

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
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Oak Harbor, OH 43449
(419) 898-0014 phone
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Deaf/hard of hearing individuals may reach
Ottawa NWR through the Ohio State Relay Service
at 1-800-750-0750 (V/TTY).

Website address:
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/ottawa>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

Ottawa

National Wildlife Refuge



Pied-billed Grebe,
©Sharon Cummings

*Ottawa National
Wildlife Refuge was
established in 1961 to
preserve diminishing
Lake Erie marshes.
Located in northwest
Ohio, Ottawa is a great
place to observe
a diversity of wildlife.*





Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex

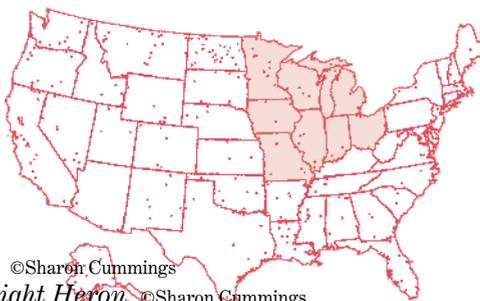
Along the southern edge of Lake Erie lies a collection of lands that comprise the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The complex is made up of three national wildlife refuges:

- Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (Including the Darby and Navarre Units)
- Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge
- West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge

The Ottawa complex totals more than 9,500 acres and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Marshes, open water, wooded wetlands, coastal wetlands, shrub/scrub, grasslands and an estuary provide a home for a wide variety of plant and animal species. The refuge staff strives to maintain a diversity of flora and fauna reminiscent of the area's early history.

Part of a Much Bigger System

The National Wildlife Refuge System contains more than 96 million acres set aside to protect wildlife and habitats. Refuges range in size from less than an acre to more than 19 million acres. They provide a diversity of habitats for a variety of wild creatures. Some species most certainly only exist today because of the protection afforded by National Wildlife Refuges.



This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Photos opposite page:

Dark-eyed Junco, ©Sharon Cummings

Black-crowned Night Heron, ©Sharon Cummings

Bald Eagle, Dave Menke, USFWS

Red-winged Blackbird, ©Sharon Cummings

American Black Duck, ©Sharon Cummings



Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge's 5,470 acres are managed to provide diverse habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, neotropical migrant songbirds and other animal and plant species. The refuge has been declared an Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy and Audubon Ohio. The Lake Erie Marshes, including the Ottawa Complex, have been designated a Regional Shorebird Reserve in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.



Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge also manages the nearby Darby and Navarre Units. In 1966, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service traded the Navarre Marsh to Toledo Edison Power Company for the Darby Marsh. The Navarre Marsh, about 5 miles east of the refuge headquarters, became the site of the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station. Although Navarre Marsh is owned by the power company, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service still manages its 820 acres. Abundant wildlife lives in the shadow of the 500-foot nuclear power station cooling tower, which dominates the skyline. Bald eagles nest in the marsh, which also contains important beach-ridge habitats used heavily by migrating songbirds.



The Darby Unit is located on the outskirts of Port Clinton, approximately 10 miles from Ottawa Refuge headquarters. Darby's 640 acres are primarily wetland impoundments managed for migratory waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species. Access to both units is by permit only.



