

Manhattan Marsh Highlights



**METROPARKS
TOLEDO**

Messages for Interpretation

Against the odds of century-old land use alterations, a remarkable amount of nature survives at Manhattan Marsh Preserve as a testament to its resilience as a natural community.

- Manhattan Marsh Preserve fulfills the vision of a 'Metropark within five miles of every Lucas County resident.'
- History reveals dramatic contrasts in the dreams that have defined the character of this property through time.
- This Metropark is here today thanks to decades of citizen advocacy efforts to protect it.
- Restoration of marsh, prairie and woodland habitats promise hands-on opportunities for environmental education.

What's in the Name?

The name references its close proximity to the nearby settlement village of Manhattan, its marshland ecology and its status as one of just four 'preserves' in our district – a designation that promises to safeguard as much as possible of this Metropark's natural integrity.

Natural and Human History

Prior to settlement, this location was part of Maumee Bay's massive, freshwater estuary. There, incoming and outflowing water supported miles of aquatic habitat ideal as breeding grounds for great numbers of native swans, other waterfowl, reptiles and amphibians. Such natural history gave Toledo its historic nickname, Frogtown. While this pre-settlement ecosystem is no longer intact, today Manhattan Marsh Preserve is still an incredible wetland. The clamors of waterfowl and Red-winged blackbirds can be nearly deafening during spring migration, and birding is exceptional in all seasons. Over 100 bird species have been recorded since this Metropark's acquisition. Reptiles, too, are a feature at this site. Midland painted turtles can be seen basking on logs, and aquatic Eastern ribbon snakes might be spotted crossing the boardwalk. Finally, Manhattan Marsh Preserve boasts some beautiful aquatic native plants, such as Swamp rose mallow and American lotus, as well as a newly restored prairie area adjacent to Chase STEMM Academy. Late summer promises peak blooming in both the new prairie and the wetland.

Human land use over the past two centuries reflects remarkable contrasts in changing environmental values. Though highly regarded today, freshwater estuaries and wetlands seemed useless to settlers of the early 19th century, who saw value only after draining and filling them. In every small village, there were efforts to make land suitable for canals, railroads and the good fortune they brought. One such village was Manhattan, on the edge of the Maumee Bay. Officially created in 1835,



Gray dogwood



Eastern ribbon snake



Swamp rose mallow



Indigo bunting

Manhattan's future looked bright for a fleeting moment in history. It was initially selected as the northern terminus of the Wabash and Erie Canal in 1836. (Part of its towpath included land near the parking area of Manhattan Marsh Preserve today.) That same year, land owners in Manhattan chartered The Ohio Railroad, a company that aspired to span the Black Swamp via elevated rail and link all the way to Buffalo and beyond. But by 1842 that rail company went bankrupt. In time, Manhattan's exclusive canal terminus designation also disappeared due to intense competition from the neighboring settlements of Port Lawrence and Vistula, who later merged to become Toledo. These competitors owned and improved the land at what is now the mouth of Swan Creek (near Middlegrounds Metropark). That area quickly became the main thoroughfare for canal traffic, deeming the 'Manhattan Extension' portion of the canal obsolete. By 1848, Manhattan was all but gone, with plats vacated and plots absorbed by the City of Toledo.

Over the next 140 years, marshlands in this area of Toledo, similar to the nation at large, continued to be drained and filled in the name of progress. But in the later decades of the 20th century, in keeping with the national environmental movement of the 1960's and 70's, cultural perceptions of land value underwent a pendulum swing. Locally, that influence over time manifested in an organized initiative from neighbors for what remained of north Toledo's wetlands. In 1996, the non-profit organization Citizens for Buckeye Basin Parks

was established, and the futuristic visions and advocacy of these concerned citizens was paramount to this site's ultimate preservation. That organization rallied undauntedly for decades to protect it. In 2014, Metroparks Toledo began working with Citizens for Buckeye Basin Parks and the Lucas County Land Bank to acquire today's Manhattan Marsh Preserve. Likely, it would not be a Metropark today if not for these citizen efforts.

Plant Life

Trees, vines and shrubs include:

Gray, Silky & Drummond's dogwood	Box elder
Eastern cottonwood	Willow species
Black walnut	Silver maple
Black locust	Honey locust
Redbud	White mulberry
Virginia creeper	Hackberry
American sycamore	Highbush cranberry
Northern catalpa	Sassafras
Black cherry	Red oak
White oak	Wild grape
Pin oak	

Aquatic plants include:

Swamp rose mallow	American lotus
Narrow-leaved cattail	Duckweed
Bur-reed species	Nodding beggar tick

Trailside plants include:

Evening lychnis	Enchanter's nightshade
Virginia knotweed	White avens
Black-eyed Susan	Common milkweed
Wild bergamot	Pokeweed
Tall boneset	Common boneset
Sweet Joe-pye weed	American germander
Tall ironweed	White vervain
Blue vervain	Canada goldenrod
Grass-leaved goldenrod	Prairie dock
Nodding beggar tick	

Wildlife

Mammals include:

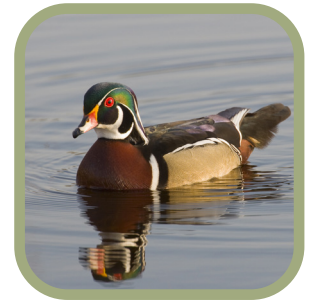
Raccoon	Groundhog
Eastern fox squirrel	Muskrat
Coyote	White-tailed deer
Red fox	Big brown bat

Birds include:

Red-winged blackbird	Northern flicker
American bittern	Bald eagle
Baltimore oriole	Belted kingfisher
Tree swallow	Carolina wren
Marsh wren	Blue-headed vireo
Indigo bunting	Yellow warbler
Yellow-rumped warbler	Prothonotary warbler
Rose-breasted grosbeak	White-throated sparrow
Dark-eyed junco	Double-crested cormorant
Mallard	Wood duck
Killdeer	Greater yellowlegs
Great blue heron	Great egret



Black walnut



Wood duck



Pokeweed



Cicada casing

Green heron
Red-tailed hawk

Cooper's hawk

Numerous species of migratory songbirds including many warblers, thrushes and northern sparrows pass through Manhattan Marsh.

Amphibians/reptiles include:

American toad	Northern leopard frog
Bullfrog	Common water snake
Snapping turtle	Green frog
Eastern garter snake	Midland painted turtle
Eastern ribbon snake	Eastern spiny softshell turtle

Insect life includes:

Monarch	Fall field cricket
Leaf roller moth species	Eastern forktail
Orange bluet	Common whitetail
Pearl crescent	Dog day cicada
Summer azure	Old scissor's grinder cicada
Clouded 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.)