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ple who normally leash their dogs would let them run free," he said. "That would disturb animals and birds and not let it be a natural habitat."

Bikes, he said, cause erosion as well as safety concerns in the park.

Woodland Hills features every species of tree naturally found in southeast Michigan along with a number of animals and plants.

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"We'll always have to fine tune the trails," Derek said, adding that for the most part, there won't be much done to the park. And with the exception of the parking lot area, there won't likely be any new plants, trees or animals introduced.

The park includes black walnut, shagbark hickory, a cherry tree that could qualify as a "champion" by forestry measurements, and several other species.

Warblers of many varieties use the meadow as their stopping point for migrations south. Hawks, owls and other birds of prey also make the park their home.

On Monday, Derek spotted one of the rare minks that have been seen in the park. And the rare, red side dace (fish) inhabits the Rouge River tributary in the park.

"It's very gratifying to see this open," Costick said. "Joe has done a great job of getting it ready."

The park is open daily from dawn to dusk. The city reminds visitors to: "Take only pictures, leave only footprints, make only memories, kill nothing but time."

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Natural splendor: A sapling oak tree is but one type of growth contributing to Woodland Hills' natural setting.

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