*West Sister
Island,*
©Sharon Cummings

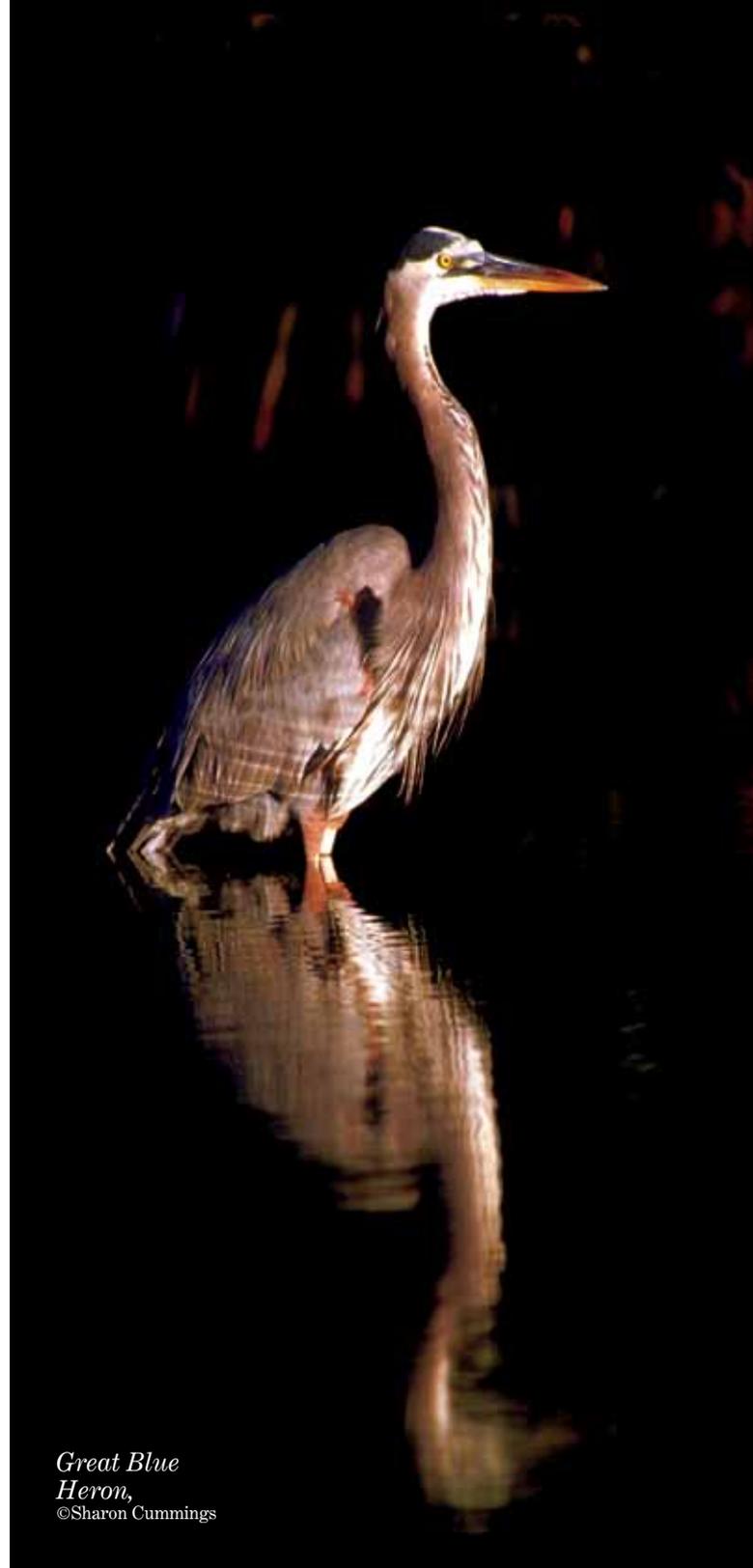
West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge

West Sister Island sits nine miles off the north shore of Ottawa NWR. It was here, on September 10, 1813, that Commodore Oliver Perry sent the immortal message to General William Henry Harrison after the Battle of Lake Erie: “*We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop.*”

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established West Sister Island “as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife...” It was specifically designated to protect the largest wading bird nesting colony on the U.S. Great Lakes. In January 1975, 77 acres of the 82-acre island were designated as a wilderness, part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

West Sister Island hosts a rookery for great blue herons, great egrets, black-crowned night herons, and double-crested cormorants. The water around the island is too deep for the wading birds to feed. These birds must travel to the mainland marshes to hunt for food to feed their young, an eighteen mile round trip. The island can be viewed from the shore of Lake Erie; look for the distinctive lighthouse on the west end. To protect this vital nesting area, no public access is permitted.

