

# River and Stream Aquatic Community

Rivers and streams shape the topography of the region as they cut through the Allegheny Plateau and carve valleys in the Lake Plain. In addition to being forces that shape the landscape, rivers and streams are living systems. To various degrees, the life in most of the region's streams has been degraded by water pollution and altered hydrology that results in low flow in dry weather and flash floods in wet weather. But these streams are still home to diverse biological communities.

Under the rocks of streams are wriggling communities of aquatic insect larvae, such as mayflies and caddisflies. Also underwater are freshwater mussels, crayfish, snails, and amphibians such as mudpuppies. Fish in a healthy stream include redbelly dace, southern redbelly dace, rainbow darter, logperch, blacknose dace, stonecat, rock bass, and smallmouth bass. A couple of high quality, cold-water tributaries to the Chagrin River still support native brook trout. The French Creek watershed in western Pennsylvania and western New York has some of the nation's best remaining examples of numerous freshwater species.

Among the rocks of local streams one might find northern dusky salamanders, and along the sandbars you can see eastern spiny softshell turtles and northern crayfish. Flying over the water are dragonflies and damselflies, such as ebony jewelwing, dragonhunter, riffle snaketail, green-faced clubtail, American rubyspot, powdered dancer, ocellated damner, and rainbow bluet.

Great blue heron and belted kingfisher are birds that patrol rivers for food. Mammal species living in or along the region's rivers include mink, muskrat, and the northern river otter.

### Where to Go

- Conneaut Creek (Erie County, PA)
- French Creek, various locations (Erie, Crawford, and Mercer counties, PA, and Chautauqua County, NY)
- Hidden Valley Park and Riverview Park, Lake Metroparks (Lake County, OH)
- Rocky River Reservation and South Chagrin Reservation, Cleveland Metroparks (Cuyahoga County, OH)
- Shenango River, various locations (Mercer County, PA)
- Stebbins Gulch, Holden Arboretum (Lake County, OH)
- Vermilion River Reservation, Lorain County Metro Parks (Lorain County, OH)



Northern longear sunfish



Redside dace



Sand darter



Pickerel frog



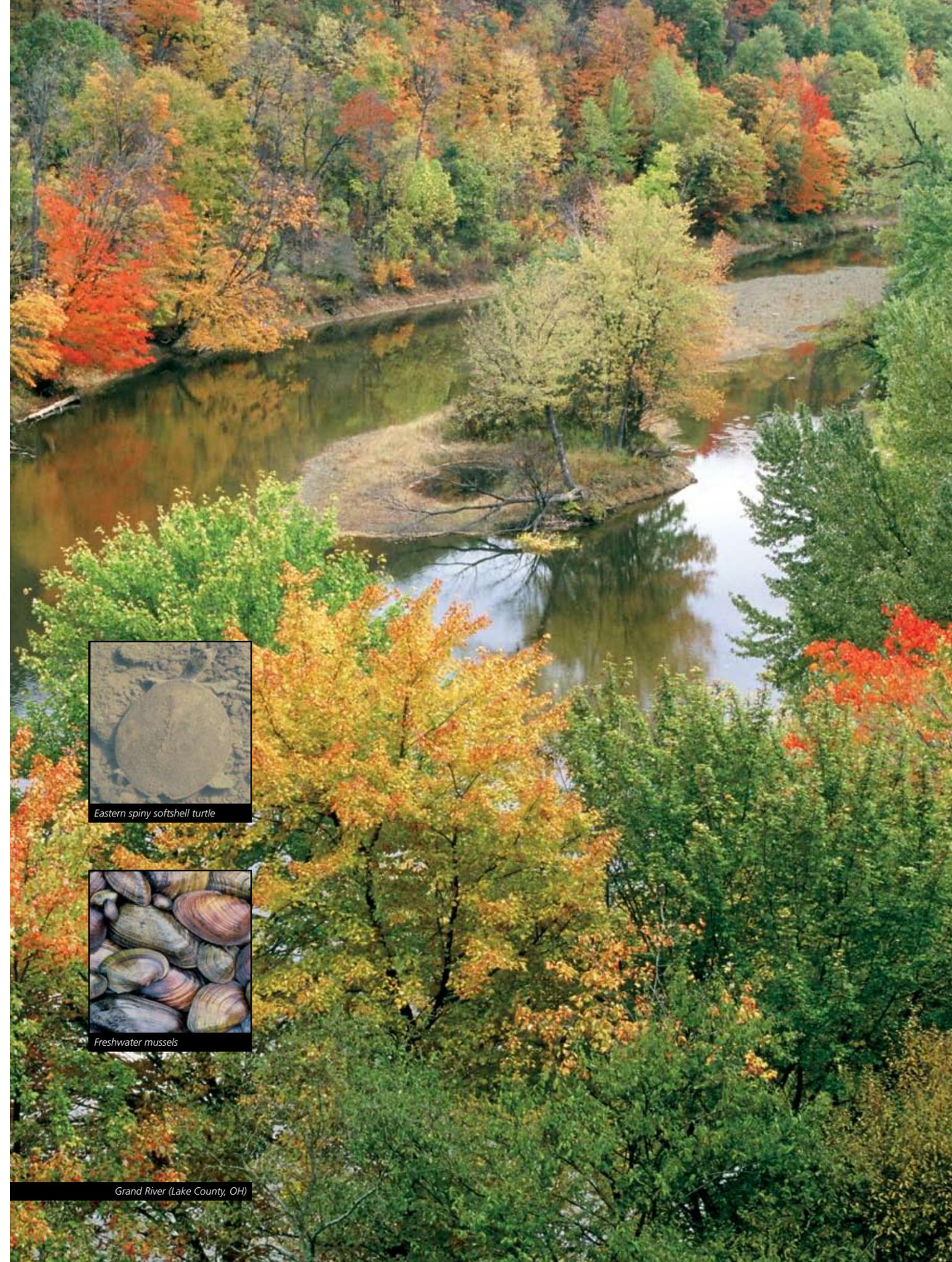
Rainbow darter



Eastern spiny softshell turtle



Freshwater mussels



Grand River (Lake County, OH)