

TRAILSIDE EYE SPY

See if you can spot each item along the Towpath Trail,
Big Bend Area, 1337 Merriman Rd., Akron, OH 44313

JAPANESE KNOTWEED

First introduced to the United States over 100 years ago for riverbank stabilization, this plant quickly took over.

Look for its asparagus-like stalks emerging near the river's edge in spring, something experienced foragers harvest to control its expansion.



SKUNK CABBAGE

This otherworldly flower is the first to bloom each spring in Ohio. Its odd smell and maroon color attract the flies that pollinate it. Skunk cabbage produces heat capable of melting late spring snows by metabolizing starches stored in its roots, a process known as thermogenesis.



EASTERN COTTONTAIL

Look for these quick critters skittering into the brush as you walk down the trail. Females can have up to five litters of young from spring through fall and kits become independent fast.

If you find a baby rabbit, leave them be unless they appear injured.



SONG SPARROW

These year-round residents are recognizable by their dark "mustache" and streaked chest. As winter turns to spring, listen for them singing from the treetops and observe them foraging in the dense brush along the riverbank, great habitat for nesting and hiding from predators.

VALLEY LINK TRAIL MARKER

Did you know? From this location on the Towpath Trail, you can connect to both Sand Run and Cascade Valley Metro Parks. Extend your exploration by visiting other park sites and be on the lookout for a future connection to the park district's new Valley View Area!



PORTAGE PATH TERMINUS

Stop to admire the iconic Portage Path sculpture and read about the rich history of this area. Notice also the smaller projectile point-shaped marker, many of which are placed along the 8-mile trail ending near the Portage Lakes.



TULIP TREE

Known for their tall and straight growth habit, tulip trees were once prized for carving dugout canoes. Native Americans in this area used small, controlled fires to gradually weaken wood and hollow out the log. Identify tulip trees by their furrowed bark and distinctive branch scars.



COURTNEY PARK

Look across the street for a large boulder with a commemorative plaque. Placed in 1925, this original marker for the Portage Path sits on the first gift of land to the Akron Metropolitan Park District donated by farmer Joseph Courtney.

SALAMANDER

Return here in winter to feel heat radiating from this large standing log burner. It gets its odd name from the ancient belief that salamanders (aka fire lizards) were born from flames. In truth, if you throw a damp log on a fire, a salamander may just run out if it was snoozing inside!

