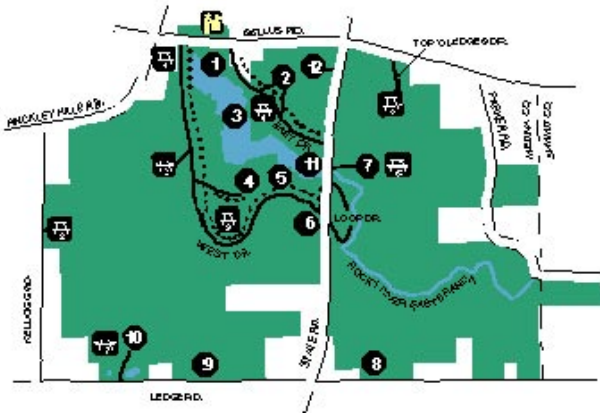


## Ecologically Speaking, Buzzards are Valuable

The buzzards of Hinckley Reservation are an important part of the natural environment of northern Ohio. As scavengers, they fulfill the ecological role of "garbage collectors" of the air. Buzzards remind us of the once abundant wildlife in northeastern Ohio. Their return each spring is a celebration of nature as it once was, and will continue to be, through Cleveland Metroparks dedication to conserving natural resources.



### Hinckley Reservation



- 1 HINCKLEY LAKE SWIMMING AREA
- 2 NORTH AND SOUTH BALL FIELDS
- 3 HINCKLEY LAKE
- 4 BOAT HOUSE
- 5 WEST LAKE SCENIC OVERLOOK
- 6 BUZZARD ROOST
- 7 WHIPP'S LEDGES
- 8 JUDGE'S LAKE
- 9 WORDEN HERITAGE HOMESTEAD AND WORDEN'S LEDGES
- 10 LEDGE LAKE
- 11 HINCKLEY LAKE BOAT LAUNCH
- 12 COASTING HILL

#### PICNIC AREAS:

- 1 SPILLWAY POOL
- 2 REDWING RESERVED
- 3 JOHNSON'S
- 4 INDIAN POINT
- 5 WHIPP'S LEDGES
- 6 TOP O' LEDGES
- 7 LEDGE LAKE RESERVED
- 8 KIWANIS RESERVED

Cleveland Metroparks is Cleveland's "Emerald Necklace," an open space of natural beauty and diversity. The Park District is dedicated to conservation, education and recreation. It offers an array of facilities and opportunities from picnicking, golfing and fishing to water and winter recreation areas, wildlife areas, and outdoor education and recreation programs.

Cleveland Metroparks was established on July 23, 1917 to provide open space for the people of Greater Cleveland, as well as to conserve and preserve the natural valleys of the area. Today, Cleveland Metroparks consists of nearly 20,000 acres of land in 14 reservations, over 100 miles of parkways, and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

Cleveland Metroparks events are featured in the *Emerald Necklace*. This free monthly publication is available to residents of Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township in Medina County. (There is an annual \$10 subscription fee for others.) To be placed on the mailing list, send your name and address to the address below.

Cleveland Metroparks does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability in employment, services or access to programs or activities. Special assistance for Cleveland Metroparks programs or facilities is available by calling (216) 635-3264 in advance.

In case of accident or emergency, call Ranger Headquarters at (440) 243-0442.

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# THE BUZZARDS OF HINCKLEY RESERVATION



## An Annual Celebration: The Return of the Buzzard

Each year on March 15 Cleveland Metroparks visitors await the return of the buzzards to the Buzzard Roost in Hinckley Reservation located on West Drive, just west of State Road. The traditional "Buzzard Sunday" celebration takes place annually on the Sunday following March 15. The event marks the return of the buzzards or turkey vultures (*Carthartes aura*) to the cliffs, ledges, caverns and open fields in Hinckley Reservation.

The return of the buzzards to Hinckley occurs each year with almost clocklike precision. Like the buzzards, visitors have been returning to witness their arrival since the first Buzzard Sunday in 1957. On Buzzard Sunday, naturalists and rangers are on hand at the Buzzard Roost to answer questions and share stories from bygone "buzzard days."

### Sighting a Buzzard

Buzzards are visible for miles as they soar seemingly motionless on their huge six-foot wings, riding the warm updrafts. The best times to spot the buzzards are early morning when they are dispersing in their search for food or late afternoon when they are gathering to roost.

In addition to buzzards, hawks and falcons also fly above Hinckley Reservation. To identify a buzzard, look for a large bird with six-foot wings. Their wings are shaped in a "V" and are a two-toned blackish color with lighter flight feathers. Unlike hawks and falcons that may scream and cry in flight, buzzards fly silently and unsteadily, rocking and tilting their wings.

## Why Do Buzzards Return to Hinckley Reservation?

No one is exactly sure, but every spring buzzards fly north from their winter ranges. During the winter, some travel as far as South America, but others make their home no farther than Kentucky, Tennessee or Virginia. In late spring, buzzards lay their eggs on the bare ground of rock ledges or caves, inside hollow trees, or under dense shrubbery. Hinckley Reservation, with its combination of rock ledges, open fields and forests, offers an ideal nesting-ground for the buzzards. Both parents incubate the eggs for 40 days. The young birds are cared for by the adults until late August. Nearby open fields and forests also provide hunting grounds and the warm columns of rising air called thermals necessary for soaring.



**TURKEY VULTURES**  
(Buzzard)



**BUTEOS (Hawk)** long, broad wings,  
short, wide tail



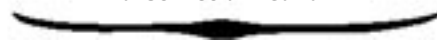
**ACCIPITERS (Hawk)**  
short, rounded wings, long tail



**FALCONS**  
long, pointed wings, long tail



**TURKEY VULTURES**  
distinct dihedral



**HAWKS OR EAGLES**  
horizontal

## Are Buzzards Really Scavengers?

Yes, their primary diet consists of carrion (dead animals). The turkey vultures usually eat dead raccoons, opossums, skunks, snakes, turtles, frogs and fish. Buzzards rely on their keen eyesight to locate food and will travel several miles from their roosts in search of a meal.

If carrion is not readily available, buzzards have been known to kill small mammals and young birds.

### Buzzard Facts

Buzzards can live as long as 20 years. They usually hunt at altitudes of 200 feet or less, but have been observed in their northward migration flying as high as 5,000 feet. Unlike most other birds, buzzards lack a syrinx (voice box): their calls are mostly hisses and grunts. Similar to most birds, buzzards have hollow bones for lightness in flight. They also have a series of internal struts or braces to bear the weight of their remarkably long wings.

### Local Legends About the Buzzards

Local folklore offers colorful explanations for the buzzards' yearly return to Hinckley. One tale claims the birds were originally attracted to Hinckley in 1808 when a Wyandott squaw was hanged for witchcraft. Whether this is true or not, historians say an 1810 record of the first white visitors to this location mentions "vultures in the air." Popular legend places the vultures in the area in 1819. Apparently, these scavengers were attracted to the thawed carcasses of hundreds of animals slaughtered in the "Great Hinckley Hunt of December 1818." During the hunt over 400 settlers enclosed a 25-mile area, killing foxes, bears and other predators that were destroying their livestock.