*West Sister
Island
Lighthouse,*
©Sharon Cummings



*Great Blue
Heron,*
©Sharon Cummings



Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge

Long before it became a national wildlife refuge, Cedar Point, named for the rows of cedar trees that historically grew at its northern tip, served as a refuge in many ways. Waterfowl and other wildlife have used the area for centuries. Ducks, deer and muskrat were hunted and trapped by Native Americans and later by French trappers. In 1813, a group of men, women and children found shelter at Cedar Point after traveling from Michigan across frozen Lake Erie to escape the River Raisin Massacre.



Later, a cabin was built near the end of the point by Ol' Joe Chevalier, a fur and whiskey trader. His cabin was a lure to many in the growing local population. In 1882, the Cedar Point Shooting Club acquired the land. On the site of Ol' Joe's cabin, they built a large clubhouse and managed the marsh for waterfowl hunting. President Dwight D. Eisenhower hunted there during the 1950's as a guest of one of the members.



In 1965, the property was donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and became a national wildlife refuge. Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge contains 2,630 acres, and the largest contiguous marsh on Lake Erie. It is home to large numbers of waterfowl and wading birds, as well as several pairs of nesting bald eagles. Access is by permit only.



Photos from top: *Semipalmated Sandpiper*; *Blue-winged Teal*, *Brown Thrasher*; *Fox Snake*, ©Sharon Cummings



A Look into the Past

Before European settlers arrived, much of the area from the southwest shores of Lake Erie to Fort Wayne, Indiana, was covered by a dense, deep swamp called the Great Black Swamp. It was a foreboding place to the early settlers but home to many Native American tribes. Bartering with early settlers for tobacco and corn, the largest of these tribes came to be called "Ottawas", a name derived from the Algonquin word *adawe*, meaning "to trade."

In 1794, at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the ten local Native American tribes were defeated by General "Mad" Anthony Wayne and forced to flee northwest Ohio. Their departure opened the area to European settlers. Although early passage through the area was extremely arduous, "progress" prevailed and the formidable Great Black Swamp was drained. Farmers and farm field replaced Native Americans and wetlands; blackbirds and livestock supplanted eagles and panthers. The Great Black Swamp was reduced from 300,000 acres to just 15,000 acres.



Blue Jay,
©Sharon Cummings

Fortunately, part of the Great Black Swamp was preserved along the Lake Erie shore. Much of this land was owned by private waterfowl hunt clubs who recognized the area's significance to wildlife. In 1961, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge was established under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act when several hunt clubs and farmsteads were purchased with Federal Duck Stamp funds. This ensured the preservation of some of the remaining Lake Erie marsh habitat.



Dunlin, ©Sharon Cummings

A Home for Wildlife

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is intensively managed to provide habitat for native species and control invasive species. Much of the refuge is divided into diked impoundments. Water levels in the impoundments can be raised or lowered through a system of ditches, pumps and valves. A variety of habitat types can be created in a given year by rotating water level patterns among the different impoundments, providing diverse habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife. For example, lowering water levels in the spring encourages the growth of certain plant species such as nutsedge and smartweed, whose tubers and seeds provide high quality natural food for migrating waterfowl in the fall. Raising water levels in the fall makes those plants accessible to foraging waterfowl as well as providing resting areas. Shallow water and mudflats serve as foraging habitat for migrating shorebirds feeding on protein-rich invertebrates.



*Wood Duck,
Lesser Scaup*

©Sharon Cummings



*Pied-billed
Grebe,
Woodchuck,
Chestnut-sided
Warbler*

©Sharon Cummings

The refuge also includes some of the only coastal marsh habitat open to Lake Erie. The Crane Creek estuary is influenced by the widely-fluctuating Lake Erie water levels, and is home to a wide variety of species. Connection with the lake allows fish access to spawning habitat, provides native mollusk habitat, and enables an exchange of nutrients between Lake Erie and Crane Creek.

Wooded and shrubby areas provide critical stopover habitat for migrating songbirds resting and feeding along Lake Erie. These areas also provide habitat for upland animals such as white-tailed deer, squirrels, coyotes, and other wildlife.





