thin, flexible evergreen needles are grouped in bundles of five. They allow filtered sunlight to reach the forest floor and illuminate the fallen pine cones containing seeds. In this particular grove, there is evidence of human planting. Can you find it?

3. Enter the Jennifer D. Moppin Bird Blind and observe wildlife up close. With patience and silence, you may see Carolina Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers, American Goldfinches, Northern Cardinals, Gray Squirrels, Raccoons and White-tailed Deer.



4. Notice the numerous Pin Oak trees, *Quercus palustris*. They thrive in hydric or wet soil. Their branching pattern makes them easy to identify: upper branches reach toward the sky, middle branches extend horizontally, and lower branches droop toward the forest floor.

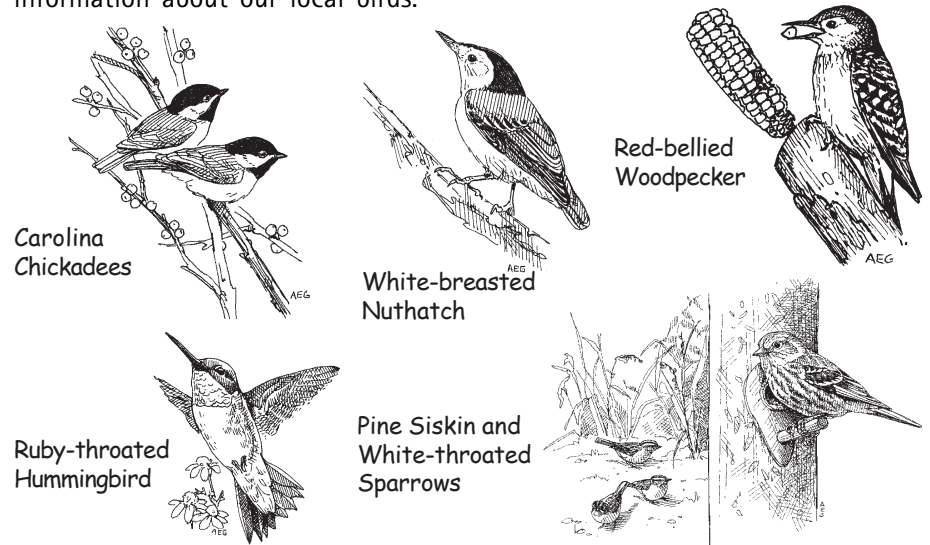


Cross the bridge and walk to Lookout Trail marker. Look to your left to see a group of Bald Cypress trees, *Taxodium distichum*. Related to Redwoods and Sequoias, these introduced water-loving trees are native to southern swamplands. Bald Cypress trees produce round cones and drop their leaves in winter.

13. Continue up the hill to the boardwalk. Powel Crosley Lake was built in 1967 to provide a habitat for aquatic birds and wildlife. In summer, male bluegills, with a sweeping motion of their tails, scoop out plate-sized nests in shallow water near the shore. After the female lays her eggs, the male guards the nest from predators. Turtles and fish swim to the dock in response to human footsteps as a Wood Duck hen and her young paddle along to the shoreline. In winter, squirrels, minks, and foxes use the frozen lake as a pathway, leaving behind their delicate footprints in the crystalline snow.



14. The bird feeding station at the Rowe Visitor Center attracts numerous species of birds and mammals. The close proximity to Crosley Lake provides access for waterfowl such as Canada Geese, Mallards and Wood Ducks. On snowy winter days more than 50 Northern Cardinals may be seen at one time. The station provides a wonderful place to observe interaction between different species, as well as among members of the same species, as they vie for their share of food. During building hours, come inside for the best seat in the house to watch the activity. The Edward M. Thayer Viewing Window has photos of birds and mammals and information about our local birds.

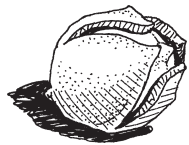


**10.** This shady, moist stretch of trail provides an ideal environment for fungi and mushrooms. Fungi consist of a network of tiny filaments called mycelia that live in soil or rotting wood. When environmental conditions are right, the mycelia develop spore-producing reproductive structures or mushrooms.



