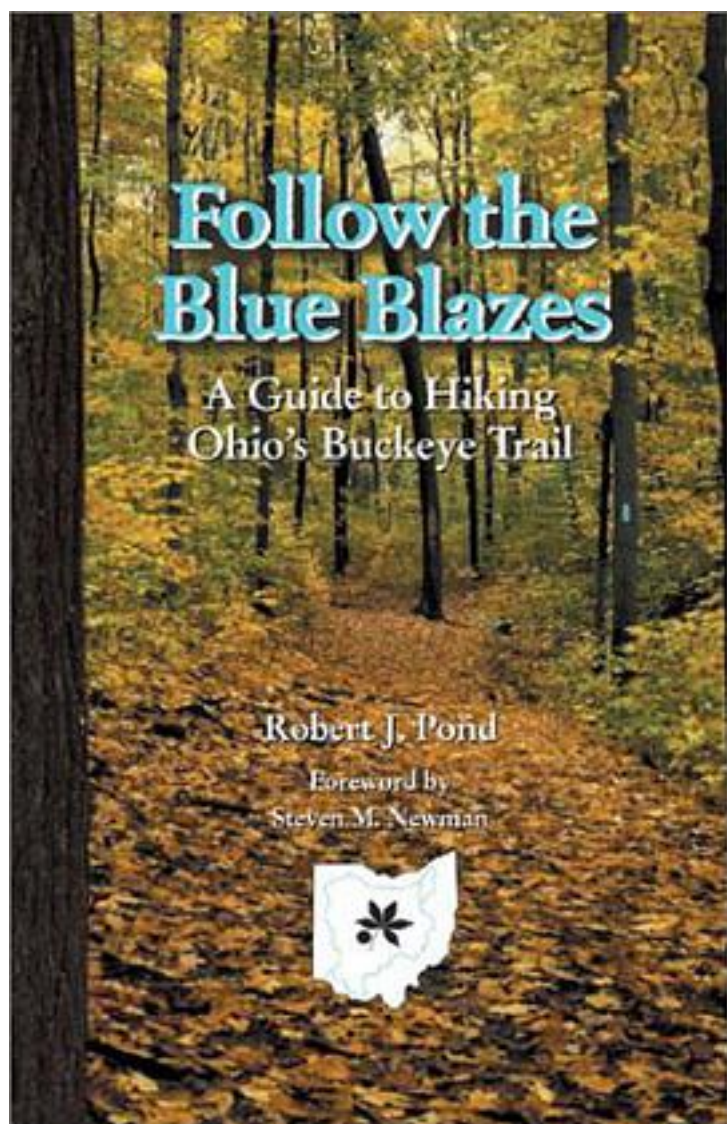


Follow the Blue Blazes



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Athens, Ohio--Ohio is blessed with a unique, 1,200-mile hiking trail that forms a complete loop around the state. The Buckeye Trail--"BT" to those in the know--is the longest loop trail in the nation and crosses more than 40 of Ohio's 88 counties. Showing the way on tree trunks, rocks, and other natural signposts are "the blue blazes," painted blue marks that guide hikers along canal towpaths, abandoned railroad right-of-ways, rivers, farms, nature preserves--even urban environments. FOLLOW THE BLUE BLAZES: A Guide to Hiking Ohio's Buckeye Trail, published by Ohio University Press on May 1, 2003, is the only book that introduces readers to the entire trail. It takes readers on hikes that "may lead you on a Walden-like journey of personal discovery," writes author Robert J. Pond. The Buckeye Trail is within a short drive of any Ohioan. In addition to many outlying areas, the extensive trail is accessible in or near Cincinnati, Dayton, Toledo, Cleveland, and Akron. Beginning with the striking rock formations and graceful waterfalls of Old Man's Cave in southern Ohio, it leads clockwise around the state to visit expansive forests, peaceful parks, ancient mounds, historic canals and battlefields, and lovely river trails. Each chapter in FOLLOW THE BLUE BLAZES features an overview of a 100-mile section of the trail and three self-guided featured hikes. The overviews, with accompanying maps, may be read consecutively to acquaint the reader with the entire course of the BT. But most readers will best enjoy the Buckeye Trail by taking the guide along on featured hikes. Hikes are supported by a detailed but easy-to-follow maps and include explicit directions to trailheads and approximate hiking times. Robert Pond has supplemented each description with interesting details about the geology and the diverse habitats of flora and fauna. "Human connections regularly occur while hiking the Buckeye Trail around Ohio," writes Pond. "There are other connections as well--geological, biological, and historical--that enhance my life while hiking. "While hiking the Blue Blazes," he continues, "I am often reminded of Henry David Thoreau's famous observation, 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.' Thoreau believed that to truly enjoy life one must rid oneself of the complications brought on by the accumulation of material possessions and the urge to travel to distant places when there is so much to understand in one's own backyard." Ohioans and other trail users--hikers, bikers, equestrians, Sunday walkers, and explorers--will be far better prepared to enjoy the beauty and wonders of Ohio if they FOLLOW THE BLUE BLAZES.

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