National Wildlife Refuge

Wildlife comes first on national wildlife refuges, which means all human activities must be compatible with the needs of wildlife. Visitors should take note of refuge rules and follow these tips for an enjoyable refuge visit.



- Weather at the refuge is often hotter, colder or windier than it is further inland. Dress in layers, and bring extra clothes, a hat, and sturdy shoes.
- Insects can be a problem. Wearing long sleeves and bringing insect repellent is advised.
- The best wildlife viewing is often in early morning or early evening.



Wildlife Observation/Photography

The refuge trails, which are part of the National Recreational Trail System, enable visitors to hike on over ten miles of level trails through marshland, woods, shrubland and grassland. The trails are a great way to explore, close-up, the diversity of Ottawa's wildlife and habitat. A refuge bird list is available at the office. Special auto tours are held throughout the year; contact the refuge for scheduled dates.



Visitor Center

Refuge visitors can stop at the Visitor Center and learn more about the Lake Erie marshes, wildlife and migration, the history of the refuge, and more. Experience life in a hunting lodge and "duck" into a muskrat hut. There's sure to be something that everyone will enjoy!



Special Events/Environmental Education/Interpretation

Ottawa NWR holds several special events throughout the year, including monthly auto tours, International Migratory Bird Day, National Wildlife Refuge Week, and other programs for the public.



Photos from top:
Fox Squirrel,
Map Turtle,
White-tailed
Deer; Northern
Harrier;

©Sharon Cummings

Many students of all ages visit the refuge each year to learn about natural resources. Programs are conducted for school, scout and other groups. Special programs and group tours must be arranged in advance. Contact the refuge for information about educational programs and opportunities.



Fishing

Fishing opportunities are available in designated locations and seasons. Contact the refuge for regulations.

Hunting

Deer and waterfowl hunting are permitted as part of controlled hunts administered cooperatively by the refuge and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife. Contact the refuge for more information.



Closed Areas

Much of the refuge is closed to public access for safety reasons and to reduce disturbance to wildlife. Visitors are asked to comply with all regulatory signs.

Please Obey These Special Rules

- Daylight use only.
- Pets must be on a standard leash and under the owner's control at all times.
- No camping or overnight parking is allowed.
- Off-road vehicles are prohibited
- Open fires are not allowed.
- Taking government property or any natural feature, artifact, animal or plant is prohibited.
- Trash receptacles are provided, but please take litter and trash home when possible.



Photos from top: *Black-crowned Night Heron,* *Eastern Tailed Blue Butterfly,* *Visitor Center; Bullfrog,* ©Sharon Cummings



©Sharon Cummings

Wildlife Calendar

*January/
February*

Tundra swans are commonly seen in the area along with many Canada geese, American black ducks, and mallards. Short-eared owls and northern harriers can be seen around the refuge. Bald eagles are building nests and can be seen in many areas.

March/April

Look for signs of spring as red-winged blackbirds, great blue herons, and killdeer return. Waterfowl migration begins, shorebirds can be seen starting in March and the first warblers appear toward the end of April. Raptor migration is heavy during this time.

May/June

Songbird migration peaks in May, and many shorebirds can also be seen. The first fawns, ducklings and goslings should also be seen at this time.

