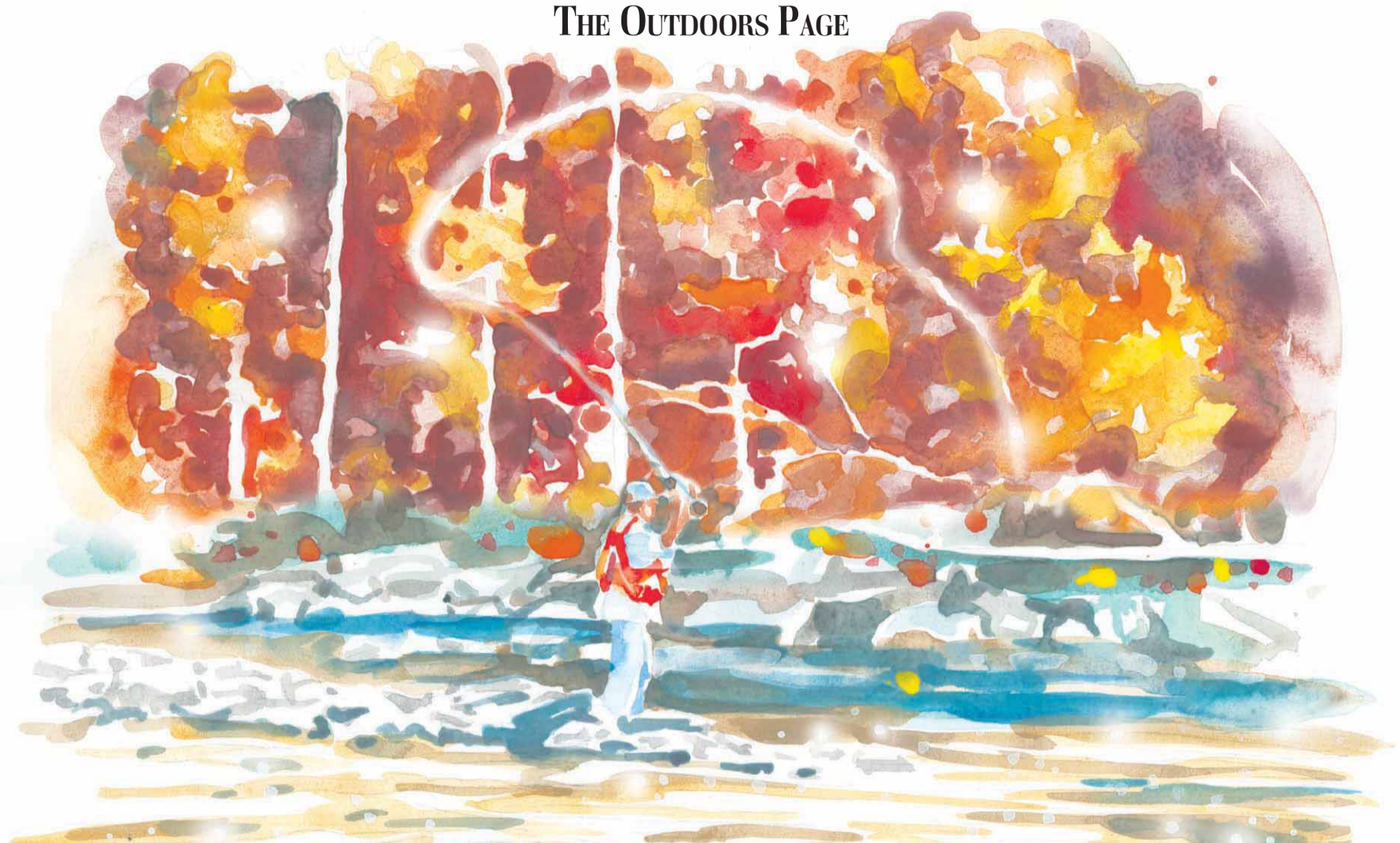


## THE OUTDOORS PAGE

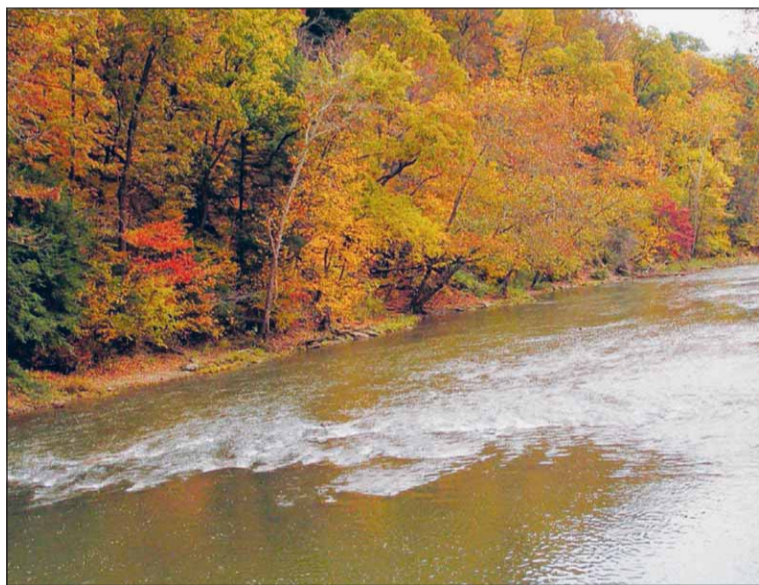


# Fall fly fishing

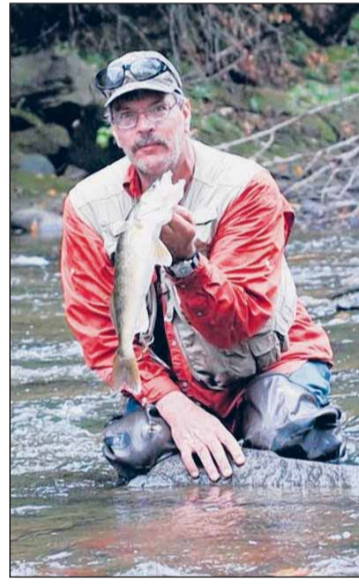
## on the scenic Little Beaver Creek

BLADE WATERCOLOR/JEFF BASTING

PHOTOS BY MIKE MAINHART



Ohio's Little Beaver Creek is graced by brilliant autumn foliage that highlights its wild and scenic designation.



Vienna, Ohio, angler Mike Mainhart with a surprise, a walleye.

By STEVE POLLICK and JEFF BASTING

It is time well-spent, flycasting for smallmouth bass on a remote, wild, scenic stream on a sunny autumn day.

The surprising thing is that here on Little Beaver Creek, it is so wild, so quiet, so remote that you wonder whether you actually are in Ohio.

Hard by the Pennsylvania line on the eastern border of Ohio, 36 miles of the Little Beaver system comprise a state and national wild and scenic river. A 2,722-acre state park named for the creek is a good place for an outing, the bridges at its upper and lower ends making nice bookends for a day astream.

You wade cowboy-style — jeans and watershoes, no hip boots. The stream temperatures are not yet unbearably cold. As you slosh slowly downstream, you are dwarfed by mighty hemlocks and monster sycamores, their roots clinging to massive, sheer sandstone cliffs. The fall colors are a palette of eye-pleasure.

Schools of little fish — darters, young shad, daces, stonerollers, and other "minnows" — skitter at your approach through the remaining pools and runs. Every so often a cluster of crayfish crab about quickly, jetting away on mud-streaks to hidey-holes in nooks and crannies.

