

BUCKEYE LAKE



Ohio Department of
NATURAL RESOURCES
OHIO STATE PARKS AND WATERCRAFT

Buckeye Lake State Park



As a popular vacation destination for generations, Buckeye Lake's 3,000-acre lake offers on-the-water adventures including boating, fishing and swimming. One of Ohio's first state parks, Buckeye Lake remains one of the state's recreational gems.

NATURE OF THE AREA

At one time, the ground now known as Buckeye Lake was swampland resulting from glaciation. Thousands of years ago, the glaciers moved south across Ohio altering drainage systems and landscapes. Natural lakes, known as kettles, were created when huge chunks of ice broke away from the glacier and melted in depressions. Other lakes were formed when the glacier blocked existing water outlets. As time progressed, clay and silt settled out of the still water into the bottom of the lakes.

Today, we discover old lake locations by the nature of the underlying clay and silt. The large area of fine clay sediment in the Buckeye Lake region indicates the glacial lake was broader than today's man-made lake. When European settlers came to Ohio, only a few of those ancient lakes remained. They were shallow and swampy and were correctly classified as bogs or marshes.

Eighteenth century explorer, Christopher Gist traveled south of Buckeye Lake and camped by the watery bog's edge in 1751. He named the area Buffalo Lick or Great Swamp in his journal. The Great Swamp included two long narrow ponds that were joined during high water.

A considerable part of the wetland was a cranberry-sphagnum bog. When the lake was impounded in 1826, Cranberry Bog broke loose from the bottom and became a floating island, which may be the only one of its kind.

Most of the island is an open sphagnum moss meadow with an abundance of cranberries and other unique plants, such as the pitcher plant. Designated as a National Natural Landmark, the 12-acre site is managed as a state nature preserve. Access to the preserve is by permit only.

Buckeye Lake's shoreline offers excellent habitat for waterfowl. The park is also a good birdwatching spot, especially during fall and spring migrations. One of the state's largest great blue heron rookeries is found near the park on private land. In recent years, bald eagles have returned to the lake.

HISTORY OF THE AREA

In order to provide interconnecting waterways for a growing state, a canal system was developed in the early 1800s. The system required feeder lakes to supply the water needed to maintain a 4 foot water level in the canal. Because of its location, Buckeye Lake joined the canal system.

July 4, 1825 marked the beginning of the canal project when Ohio Governor Jeremiah Morrow held a special ceremony near Newark. In attendance was New York's DeWitt Clinton, the father of the Erie Canal. Ohio's canal system was becoming a reality.

Construction of the dike blocking drainage into the South Fork of the Licking River began in 1826 and within four years, Licking Summit Reservoir was created. After impoundment, Cranberry Bog and other islands were created because the land was above the water level.

During the canal era, canal boats traveled along the original western end of the lake. This lake, however, was not large enough to supply the necessary water so it was enlarged. Later, another lake was developed north and west of the original one. A dike, known as Middle Wall, was built separating the old reservoir and new reservoir. This dike was used as the canal's towpath.

With the advent of railroads, the canal system became outdated. Many miles of canal fell into disuse and were abandoned or sold. In 1894, the Ohio General Assembly established all of the feeder reservoirs as public parks. At

that time, the Licking Summit Reservoir became Buckeye Lake. In addition to the lake itself, a few remnants of the old canals still remain. The Middle Wall was removed, but a towpath is still visible along the north shore and the Deep Cut channel still runs through Millersport.

In 1904, the Columbus, Buckeye Lake & Newark Traction Company's interurban electric was completed. To boost weekend business, the company offered rides to attractions located on the lake's north shore. In the 1940s and 50s, visitors traveled to the Buckeye Lake Amusement Park to see big bands, dance and picnic.

The area officially became Buckeye Lake State Park in 1949. By the late 1950s, the amusement park began to decline. Today all that is left of the former "playground of Ohio" is the fountain that once served as the centerpiece of the midway.

BOATING

Buckeye Lake is designated as an unlimited horsepower lake; however, water levels could be impacted by a significant ongoing dam construction project. Current water levels may be viewed at the park's web page at ohiostateparks.org.

Several public boat ramps offer access to the lake. Boat camping is available near the boat swim areas.



SWIMMING

Swimming opportunities are available throughout the park. Some beaches may close for dredging activities. Please do not swim in closed areas. Swimming is permitted in designated areas. Please exercise caution while swimming at the beaches.

PICNICKING

Picnic areas with tables and grills are available around the lake. Depending on the current construction schedules, two shelterhouses at North Shore and another at Fairfield Beach may be reserved by calling 866-OHIOPARKS or online at ohiostateparks.org.

FISHING AND HUNTING

Anglers enjoy fine catches of perch, bluegill, crappie, saugeye, muskellunge, largemouth bass, channel catfish and bullhead catfish. The dam construction project at Buckeye Lake includes fish habitat enhancement areas and a new accessible fishing pier.

Waterfowl hunting is permitted in season with a valid Ohio hunting license. A number of blinds are offered annually through a lottery drawing. For more information, contact the park office.



NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

A number of historical markers and signs are located around Buckeye Lake State Park. The Greater Buckeye Lake Historical Society museum, located in the village of Buckeye Lake, offers displays and artifacts from the canal and amusement park eras.

The Hebron Fish Hatchery, operated by the ODNR Division of Wildlife, is located north of the lake on Canal Road. The facility's ponds, trails and woodlots offer excellent birding opportunities.

Other local attractions include Dawes Arboretum, Flint Ridge Memorial and Moundbuilders Park. For more information other sites to visit ohio.gov or call 800-BUCKEYE.

THINGS TO DO

- Boating • Fishing • Swimming
- Picnicking • Ice Fishing





Buckeye Lake State Park

**2905 Liebs Island Rd.
Millersport, OH 43046**



**For Reservations:
866-OHIOPARKS
ohiostateparks.org**

**Park Office:
740-467-2690**

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