July/August

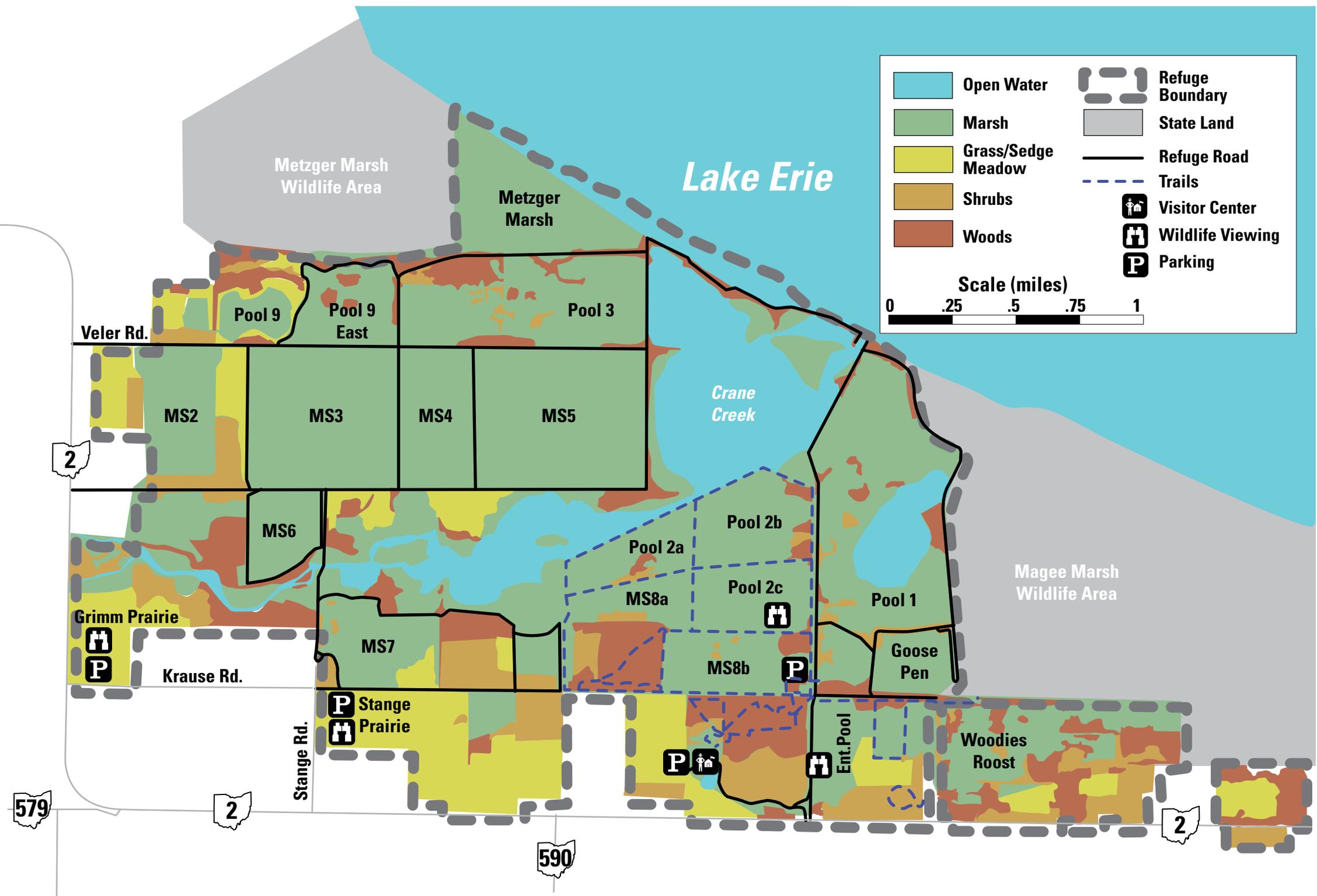
Shorebirds are returning from their northern nesting grounds. Look for them in areas with mudflats and shallow water.

*September/
October*

Raptors are heading south, and the fall migration of songbirds is usually at its peak. Look for large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds in the area at this time. Bald eagle numbers are also high on the refuge in the fall. White-tailed deer are common throughout the refuge.

*November/
December*

The last of the shorebirds and raptors are still in the area. Look for buntings, shrikes and peak numbers of waterfowl.



Lake Erie

Crane Creek

Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area

Metzger Marsh

Veler Rd.

Pool 9

Pool 9 East

Pool 3

MS2

MS3

MS4

MS5

2

MS6

Pool 2a

Pool 2b

Grimm Prairie

MS8a

Pool 2c

Pool 1

P
H

MS7

MS8b

Goose Pen

Krause Rd.

P
H
Stange Prairie

P
H

H

Ent. Pool

Woodies Roost

579

2

Stange Rd.

590

2