

# Howard Marsh Metropark Highlights

*Please use this as a supplement to information provided on any Metroparks maps.*

## 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 A 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! 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



*Mink*



*Bufflehead*



*Pump Station*



*Winter*

is in stark contrast to its current initiatives. Settlement began with Eber Brock Ward, a wealthy Detroit industrialist, 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 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. Today the park offers recreational opportunities that include six miles of trails, two kayak launch docks, and seven miles of navigable blue-way for paddlers and small fishing boats.

**Plant Life** (\* = State-listed as rare)

*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   | Pickerel weed           |
| 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  | Green darter              |
| Checkered skipper | Monarch                   |
| Mayfly sp.        | Clouded and Orange sulfur |

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

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



Trumpeter swan



Greater scaup



Common grackle



Common arrowhead



Snowy owl



Killdeer