

## STATE NATURE PRESERVES

Conkle's Hollow was purchased in 1925 by the state of Ohio and in 1977 the hollow was dedicated as a state nature preserve by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Parks and Recreation; management and protection responsibilities were subsequently given to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

Nature preserves are legally-protected natural areas representing the finest examples of Ohio's natural resources. The preserve is open daily from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset throughout the year. Please help us protect this special place by observing the rules and regulations posted near the entrance.

To learn more about Conkle's Hollow, please attend one of the interpretive programs advertised on the area's bulletin board or call (614) 265-6453.

*This brochure was made possible through your donations to the Natural Areas Income Tax Checkoff Program. Thank you for your support!*



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# Conkle's Hollow State Nature Preserve



## WELCOME

Located in the scenic Hocking Hills region, Conkle's Hollow is one of the most spectacular features in the area. Here one can find the unequaled beauty of sheer cliffs of Black Hand sandstone rising nearly 200 feet above the valley floor. The deep, cool gorge, which is only 100 feet wide in places, is considered one of the deepest in Ohio.

Conkle's Hollow features numerous waterfalls cascading over sandstone cliffs. The cliff tops with their magnificent overlooks and the quiet gorge beneath offer visitors an opportunity to explore a variety of habitats, each with its own unique plant and animal communities.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Not much is known about the use of what is now called Conkle's Hollow by prehistoric Ohio Indians. Although some Adena and Fort Ancient cultures apparently frequented the Hocking Hills region, there is little evidence that permanent habitation was established. Nevertheless one can easily imagine hunting parties using the overhangs of the hollow for temporary shelter.

In historic times, the Shawnee and Wyandots inhabited this area. Both groups used a nearby trail that linked West Virginia and central Ohio. The Wyandots were said to have believed that the deep ravines were mysterious and dreary, but the region was still one of their favorite hunting grounds.

Conkle's Hollow takes its name from the inscription- W.J. Conkle 1797- once visible on the west wall of the gorge. However, there is no further

evidence that other early settlers used this rugged ravine for anything more than hunting and occasional logging.

## GEOLOGIC HISTORY



About 350 million years ago, this region of Ohio lay under the waters of a vast inland ocean. Rivers flowing into this ancient sea carried coarse and fine grained sands, depositing them in large wide deltas much like the present-day delta at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Over millions of years, the sea deepened and these sand deltas were buried by finer textured sediments. Eventually these sedimentary deposits were compressed to form a thick, hard layer of sandy textured rock, which we now call Black Hand sandstone. This sandstone layer, which can be more than 250 feet thick, is the predominant bedrock found throughout the entire Hocking Hills region.

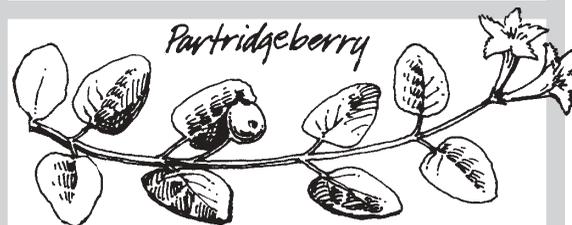
Great forces of energy within the earth caused the land surface of eastern North America to gradually rise, eventually forming today's Appalachian Mountains. As the ocean waters drained away, the new land surface dried out

and became subject to the process of erosion by surface water and climate extremes. The newly-exposed sediments were weathered away, layer by layer, and washed onto some distant river delta.

Today, the Black Hand sandstone layers are now the uppermost of these past sediments and they in turn are being acted upon by erosional forces. If we could return in a million years or so, the beautiful, highly sculptured bedrock, so common to us now, would be just another geologic memory. Perhaps new gorges, rock shelters and dazzling waterfalls are yet to be created.

The encroachment of a series of great continental glaciers across most of Ohio, starting about two million years ago, greatly changed the existing physical features of Ohio's landscape. However, these glaciers did not directly carve Conkle's Hollow. Erosion intensified because of increased precipitation and streamflow related to the giant ice sheets. The closest and last glacier, about 18,000 years ago, stopped about six miles northwest of the preserve.

The process of erosion is far from over. The gentle stream which flows through Conkle's Hollow is still at work, carving the stream bed deeper and cutting back the faces of its waterfalls. By human reckoning, this process is infinitely slow. But given enough time, even a tiny stream can make spectacular changes.



## PLANT COMMUNITIES

The plant communities of Conkle's Hollow were at the mercy of the last continental glacier. Many species, which flourished in cool climates preceding the advancing ice, continue to maintain healthy populations in the cool, deep recesses of Conkle's Hollow.

Today, in the gorge itself, after thousands of years, you can still find plants such as Canada yew, teaberry and partridgeberry, species that are generally associated with more northern climates. The gorge also contains a number of fern species.

The dry, shallow soils of the preserve's ridges support sparse stands of oak and pine, and contain several species of endangered native orchids. Here and on the exposed cliff faces wherever their roots can find a crack or crevice, blueberries, huckleberries and mountain laurel thrive. The damp valley soils favor the growth of massive hemlock, tulip poplar and other hardwoods.

## ANIMAL POPULATIONS

Although the black bear, mountain lion, elk, fisher and marten disappeared from the Hocking region long ago, others like the beaver, white-tailed deer, grouse, turkey and bobcat have made a sometimes dramatic recovery.

Springtime offers an echo of diversity from bird and amphibian songs. Annual bird counts attest to the many warblers, vireos, flycatchers and thrushes that remain in and around Conkle's Hollow to foster their offspring.