

Manhattan Marsh Metropark Highlights

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

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 A 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



Gray dogwood



Eastern ribbon snake



Swamp rose mallow



Indigo bunting

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, 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. Citizens for the Buckeye Basin Parks 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
- Eastern cottonwood
- Black walnut
- Black locust
- Red bud
- Virginia creeper
- American sycamore
- Northern catalpa
- Black cherry
- White oak
- Pin oak
- Poison ivy
- Box elder
- Willow sp.
- Silver maple
- Honey locust
- White mulberry
- Hackberry
- Highbush cranberry
- Sassafras
- Red oak
- Wild grape

Aquatic plants include:

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

Trailside plants include:

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

Wildlife

Mammals include:

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

Birds include:

- Red-winged blackbird
- American bittern
- Northern flicker
- Bald eagle



Black walnut



Wood duck



Pokeweed



Cicada casing

- Baltimore oriole
- Tree swallow
- Marsh wren
- Indigo bunting
- Yellow-rumped warbler
- Rose-breasted grosbeak
- Dark-eyed junco
- Mallard
- Killdeer
- Great blue heron
- Green heron
- Red-tailed hawk
- Belted kingfisher
- Carolina wren
- Blue-headed vireo
- Yellow warbler
- Prothonotary warbler
- White-throated sparrow
- Double-crested cormorant
- Wood duck
- Greater yellowlegs
- Great egret
- Cooper's hawk

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

Amphibians/reptiles include:

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

Insect life includes:

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

Stay on trails and boardwalks to protect plants and wildlife and avoid Poison ivy.