Mushrooms come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, textures and smells, depending on the species. Incapable of producing their own food through photosynthesis, fungi feed on dead and dying organic matter, absorbing nutrients through the enzyme-secreting mycelia. Fungi play a major role in the efficient decomposition of dead matter, hastening its return to soil. Look for mushrooms on fallen trees and stumps. See the exhibit in Rowe Visitor Center to learn more about local fungi.

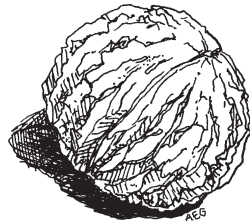
**11.** Many forest trees produce nuts that are eaten by squirrels, or buried for later consumption. Forgetful squirrels are responsible for planting the seeds that become forests. In early fall, scan the forest floor for acorns, walnuts, hickory nuts and buckeyes that have escaped a squirrel's keen sense of smell. A pile of nut shells is evidence of a squirrel's recent meal.



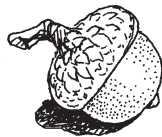
Bitternut  
Hickory nut



Shagbark  
Hickory nut



Black Walnut



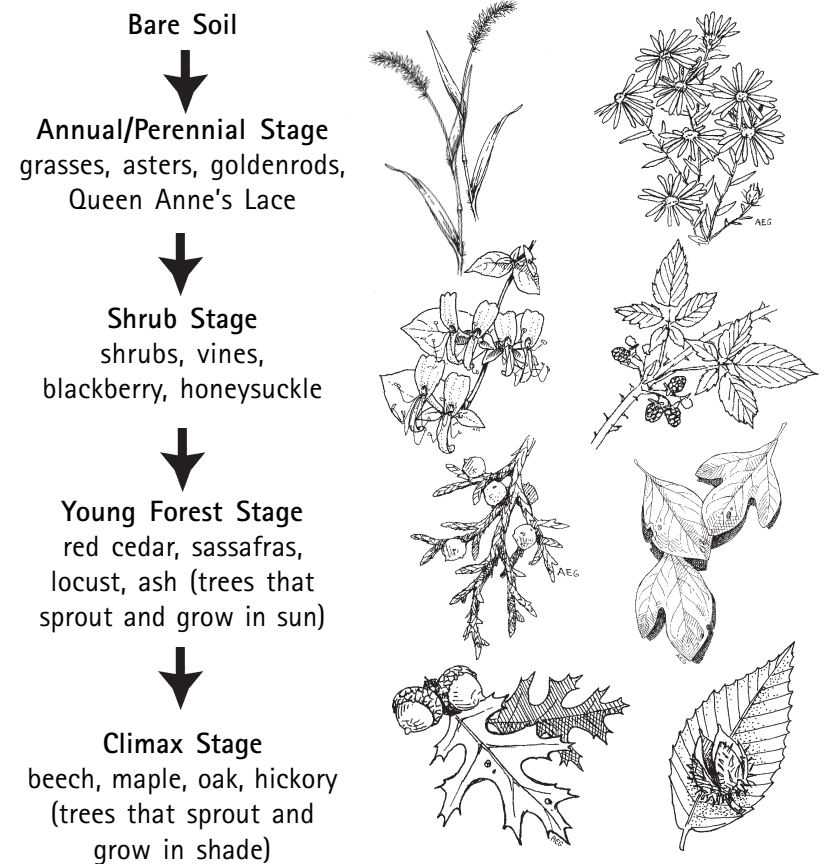
Pin Oak acorn

**12.** Stop at the bridge. The rocky creek bed below falls steeply down the hillside and provides shelter for small mammals. Look for loose dirt where chipmunks have tunneled under exposed rock layers. Cross the bridge. On the right is the Powel Crosley Lake dam. This dam blocked the flow of a small stream whose now dry valley is still evident on your left.