A few smallish smallmouth, 10 to 12 inches, and perhaps a leftover 19-inch walleye, are fooled by your flycast offerings, brown woolly buggers and such, or a companion's spincast feather-dressed chrome spoons. In contrast, in the spring spawning runs it is not unusual for a couple of persistent fishermen to catch and release 80 bass in a day.

Now, most fish already have fled to downstream depths. But this is about the nearly lost art of being rather than doing. Too, a day on the stream may bring the sightings of a

bald eagle, an osprey, and, around the next bend, two deer, wading, one of them a nice buck. This is a place to lose track of time.

It is not easy wading over the cobble for hours, but too soon the sun-shot shadows are getting long and you realize that you are a steady, 45-minute hike from the Jeep, following an old mule towpath. Tracing it is a godsend when you are hungry and tired and want to "get back."

The raised path was used in the 1830s and 1840s by muleskinners prodding teams that pulled towboats through the 90 locks of the 73-mile-long Sandy and Beaver Canal. The canal paralleled the creek as a spur of the Ohio-Erie Canal.

Natural and cultural history reign here. The valley is the only one in the country known to have evidence of all four major glaciations (ice ages). The first humans were the Fluted Point Culture nearly 10,000 years ago; their flint knives, fluted arrowheads, and pottery are found nearby.

Much later the celebrated Mingo chief, Logan, was massacred near here on the Ohio River at the mouth of Yellow Creek, spurring Lord Dunmore's War in 1774. The first permanent white settler in the area, Trapper John Quinn, moved into the valley around 1790.

