



BOB DOWNING/Akron Beacon Journal photos

Lake County's Mentor Marsh is one of the largest wetland areas in Northeast Ohio, with plume grass dominating its 646.5 acres.

# Watery world

By Bob Downing  
Beacon Journal staff writer

## MENTOR

It's a jungle, an imposing wall of waving tall grasses.

Lake County's Mentor Marsh, a spongy world of water and land, is dominated by an impenetrable tangle of reed grass. It is a tall plume grass, growing 10 to 15 feet high, and it is an invasive species.

Today, reed grass is the dominant feature of Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve, a 646½-acre site where the Grand River once flowed.

It is one of the largest natural wetlands in Northeast Ohio. The area is important for its birds and its breeding grounds for fish.

The river made a new turn to empty into Lake Erie at Fairport Harbor 800 to 1,000 years ago. That turned the crescent-shaped old riverbed into a wetland that is three miles long and up to one mile wide.

You can see the marsh - managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and owned by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History - by hiking on three trails and visiting a small nature center off Corduroy Road.

The Kerven Trail is a loop of one mile on the south side of the wetland. It begins near the Carol Sweet Nature Center at 5185 Corduroy Road.

The trail runs through flat woodlands and leads to a wooden platform at the edge of the marsh, where you may see red-winged blackbirds, herons and warblers. Keep an eye out for white-tailed



The Kerven Trail at Mentor Marsh is a one-mile loop through flat woodlands, along a marsh and near a butterfly meadow.



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deer and owls.

The trail passes a butterfly meadow and heavy woods filled with woodpeckers.

An immature bald eagle flapped across the marshes as I hiked the Kerven Trail in November. It came to roost in a tall oak tree on an island surrounded by tall grasses.

The reed grass is interspersed with tree stumps and snags.

Interestingly, Corduroy Road got its name because early settlers felled trees and stacked them next to one another to cross the low-lying marsh.

On the northern side of the marsh, you can hike into it on an 1,100-foot-long wooden boardwalk on the Wake Robin Trail.

The short out-and-back hike is less than one mile. But the boardwalk takes you directly into the marsh.

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