Eastern Chipmunk

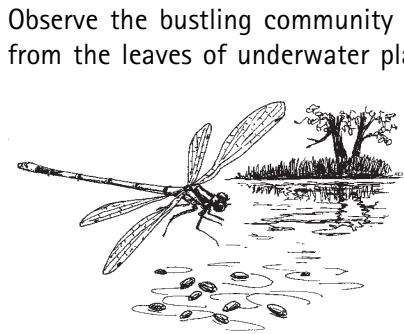
**5.** Succession is an orderly, predictable sequence of plant communities that develop in an area over time. In southwestern Ohio, the succession stages from bare soil to the final "climax" community are shown in the diagram below. The succession process can be disrupted in many ways – by mowing, plowing, logging, storm damage or forest fires.



As you enter the open field on your left, look for the plants that indicate particular stages of succession. Walk side paths to look for goldenrod galls – enlarged growths on the main stem or upper branches of goldenrods. Galls are produced by the plant in response to an insect depositing an egg in the plant. The hardened gall becomes a protective case for the developing larva. A gall with a hole may signify that the pupa has already emerged as an adult. If the hole is funnel shaped, the pupa has been extracted and eaten by a Downy Woodpecker.



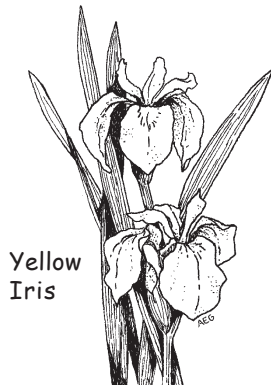
6. Enter the Marsh Pond boardwalk. Look at the plants growing along the shoreline. Through photosynthesis, green plants produce food, store energy, and give off oxygen. Algae and cattails provide shelter for nesting and hiding organisms. In spring showy Yellow Iris, *Iris pseudacorus*, emblazon the shoreline with golden yellow. In mid-July, fragrant white "golf ball" flowers of Buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, attract Tiger Swallowtail butterflies, Silver-spotted Skippers, Hummingbird Moths and bees.



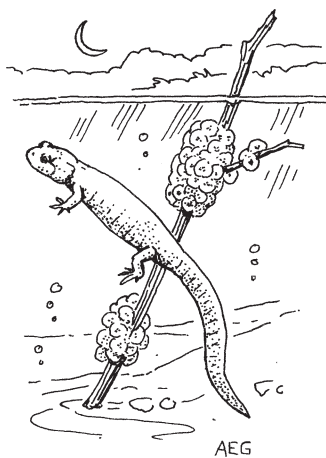
dragonfly and whirligig beetles

Whirligig beetles circle around the pond's glassy surface in search of gnats. Two sets of eyes, one for above the water surface and one for below, make them formidable hunters.

Marsh Pond is an important habitat for breeding amphibians. In early spring, Jefferson Salamanders emerge from underground tunnels and crawl to this pond to breed. Golf-ball-sized jelly egg masses attach to stems and twigs below the water's surface. A salamander larva has external feathery gills behind its head while frog tadpoles have internal gills. Jefferson Salamander young leave the pond in late summer and burrow underground.

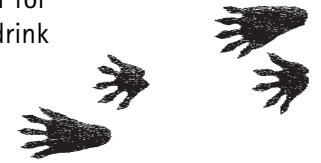


Yellow Iris

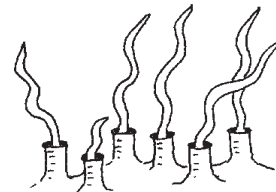


Jefferson Salamander and egg cases

7. Stop at the bridge and scan the creek bed for animal tracks. As the creatures come to drink or search for food, they leave footprints on the soft mud or snow. Can you identify any recent visitors? A raccoon perhaps?



8. Walk down the steps to the dock. In the past, water on either side of the dock was several feet deep but it has steadily become more shallow. Soil eroded from the nearby woods is carried downstream by the creek and deposited in Powel Crosley Lake. Although the siltation has forced fish to move farther out into the lake, tubifex worms flourish in the soft mud shaded by willow trees.



tubifex worms

In summer months, you may notice a plant with spikes of showy magenta flowers lining the shore. This attractive but invasive plant is Purple Loosestrife, a horticultural escapee that invades wetlands, displacing native plants.

