

GO!

Hiking

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makes the trail a must in the spring.

The park is also great in the springtime because the Great Miami River Trail bisects Taylorsville MetroPark from north to south. As bikers begin to kick the rust off their wheels for the season, Taylorsville is a wonderful stop-over when taking a spin on the region's largest bike trail network.

Germantown MetroPark's Bob Siebenthaler Natural Area, 7101 Conservancy Rd., Germantown

As soon as those first days of spring consistently show up, the trees in the Bob Siebenthaler Natural Area begin to wildly bloom.

Careful to avoid the muddiest of spots – Germantown MetroPark has miles and miles of wooded trails that are beautiful and buzzing in the spring, though some areas can become difficult to navigate in wetter conditions.

Pearl's Fen, 4535 Byron Road in Fairborn

One of the area's newer wetlands, Pearl's Fen opened in August 2020, and it's a springtime haven. The wetland is flourishing with native plants that begin springing back to life this time of year.

In addition to its aesthetic qualities, Pearl's Fen, named for the late owner of the land, extends the distance hikers can explore when visiting the nearby Oakes Quarry Park at 1267 E Xenia Drive in Fairborn. When walking Pearl's boardwalk, you will find another trail that leads to the back portion of the fen and eventually connects to a trail leading to Oakes Quarry. Visitors can now enter at either Oakes or Pearl's and hike the entirety of both parks.

For more information, visit metroparks.org.

GET ACTIVE

Dayton group provides spring hiking tips

By Debbie Juniewicz
Contributing Writer

It's said that April showers bring May flowers, but they also make for muddy trails.

And those muddy trails can be more than a temporary inconvenience. According to Leave No Trace – an organization that provides innovative education, skills, research and science to help people care for the outdoors – it could take 10 to 30 years for an ecosystem to recover from irresponsible off-trail hiking or camping.

The solution is simple, although a bit messy.

"Walk through the mud and not around it," said Andy Niekamp of Dayton Hikers. "This prevents our trails from getting wider and vegetation from getting trampled."

Niekamp also suggests checking for trail alerts or closures on park websites or Facebook pages before venturing out.

"Spring rain can bring flooded creeks and rivers, and floodwaters can cover and block low-lying trails," he said. "Know before you go."

Navigating slippery, muddy trails requires preparation and patience. The Dayton Hikers weigh in with some advice on conquering challenging trails.

Navigating the trails

"If a puddle exists, take a moment and pull a big stick through the edge of a lower side to allow the puddle to drain." – Andy Bergeron

"I recommend bringing trekking poles when walking through the slippery, muddy areas. Sunscreen is good since leaves aren't out on the trees yet. I like hiking boots vs. shoes for more ankle stability." – Terri Reinheimer-Kerivan

"I swear by my Merrell



Gravel trails or boardwalks allow you to enjoy the little bursts of spring without getting muddy.



April showers will bring May flowers, but also muddy trails. DEBBIE JUNIEWICZ PHOTOS

hikers and Bombas socks, but there are many other great choices. I always bring a light backpack for water and snacks, maybe sunscreen and bug spray for warmer months." – Alan Limke

"For beginner hikers, I highly recommend waterproof boots and gaiters to keep comfortable in case you do hit mud. Walking sticks are helpful for balance in thick mud." – Kristen Beireis

"Gaiters will keep some of the mud off your pants. Walk slower on muddy trails to keep from falling. If you have fallen in mud, you have officially been baptized as a true hiker." – Laurel Slate

"Having a clean pair of shoes waiting in your car for the drive home is often a good idea. Muddy boots can go in a plastic bin on the floor

'Walk through the mud and not around it. This prevents our trails from getting wider and vegetation from getting trampled.'

Andy Niekamp
Dayton Hikers

of your car or in the trunk, so your car doesn't get muddy." – Elizabeth Delaney

Steering clear of the mud

If you'd prefer to keep your hiking boots clean, there are some alternatives to natural surface trails. Dayton Hikers offer some suggestions.

"For people who don't have specialized gear or don't want to deal with all of the mud, any of the area bike trails provide opportunities to get out in nature. My favorite is the Little Miami

Scenic Trail, specifically the sections from Xenia to Yellow Springs and from Xenia to Corwin. Both sections cross or run along rivers and streams and are beautiful this time of year. There are multiple access points, so people can choose whatever length of hike that suits them." – Luwanna Linkhart

"The forested parts of the purple trails at Possum Creek and Germantown are in decent shape right now. So are the Heron and Ghost trails at Sycamore State Park.

For paved, I'm a fan of Woodland Cemetery and the bike path that runs from Deeds Point up to Wegerzyn. Our bike paths are a really nice option right now because not only do you still get to enjoy plenty of wildlife and foliage, you're helping give those soupy trails a chance to rest." – Katie Thimons

"The purple trail at Bill Yeck (Smith House entrance) is a good choice for something that's fairly free of mud. And the yellow trail at Cox Arboretum MetroPark is typically a good option." – Elizabeth Delaney

"For people who want to avoid mud, I recommend the bike trails, Charleston Falls and Stillwater Prairie Reserve, where they have gravel down on the trails." – Denyse Moore Carone