

(Map Location 1) The trail parallels the Hocking River as it meanders between riparian floodplain and upland forest. As you descend the trail west of the Community Center, you will pass under the State Route 33, Stimpson Ave, and Richland Ave bridges in that order. **Look** closely at the bridge abutments. There you will find colonies of *cliff swallows* and their gourd-shaped (pictured below), mud-beaded nests clustered together at the concrete "arch." The bridge abutments serve as surrogate cliffs, providing habitat where naturally it does not exist. In general, swallows can be identified by their sharp-pointed wings that enable their swift and graceful swooping and sweeping over open water and meadows. They have short



but wide bills to capture and consume flying insects on the wing. Cliff swallows can be distinguished from other swallows by their spotted undertail coverts and bright white forehead. If you are lucky, you can observe all five species of Ohio swallows (i.e., *barn, tree* (pictured here), *northern rough-winged, bank, and cliff*) as well as the *purple martin* and *chimney swift* along this bike trail.

(Map Location 2) Southwest of the trail, there is an area called the Ridges, formerly the Athens Lunatic Asylum (1874-1993), which is now owned and operated by Ohio University. It hosts one of the largest *black vulture*, pictured here, roosts found in



Southeastern Ohio. Look for the birds circling over the ridges. Often, they will be soaring with their more widespread cousin, the *turkey vulture*. Both vultures are large black/brown birds with broad wingspans and featherless face mask. The redhead of the turkey differs from the dark gray of the black vulture. In-flight, black vultures can be distinguished by a pearly, white-colored patch on their wings' underside tip, while the turkey vulture has a larger whitish band on the trailing edge of its wings. Although the black vulture is primarily a carrion consumer like the turkey vulture, it can demonstrate predatory behavior by attacking and sometimes killing calves, piglets, and lambs shortly after birth. Soaring with the vultures, look and listen for the *red-shouldered hawk*, which nests above the Hocking River on The Ridges. Unlike the solid red colored tail and harsh, rasping scream of the more common *Red-tailed hawk*, the adult red-shouldered hawk has a banded tail and a clear and sharply articulated *keeyuur*.

“Observation is more of the mind than of vision; our attitude is the secret of original observation.”

Merrill C. Gilfillan

BIRDING ON OHIO'S BIKEWAYS Hockhocking Adena Trail (Athens to Nelsonville) Birding Ohio's Bikeway Guide

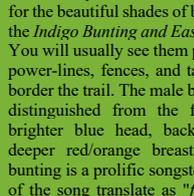


The 17 mile Hockhocking Adena Trail, according to the Athens County Visitor Center web site, "is named in honor of the first inhabitants of this Southeastern Ohio region. "Hockhocking," which means "bottleneck" or "twisted," was the native Shawnee name for the Hocking River; "Adena reflects the history of the Adena Indians who lived in the Hocking Valley 2,000 years ago."

Plan your ride! Birds are most active at Dawn and Dusk!

This trail lies within the Western edge of the unglaciated portion of the Alleghany Plateau, the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Hills and dales characterize this region with steep ridges, and narrow ravines cut through by small streams and creeks. Athens County is 70% covered by upland and bottomland deciduous forest, which is occasionally fragmented by commercial, residential, and agricultural land types.

(Map Locations 3-4) As you enjoy the ride west along the Hocking River's open corridor, **look** for *great blue herons, spotted sandpipers, Canada geese, and mallards*, resting and feeding on or around the sandbars and mudflats within the river channel. North of West Union St will pass through West Community Recreational Park, community gardens, and the City of Athens well fields. **Look** for the beautiful shades of blue that adorn the *Indigo Bunting* and *Eastern Bluebird*. You will usually see them perched on the power-lines, fences, and taller trees that border the trail. The male bluebird can be distinguished from the female by its brighter blue head, back, wings, and deeper red/orange breast. The Indigo bunting is a prolific songster; the phrases of the song translate as "fire fire where where here here." You will see and hear this strikingly beautiful bird all along the trail. **Listen** also for the *common yellowthroat warbler*, and *eastern meadowlark* in the un-mowed grass fields and experimental prairies southeast of the trail. The song, transliterated, sounds like "wichey wichey wichey." **Look** for a yellow bird with a black facial mask (pictured here). The "Lone Ranger" bird is a nickname for this diminutive warbler.



