

Howard Marsh Metropark Highlights



**METROPARKS
TOLEDO**

Messages for Interpretation

Located within the Lake Erie Coastal Plains Ecoregion, Howard Marsh Metropark enhances the quality of life for both people and wildlife.

- Restoration and a unique water management plan support critical wetland habitat.
- Howard Marsh Metropark offers improved local drainage and water quality on site and to its neighboring communities.
- Used historically for lumber operations, ship-building, hunting and farming, today the land is ideal for bird watching, fishing, and kayaking.
- The success of Howard Marsh Metropark is a result of multiple community partnerships.

What's in the Name?

Known as Howard Farms during much of the 20th Century, the name today connects the land's historical land use to its current and future importance as a marshland.

Natural and Human History

Wetlands are often termed 'nature's kidneys' because of their ability to filter pollution and toxins from ecosystems. With an emphasis on the need for capturing nutrients that produce harmful algal blooms before they enter western Lake Erie tributaries, the nearly 1,000-acre Howard Marsh Metropark leads the way in the effort to revert farmland to its natural wetland state.

Prior to opening, this Metropark's impressive restoration project had a price tag of over 10 million dollars and rallied assistance from multiple partners. 800,000 tons of earth was moved during restoration and an innovative pump station was incorporated. By way of the Ward Canal, the pump station can transfer water from the marsh into Lake Erie, from Lake Erie into the marsh, or it can keep water level equal in both places. It is capable of moving 20,000 gallons of water per minute, or 1.2 million gallons per hour! This system allows Metroparks to maintain appropriate water levels for native wetland plants and control invasive plants. All of the preliminary work was undoubtedly worth the effort.

Today the marsh greatly enhances wildlife habitat, reduces invasive plant species, filters and removes phosphorous from water, and improves local drainage for neighboring communities. The work at Howard Marsh Metropark is so highly regarded that it received the prestigious Governor's Award from the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association in 2018, the Metropark's opening year.

Because the value of wetlands has not always been appreciated, historic land use at Howard Marsh Metropark was in stark contrast to its current initiatives. Settlement began with Eber Brock Ward, a wealthy Detroit industrial-



Mink



Bufflehead



Pump station



Winter

ist, who purchased nearly all of present-day Jerusalem Township during the mid-1800s for timber harvesting. Ward had a shipyard in the town of Bono, and dredged a canal through the marshes for nearly 3 miles in order to transport harvested timber out of his sawmill. Known as 'Ward's Canal,' part of it today is the eastern boundary of the Metropark. Ward's timber operations ended in 1895 from catastrophic wildfires which burned for several months.

Around the turn of the century, George A. Howard, bought about 1,500 acres of the former Ward property and established the George A. Howard Farm Company. Pioneering northwest Ohio farming techniques borrowed from the Netherlands, he constructed dikes, tilled the land and pumped it dry for farming. Although he sold his holdings in 1916, the name "Howard Farms" remained in the decades following, when much of his land was subdivided into lakefront lots. Immediately north of Howard Marsh Metropark is a community still known today as Howard Farms. Subsequent owners took advantage of the land's wetland characteristics by seasonally flooding it for fall waterfowl hunting and pumping it for spring planting. This was the scenario for Herman Wiener, who in 1938 purchased the nearly 1,000 acres of former Howard Farms property that is today our Metropark. Wiener sold it to John Gradel in 1992, and then in 2008 Metroparks Toledo purchased the land. October 2022 marked the end of a 20 year vision for Howard Marsh. The completion of phase 2 restored the remaining 243 acres of farmland, while also replacing .5 miles of failing

flood control levies with new dikes to protect 70% of the adjacent community. Howard Marsh provides excellent recreation opportunities including almost 10 miles of trails with a board walk into the marsh, 3 kayak launches, and 9 miles of navigable blueway for paddlers and small fishing boats.

Plant Life

Common trees and shrubs include:

Red oak	Red cedar
Red maple	Eastern cottonwood
Black chokeberry	Spicebush
Common hackberry	Pussy willow

Aquatic and emergent plants include:

Broad-leaved cattail	Pickerelweed
Common arrowhead	American water plantain
Pennsylvania smartweed	Grand redstem

Wildlife (* = State-listed as rare)

Raptors include:

American bald eagle	Osprey
Snowy owl	Red-tailed hawk
Rough-legged hawk	Northern harrier

Waterfowl include:

Wood duck	Mallard
Blue-winged teal	Bufflehead
Green-winged teal	Goldeneye
Northern shoveler	Pintail
Hooded merganser	Ring necked
Common merganser	Common tern
Pie-billed grebe	American coot
Eared grebe	Canada goose
Snow goose	Cormorant
Trumpeter swan	Tundra swan
Greater scaup	

Shorebirds include:

Black-crowned night heron	Green heron
Great blue heron	Great egret
Killdeer	Lesser yellowlegs
Black-necked stilt	Dunlin
Spotted sandpiper	Golden plover

Other birds include:

Ring-billed gull	Herring gull
Black-backed gull	Tree swallow
Purple martin	Snow bunting
Horned lark	Baltimore oriole
Song sparrow	Blue jay
Common grackle	Cardinal
White-throated sparrow	Rose-breasted grosbeak
Warbling vireo	Red-winged blackbird
American robin	Magnolia warbler
Common yellowthroat	Yellow-breasted chat
Yellow warbler	Golden and Ruby crowned kinglet

Mammals include:

Mink	Muskrat
Eastern cottontail	Raccoon
American beaver	Coyote
White-tailed deer	

Reptiles, amphibians and fish include:

Northern leopard frog	Bullfrog
Common water snake	Midland painted turtle
Snapping turtle	Walleye
Large mouth bass	Channel catfish
Bluegill	

Insects:

Black saddlebags (dragonfly)	Green darner (dragonfly)
Checkered skipper	Monarch
Mayfly species	Clouded and Orange sulfur

Stay on trails and use protective clothing and insecticide to avoid poison ivy, chiggers, ticks and mosquitoes.

(Note: There is no poison oak in Northwest Ohio.)



Trumpeter swan



Greater scaup



Common grackle



Common arrowhead



Snowy owl



Killdeer