

DECOMPRESSION DRIVE

PEARSON TO HOWARD MARSH



Begin your journey at the main entrance of Pearson Metropark, which offers the best remaining example of historic Great Black Swamp habitat in all of Metroparks Toledo. While the Great Black Swamp once covered miles and miles of land in Northwest Ohio, extending all the way into Indiana, most of it was transformed into farmland in the latter half of the 19th century. Thus, today, woodlands such as the one you see in this Metropark are not that common in the surrounding agricultural setting. Called the Bank lands in the early 20th century, George Pearson of The Toledo Blade was instrumental in acquiring Pearson Metropark. The park was officially dedicated in 1934, and it is one of our earliest Metroparks.

As you drive through Pearson Metropark, you will pass the scenic paddle boat pond and a sledding hill- both of which are man made, as no lakes or elevations were present in the historic Great Black Swamp (excepting Lake Erie on the region's border). These examples are reflective of how throughout its nearly 100-year history, Metroparks has been consistently dedicated to bringing people outdoor experiences that connect them to nature.

Also notice as you drive through Pearson Metropark the distinctive stonework near the pond and in buildings such the Packer-Hammersmith Center and shelters. Much of this stonework was originally built by the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps during the mid to late 1930's. Such federal work initiatives helped to fuel the economy during the Great Depression.

As you come to Starr Avenue, you will be embarking on a view of the more recently acquired Pearson North property. Pearson North was acquired in 2003 and is a Lucas County wetland mitigation bank site that almost doubles the acreage of this Metropark. It is the land within the large block of Starr, Lallendorf, Seaman and Wynn Roads. Its natural area is representative of Lake Erie coastal zone, featuring open wetland expanses with high numbers of waterfowl and wetland species including non-native, narrow-leaved cattail. Its wooded area also supports vernal pools-- spring woodland puddles that usually dry up by summer, do not contain fish and are hotspots for amphibian and macro-invertebrate diversity.

Once you are heading east on Seaman, you will approach the Pearson North entrance and the parking lot for the historic Johlin House. This log house, formerly located on Corduroy Road, was donated to Metroparks by Fred Johlin and moved to the Pearson North property in 2006, and is an excellent representation of the kinds of homes built in the Great Black Swamp during the mid-19th century.

As you leave Pearson Metropark and head north on Wynn Road towards Little Cedar Point Road, take time to reflect upon what this land must have been like a couple hundred years ago. At that time, it was an incredible, densely wooded swamp that covered a huge portion of Ohio. Its blue clay soil had been deposited approximately one million years ago, and eventually became the lake bottom of glacial Lake Warren about 20,000 years past.

As you travel east on Little Cedar Point Road, you will pass Maumee Bay State Park and its main entrance to the campgrounds, lodge, cabins and trail network. On the edge of Lake Erie, Maumee Bay State Park is another gem of a public land that helps protect the Lake Erie coastal zone.

Once past the extent of Maumee Bay State Park, you will be heading back to the south for a short jaunt along Decant Road, and then resume your eastern direction on Corduroy Road. Notice the very deep ditches that you pass as you journey through these miles of farmland. Those ditches, along with the impressive amounts of drain tile in this region, are what were required to change the face of the Great Black Swamp into productive agricultural land. Some say that there is more drain tile beneath the historic Great Black Swamp than nearly anywhere else in the world.

As your drive along Corduroy Road approaches the intersection at Howard Road, you will be at the very edge of the small town of Reno Beach, where historically Henry Reno started a 900 acre farm and summer resort. Known as the Reno Amusement Company, it consisted of a two-story dance hall, swimming beach, picnic area, boating grounds and golf course. Today, it is the northern neighborhood of Howard Marsh Metropark.

When you turn onto Howard Road, you will be approaching the entrance to Howard Marsh Metropark -a place where nearly 1,000 acres of extraordinary wetland restoration that not only greatly enhances wildlife habitat, but also filters and removes phosphorus from water and improves local drainage for the neighboring communities. This impressive restoration project had a price tag of over 10 million dollars, rallied assistance from multiple partners and eventually moved 800,000 tons of earth to recreate this award winning Metropark into a conservation oasis for the Lake Erie coastal zone.

Driving through the beautiful Howard Marsh Metropark, notice the variety of wetlands. The ability to manage the depth of the wetlands helps to reduce invasive plant species and also bring in greater diversity of wildlife. In every season there are watchable wildlife, from the basking turtles and darting dragonflies of summer to the Trumpeter swans and possibly Snowy owls of winter. Some wildlife seen by many throughout the growing season include Great blue herons, Great egrets, Killdeer, and many kinds of shorebirds and waterfowl. Also, look to the skies for views of Bald eagles, Turkey vultures and Osprey, and to the water's surface for a chance to glimpse muskrat, American beaver, or maybe even River otter.

The end of the parkway through Howard Marsh finalizes your Decompression Drive, but your opportunities don't stop here! You could take a short walk to one of the nearby overlooks, or even rent one of our kayaks in the locker rental near the restroom from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Or, for a longer walk, take the Egret Trail 1.5 miles for a close-up look at the remarkable Howard Marsh pump station. By way of the Ward Canal, the pump station is capable of moving 20,000 gallons of water per minute, and transfers water from the marsh into Lake Erie, from Lake Erie into the marsh, or keeps levels equal in both places. Finally, to view the pump station more closely from a road, you could extend your Decompression Drive to our eastern neighbor, Metzger Marsh State Wildlife Area. It is located just east of Howard Marsh Metropark from SR 2, includes a parking lot and fishing pier that is open to the public, and takes you past the Howard Marsh pumping station as you drive the road into that site.

Metroparks Toledo hopes you have enjoyed this Decompression Drive of its East Region!

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PICNIC LOCATION



POINT OF INTEREST