The Eastern meadowlark is a favorite song of mine. **Listen** for a high pitched mellow whistle that emanates aesthetically over the grasslands. Meadowlarks prefer singing from conspicuous locations such as fence posts, power lines, and plants that rise above the grasses. **Look** for a rather plump bird with a brilliantly colored yellow breast surmounted by a glossy black crescent or gorget. **Listen** for the "bouncing ball" song of the field sparrows, which are abundant in the well fields along this stretch of the bike trail.

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(Map Location 5) As you veer north and cross over the Hocking River towards The Plains, note the backwater sloughs on the east side of the trail. These swampy bottomland forests occur intermittently along the trail from the old railroad trestle crossing to the intersection of State Route 682. **Look and listen** for the stunning *prothonotary warbler*,



pictured here, an inhabitant of these riparian wetlands. This swamp warbler is adorned with contrasting blue/gray wings against a rich gold body. Its song is a loud, emphatic, but an even-paced "sweet, sweet sweet." This is the only cavity-nesting warbler in Ohio, preferring to use holes in standing dead trees called snags in or over the water. Aldo Leopold, the author of "A Sand County Almanac," remarked that "The real - jewel of my disease-ridden woodlot is the prothonotary warbler... The flash of his gold-and blue plumage amid the dank decay of the June woods is in itself proof that dead trees are transmuted into living animals, and vice versa. When you doubt the wisdom of this arrangement, take a look at the prothonotary." The lack of nesting cavities is a limiting factor negatively impacting the populations of many bird species, including this warbler. To offset this problem, human-made nesting boxes have been put up in several suitable locations along the trail. Nest boxes have made a significant contribution to the recovery of species like the wood duck and eastern bluebird. Perhaps it will help the prothonotary warbler as well.

“As I come over the hill. I hear the wood thrush singing his evening lay. This is the only bird whose note affects me like music, affects the flow and tenor of my senses, my fancy, and imagination. It lifts and exhilarates me. It is inspiring.”

Henry David Thoreau

(Map Location 6) As you continue north of State Route 682, the trail enters one of the ride's loveliest stretches. It runs along the base of a steep hillside forest with large sandstone outcroppings cut by deep ravines, covered by a mature deciduous hardwood tree stand. In the spring, abundant woodland wildflowers such as the white-flowered trillium (pictured here), blanket the ground



extents of mature forests for nesting, especially the wood-warblers. **Listen** under the "mid-wood" on the east-facing slope for the "teacher teacher teacher" of the *ovenbird*. This ground-nesting warbler derives its name from the dome-shaped nest with a side entryway, like the open door of an oven. High above the "mid-wood" in the Bluebell Preserve, **listen** for a canopy dwelling songster called the *cerulean warbler*. Trying to find this songbird in the dense green foliage of the canopy, 60-80 feet above the ground is literally a "pain in the neck." Instead, **listen** for its buzzy three-part "beer beer beer si si zreeee" song. Two more common species found in the Bluebell and Poston Preserves are the *wood thrush* and the *Acadian flycatcher*. Even though the wood thrush is a plain, earth-tone, olive-reddish brown color by sight, its song is not of this world. **Listen** quietly for the wood thrush's rich-sounding, airy, flute-like notes echoing from the forest's understorey. The phrases can be written "eelolah ahholee."

In contrast to the wood thrush, the Acadian flycatcher's song is a simple two-syllable "pi-zza." This non-descript little olive-gray flycatcher blends perfectly with the shades and shadows of grays and greens found in the forest understorey. Flycatchers perch upright and perfectly still on a branch, waiting patiently to hawk an insect flying by. They can be difficult to see until you hear their song and detect which direction to **look**. Finally, before you leave the preserves, stop and be attentive to the steep hillsides and the deep recesses of the stream-cut ravines and **look and listen** for the *Louisiana waterthrush*. They are among the first warblers to return to Ohio in early spring, inhabiting forest along fast flowing streams and rivulets found in steep ravines. **Look** for its "bubble gum" pink legs as it works the rivulets for aquatic invertebrates, note its tail pumping habit, as it forages. Its rollicking song has been described "ti tsiu tsiu ichew ichew," with the last jumbled phrases descending quickly as if tumbling off the tongue's edge

(Map Location 7) When you reach the County Road 4 Bridge, **look and listen**. This has been a favorite birding spot in Athens, long before it was a bike path.



