

# Wild

## Preserve has butterflies and migrating birds

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The plants cannot thrive on the harsh, windy beach, but they can thrive in the shadow of the dunes in what is a sheltered landscape.

Some dune plants thrive with extensive root systems. Others have folding leaves to stabilize themselves and trap moisture.

The key plants in creating dunes are switchgrass and beach grass. They become established on the upper beach away from the water and quickly spread into huge rootlike mats. Sand rapidly drifts into the calm areas around the grasses and stops moving. That makes the dunes taller. Yet the grasses are not buried and simply grow up through the accumulating sands.

They are joined by beach pea, cockebur, sea rocket, seaside spurge and purple sand-grass.

As the dunes become established, grape vines and poison ivy appear. Cottonwood and willows appear and finally black oak follow.

Other dune-specific plants include sand-dropseed, Canada wild-rye, wafer-ash and wild bean.

There are frontal dunes near the water, secondary dunes and back dunes farthest away from the lake.

Lake Erie became part of the Atlantic Ocean about 12,000 years ago when the glaciers were retreating. The saltwater retreat-

ed 2,000 years later, but the Atlantic coastal plants remained in the Lake Erie dunes.

## Birds and butterflies

Headlands Dunes, dedicated in 1976, is a good site for migrating birds and monarch butterflies.

Visitors to the preserve are asked to walk carefully on four trails and to not disturb any dune vegetation.

A Coast Guard station at the edge of the preserve marks where the river dumps into Lake Erie at Fairport Harbor. The lighthouse dates to 1925.

The dunes are moving farther out into Lake Erie, due to the breakwall at the river's mouth. The beach has moved northward 2,500 feet since 1827.

The state park and nature preserve lie at the north end of state Route 44 where it dead-ends at Lake Erie.

To get there from the Akron area, take state Route 8 north to Interstate 271. Proceed on I-90 toward Erie, Pa. Exit at the state Route 44/Mentor exit. Turn left and head north. The road ends into the state park parking lot. The preserve is at the eastern edge of the parking lot.

State park hours: half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset. Preserve hours: daylight to dark daily.

FYI: The northern terminus of the cross-Ohio Buckeye Trail is at the entrance to the preserve. A large sign marks the end of the road.

For more information on the state park, write to Headlands Beach State Park, 9601 Headlands Road, Mentor, OH 44060.

You can also contact Headlands Beach and Cleveland Lakefront State Park, 8701 Lakeshore



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Blvd. N.E., Cleveland, OH 44108; 216-881-8141. The Internet site is [www.clevelandlakefront.org](http://www.clevelandlakefront.org).

For information on the state nature preserve, contact the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Natural Areas & Preserves, Building F, Fountain Square, Columbus, OH 43224; 614-265-6453 or 440-632-3010; [www.ohiodnr.com](http://www.ohiodnr.com).

You can also contact the Lake County Visitors Bureau, 1610 Mentor Ave., Painesville, OH 44077, 440-354-2424 or 800-368-5253; [www.lakevisit.com](http://www.lakevisit.com).

## Owl hikes

Ohio's Malabar Farm State Park in Richland County will host evening owl walks from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Feb. 4 and 11.

Advance registration is required. Call 419-892-2784 for reservations and information.

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