



## VISITING & HIKING

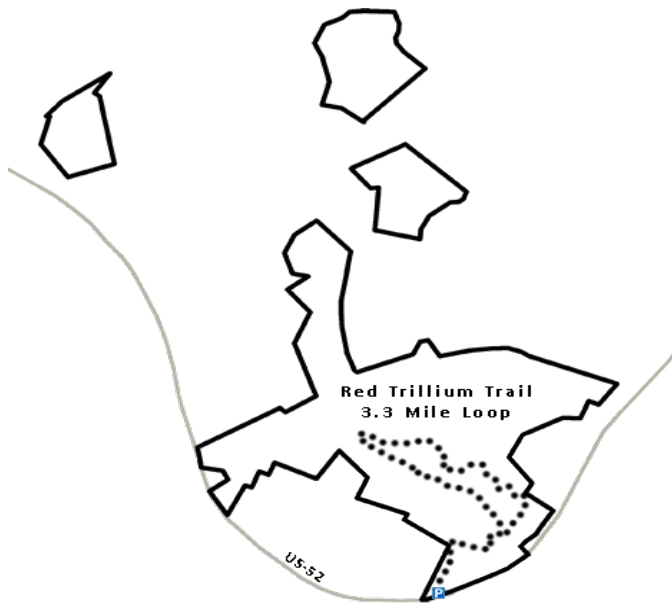
Rock Run, Arc of Appalachia Preserve System

Current Size: 802 acres

The Arc of Appalachia's operations are 100% supported by private donations. If you love what we do, [please support us](#), so that our wildlands preservation work and trail stewardship can continue.



Dogs are permitted at Rock Run on a six-foot leash. Please see [Hiking Arc Preserves](#) for more dog-friendly trails.



**Hiking Trails:** The **Red Trillium Trail 3.3 mile loop** is a challenging but rewarding backcountry trail with stunning views of the Ohio River below and the hills of Kentucky on its far shore. Rock Run is an incredibly picturesque landscape. After ascending to the ridgetop from the base of the hill on HWY-52, the trail drops down into the rich woodlands of Trillium Hollow, where the sounds of the highway and the bustling enterprises of the Ohio River suddenly vanish. Here one is immersed in the deep woods – surrounded by bird song, ferns, frogs, and native wildflowers.

Historical remnants of the sandstone mining can be seen at many points along the trail, including massive 19th-century boundary markers carved out of stone and the large vernal pools left behind when the bedrock was removed. These are now breeding habitats for a variety of amphibians. The trail then loops back to the ridge line and ends at the trailhead.

**You are entering a highly protected nature preserve.** Regulations exist to protect natural communities from the impact of public visitors. Please follow these regulations to leave Rock Run as beautiful as you found it. Remain on trails at all times and walk in single file to protect bulbs of native wildflowers bordering the trail. Do not disturb, pick or collect flowers, plants, rocks, or wildlife. Hunting, caving, fishing, trail biking, rock climbing, wading, campfires, and swimming are prohibited.

### Directions from West Union: U.S. Rt 52, Stout, OH 45684

From West Union drive south on OH-247 for 6.9 miles. Turn left (east) onto US-52 and follow for 14 miles. After passing a small rest area on your right, the parking lot for Rock Run will be .2 mile further on your left, directly across from Sandy Springs Campground.

**Interpretive kiosk:** An interpretive kiosk is not yet posted at the preserve trailhead. Please download a trail map onto your phone before hiking the trail.

**Rock Run hiking trails are open from sunrise to sunset.** Please note parking lots are not winter maintained and the trails are not safe to hike during periods of heavy rain, ice, and snow. Trails are closed during our annual Deer

Management Hunt which takes place on the 1) Monday through Sunday following Thanksgiving, and 2) Saturday and Sunday before Christmas.

**Warning: Trails border dangerous, potentially life-threatening cliffs.** Trails can be narrow, uneven, and steep with some unimproved creek crossings. Keep children close at hand and stay on the trail at all times.

**Rock Run wilderness:** Rock Run is an 802-acre preserve that protects the Appalachian hill country surrounding the exceptionally deep ravine of Rock Run, a small but pristine creek that flows directly out of Shawnee Forest and into the Ohio River. Surrounded by the 60,000 + acre Shawnee State Forest and privately-owned forests, Rock Run belongs to one of the largest near-contiguous blocks of forest left in the state, one that is over 100 square miles in size. This region is one of the most important refuges for biodiversity in Ohio, sheltering bobcats, timber rattlesnakes, and scores of rare and endangered plants.

**Rock Run waters are pristine and biologically rich.** Rock Run ranks among the top 5% of all Ohio streams for water quality. When the Arc became active in the region in 2004, half of the watershed of Rock Run was owned and managed by Shawnee State Forest. The Arc's long-held goal was to slowly purchase the remaining half of Rock Run's watershed, parcel by parcel until the *entire* watershed was under conservation protection. To protect an entire watershed is an extraordinary feat, but the relatively small size of Rock Run's drainage and its location in the heart of Shawnee State Forest made it a more likely candidate than most. The Arc of Appalachia made its first purchase at Rock Run Preserve in 2004. Ten Arc acquisitions later, our dream of full watershed protection has been realized!

**Rock Run's Appalachian hardwood forest:** Oaks and hickories grow in the upper slopes at Rock Run, while sugar maple, red maple, black birch, hemlock, beech, and tulip are most often found in the mid and lower elevations. Rock Run provides a critical breeding and nesting habitat for several deep forest bird species, including cerulean, worm-eating, and hooded warblers. All of these Eastern warbler species are suffering declining populations because they require large, dense, unfragmented forests for breeding success.

**Outstanding floral diversity:** Healthy and undisturbed Ohio Appalachian forests are frequently associated with diverse and showy wildflower displays, especially in sheltered coves and ravines. Rock Run Preserve shelters the rare nodding mandarin, *Prosartes maculate*, along with robust colonies of the showy red trillium, *Trillium erectum*, commonly known as wake-robin. An unusual small mint provides a woodland carpet in the low elevations, *Meehania cordata*, or Meehan's mint.

**Rare sand ecosystem & ancient sand dunes:** Rock Run sits on a section of the Ohio River known as Sandy Springs. Here the north shore of the river is bordered by wide, flat expanses of deep sand terraces and ancient sand dunes. Sandy Springs is a notable Paleo-archaeological site for Clovis points, yielding more than any other site in Ohio. In the Pleistocene era, the river crossing at Sandy Springs teemed with migratory wild game—including mammoths, elk, and giant sloths—that moved north and south with the seasons and took advantage of the shallow, sand-bottomed waters of Sandy Springs. Paleo people learned to lie in wait for them. A signature plant species at Rock Run is the rare prickly pear cactus. Sandy Springs boasts what may be the largest, densest colony of prickly pear to exist anywhere in the nation.

**Sandstone mining at Rock Run:** Geologically, the hills are composed of layers of sandstone interspersed with beds of shale. Each sandstone layer is around 16 inches thick, an ideal height for making building blocks. By mid-century, in the heyday of quarrying, stonecutters drove their horse and oxen teams up the creek bed of Rock Run and then followed the roads that had been cut longitudinally across the steep slopes to reach their quarry sites. The process left flattened terraces on the otherwise steep hillsides. The bedrock's contributions to the buildings of *Queen City*, as Cincinnati is often known, inspired the stone's name, *City Ledge*. City Ledge was considered by many to be the best quality sandstone in the entire eastern United States.