Before you exit the mature forest on both sides of the trail, listen for the *hooded warbler* and the *American redstart*. The hooded can be identified by the jet-black "monk's cowl," covering a bright yellow face with a cloak of olive green-yellow bedecking its back and breast. It occupies dense understories of mesic forests like the one along this trail. It contributes to the chorus of woodland songsters a loud and fast, but musical "twee, twee twee-teeo," the last note is strongly accented. This song can sometimes be confused with one of many song arrangements of the American redstart. But if you **listen** closely, you will find the redstarts version to be slower, much weaker, and without the strong accent on the last note - a series of "tsi tsi tsi tsi tseeo" or some variation thereof. Like the hooded, the redstart also inhabits the understorey and mid-canopy strata of the forest, particularly the edges and areas near water. With flashy red or yellow patchwork on its wings and tail, the redstart should not be mistaken for any other forest bird species. The section of trail you just traversed is one of the most diverse and richest areas for interior forest songbird communities that you will find on any bikeway in Ohio. There are several birds in these two forest preserves, I have not described, including: *Eastern wood-pewee, yellow-throated vireo, red-eyed vireo, Kentucky warbler, Northern Parula, yellow-throated warbler, and scarlet tanager*.

(Map Location 8) The final leg of your journey will take you to Robbins Crossing and the Campus of Hocking College, a two-year school of higher education specializing in technical programs to train students for jobs in various professional fields, including natural resources. Robbins Crossing is a small pioneer village that recreates the people and settings of a 19th century southeastern Ohio community. Students from Hocking College's Parks and Museum Education program conduct reenactments throughout the spring, summer, and fall.



Birds are plentiful on campus. Near the bike trail you can expect to see and hear any of the following species: Eastern phoebe, *downy woodpecker, chipping sparrow, song sparrow, house sparrow, yellow warbler, northern mockingbird, brown thrasher, Baltimore oriole, American robin, mourning dove, common grackle, eastern starling, house finch, American goldfinch, Carolina wren, northern cardinal* (pictured here), *killdeer, mallard and Canada goose*.



“Then came a time when to have a bicycle, and to have learned to ride it, and to be at last spinning along on one’s own, early in the morning, under trees, in and out of the shadows, was like entering Paradise.”

C.S. Lewis



Common Breeding Birds of Hockhocking Adena Bike Trail Field Checklist

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Canada Goose | Wood Thrush |
| Wood Duck | American Robin |
| Mallard | Gray Catbird |
| Ruffed Grouse | Brown Thrasher |
| Wild Turkey | Northern Mockingbird |
| Great Blue Heron | European Starling |
| Green Heron | Cedar Waxwing |
| Black Vulture | Ovenbird |
| Turkey Vulture | Worm-eating Warbler |
| Osprey | Louisiana Waterthrush |
| Bald Eagle | Blue-winged Warbler |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Black-and-White Warbler |
| Cooper's Hawk | Prothonotary Warbler |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | Kentucky Warbler |
| Broad-winged Hawk | Common Yellowthroat |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Hooded Warbler |
| Killdeer | American Redstart |
| Spotted Sandpiper | Cerulean Warbler |
| American Woodcock | Northern Parula |
| Rock Pigeon | Yellow Warbler |
| Mourning Dove | Yellow-throated Warbler |
| Yellow-Billed Cuckoo | Yellow-breasted Chat |
| Eastern Screech Owl | Eastern Towhee |
| Great Horned Owl | Chipping Sparrow |
| Barred Owl | Field Sparrow |
| Eastern Whip-poor-will | Song Sparrow |
| Common Nighthawk | Scarlet Tanager |
| Chimney Swift | Northern Cardinal |
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | Indigo Bunting |
| Belted Kingfisher | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | Eastern Meadowlark |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | Common Grackle |
| Downy Woodpecker | Brown-headed Blackbird |
| Hairy Woodpecker | Orchard Oriole |
| Northern Flicker | Baltimore Oriole |
| Pileated Woodpecker | House Finch |
| American Kestrel | American Goldfinch |
| Eastern Wood Pewee | House Sparrow |
| Acadian Flycatcher | |
| Eastern Phoebe | |
| Great Crested Flycatcher | |
| Eastern Kingbird | |
| White-eyed Vireo | |
| Yellow-throated Vireo | |
| Warbling Vireo | |
| Red-eyed Vireo | |
| Blue Jay | |
| American Crow | |
| Purple Martin | |
| Tree Swallow | |
| Cliff Swallow | |
| Barn Swallow | |
| Carolina Chickadee | |
| Tufted Titmouse | |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | |
| House Wren | |
| Carolina Wren | |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | |
| Eastern Bluebird | |

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Bike Trail Maps: David Simon

Bird Song Audio Guide for Hockhocking Adena Trail at HockingohioBikeways.com
<http://birdingohioBikeways.com>