

Great Lakes Hemlock-Beech Hardwood Forest

This upland, mixed conifer-broadleaf forest community can be found in the cool microclimate of steep, north-facing river valley walls and ravine slopes. The community occurs in the snowbelt east of Cleveland, on steep slopes of the Allegheny Plateau to the south, and on sandy beach ridges in Ashtabula County, OH, and Erie County, PA. Dominant canopy species found in old growth remnants of this forest include eastern hemlock, sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, and black cherry, with white pine as a co-dominant in some stands. Basswood and cucumber magnolia are occasional members of the canopy. Many hemlock forests growing in ravines and on steep slopes are secondary in origin. These stands may have red oak, red maple, and tuliptree mingled with the hemlock. Hemlock is also found on the river valley slopes and steep ravines of the lower Rocky, Black, and Vermilion rivers west of Cleveland.

Typical understory shrubs are maple-leaf viburnum and witch hazel. Common herbaceous and evergreen ground-cover species include sweet white violet, round-leaved yellow violet, long-stalked sedge, red trillium, Canada mayflower, Indian cucumber root, giant blue cohosh, black cohosh, white wood aster, evergreen wood fern, marginal shield-fern, and partridgeberry.

Regionally uncommon forest birds, including winter wren, hermit thrush, northern waterthrush, dark-eyed junco, black-and-white warbler, black-throated green warbler, Canada warbler, magnolia warbler, and Blackburnian warbler, are associated with this forest community.



Long-tailed salamander



Magnolia warbler



Black-throated green warbler



Dark-eyed junco



Red trillium



Blue cohosh

Where to Go

- Big Creek Park, Geauga Park District (Gauga County, OH)
- North Chagrin Reservation, South Chagrin Reservation, and Bedford Reservation, Cleveland Metroparks (Cuyahoga County and Lake County, OH)
- Paine Falls Park and Hell Hollow Wilderness Area, Lake Metroparks (Lake County, OH)
- Sand Run Park, Metro Parks Serving Summit County (Summit County, OH)
- Stebbins Gulch, Holden Arboretum (Lake County, OH)
- Vermilion Reservation and Black River Reservation, Lorain County Metro Parks (Lorain County, OH)
- Zoar Valley area along Cattaraugus Creek (Erie, Chautauqua, and Cattaraugus counties, NY)



Hell Hollow Park (Lake County, OH)