The Edward M. Thayer shelter is an excellent place to quietly observe lake activity. Spiders spin their delicate webs between the wooden rafters while Organ Pipe Mud Dauber Wasps plaster their tubular nests on the walls. The female wasp places paralysed spiders within each mud cell for her larvae to eat. Look closely for openings where new adults have chewed their way out of their cells.

Look straight ahead and you'll see an island. Protected from predators by water, the island is a favorite nesting location for Canada Geese.

9. Look around and see the numerous vines. Thick woody grape vines dangle from tree canopies. With roots anchored in the soil, the mass of energy-collecting leaves is far above in the tree tops. Virginia Creeper attaches to the trunks of trees with numerous rootlets similar in appearance to poison ivy. Nonnative invasive vines such as Japanese Honeysuckle, Asian Bittersweet and Wisteria engulf trees at forest edges, inhibiting their growth.

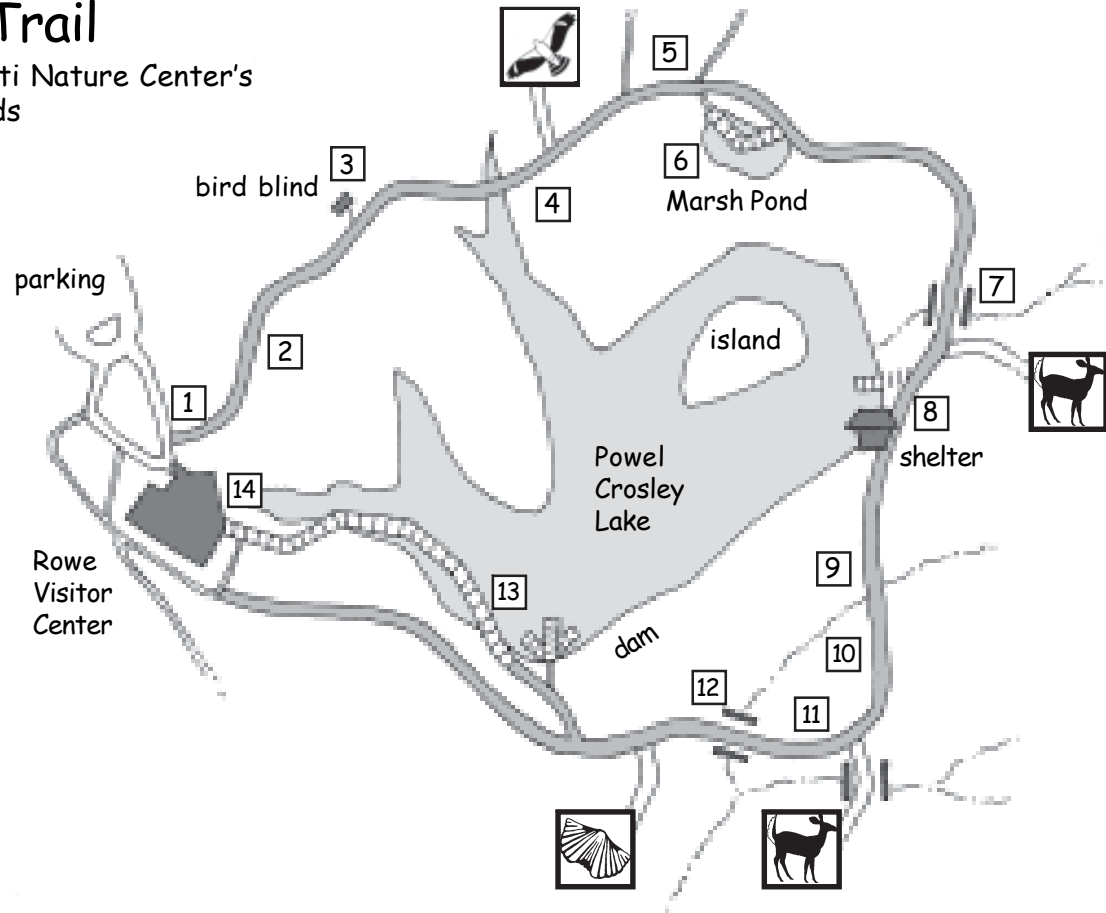


Virginia Creeper



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