The Civil War capture of the infamous Confederate general, John Hunt Morgan, one of the Confederacy's most daring cavalymen, occurred nearby. Morgan and his 2,000 raiders crossed the entire width of Ohio from west to east before his eventual capture.

It all is a lot to fit into such a marvelous little valley.

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Outdoors editor Pollick admires a feisty if smallish stream bass.



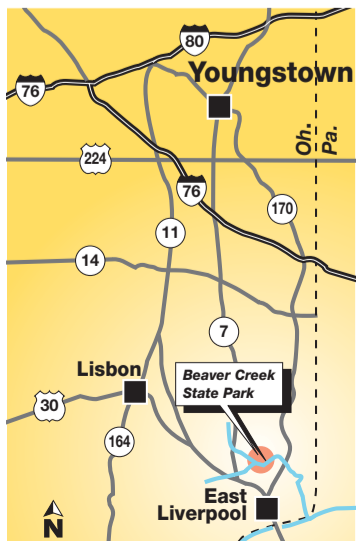
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, angler Paul Liikala casts cross-stream in search of Beaver Creek smallmouth.



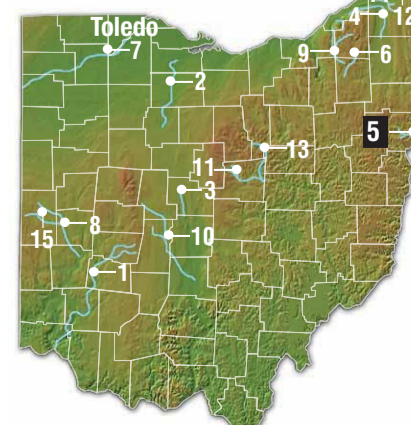
A handful of bass flies on a colorful maple leaf.



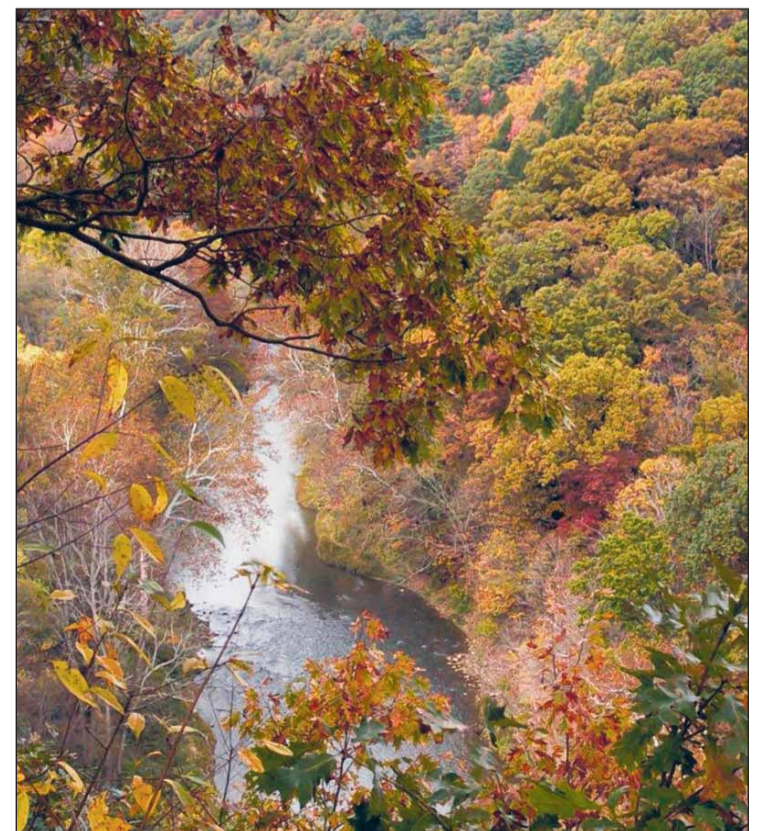
The scenic little valley is aflame with reds, oranges, yellows, and bronzes in autumn.



### Ohio Scenic Rivers



1. Little Miami River
2. Sandusky River
3. Olentangy River
4. Grand River
5. Little Beaver Creek
6. Upper Cuyahoga
7. Maumee River
8. Stillwater River
9. Chagrin River
10. Big & Little Darby Creeks
11. Kokosing River
12. Conneaut Creek River
13. Mohican River
14. Ashtabula River
15. Greenville Creek



A scenic overlook of Little Beaver Creek valley shows its deep, narrow character.