Princess Ledges Nature Preserve

Princess Ledges Nature Preserve is a refuge of quiet beauty in the midst of a teeming city. It officially opened in 2005 but had been a work in progress for 30 years. In the 1920s, the land was known as the Strongsville Heights Allotment and was subdivided into small lots for vacation cottages. However, the same sandstone that created the preserve's beautiful rock ledges made it all but impossible to dig foundations for homes. In fact, once the Great Depression hit, interest in the project lapsed to the point that some lots were given away as prizes in movie theaters. In 1973, the park district began the laborious process of locating property owners and knitting the parcels together into the 45-acre natural gem we see today. Lynne MacPherson, who grew up playing in these woods once owned by her family, had pet names for all of the ledges. She called the largest ledge "Princess" for which the nature preserve is named.

The topography makes the preserve a prime spot for spring warbler watching and wildflower photography among the towering oak and tulip poplar trees. But, the stars of the show are the dramatic sandstone ledges, stretching 1,100 feet across the preserve. Accessed by the 0.54-mile Ledge Trail, it's amazing to gaze up at these rocky cliffs and know that many thousands of years ago they formed the shoreline of Lake Erie. It's in winter that the ledges literally shine as ice forms from the springs that flow from the rock formations. These small, spring-fed streams provide year-round homes for an especially diverse assemblage of invertebrates such as mayflies, stoneflies, dragonflies, salamanders, and more that rely on the perennial flow of cold water.

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