

Lake Erie Coastal Wildlife Habitats, Migratory Birds and Native Plants @ Cleveland's Dike 14

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CLEVELAND • DIKE 14 Natural Resource/Land Use Study

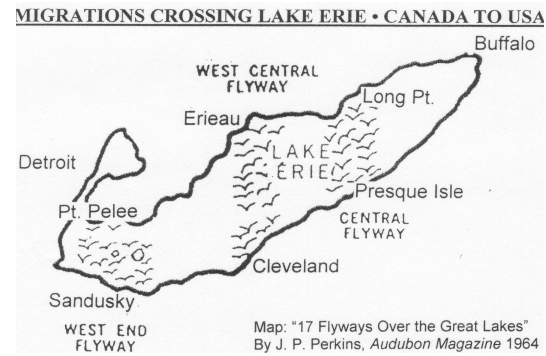
Data compiled 5/10/03 by Barbara A. Martin, LWVC Environmental Committee 440-243-9070



GREATER YELLOWLEGS



PINE SISKIN



DICKCISSSEL



NORTHERN HARRIER

COASTAL HABITATS at DIKE 14

- **OVERVIEW** Dike 14 functions as a high performance migratory stopover site because of its 88-acre size, its strategic coastal location and its diverse wildlife habitats that meet the survival needs of significant numbers and diversity of migratory birds i.e. food, shelter, water and ample staging areas for flocks to assemble and assess wind and weather conditions before departure.
- **KEY LOCATION** Dike 14 is located in Lake Erie adjoining 1,700 feet of shoreline at Cleveland Lakefront State Park at Gordon Park. Dike 14 is situated at the intersection of four (4) migratory routes: the Lake Erie shoreline, Lake Erie itself (See Map), the Doan Brook Valley and the Cuyahoga River Valley.
- **DIVERSITY** Nature's reclamation of dredged soils at Dike 14 has resulted in significant and diverse wildlife habitats covering the 88-acre landmass with wetlands, mudflats, grasslands, shrublands meadows and forests.
- **A CRITICAL RESOURCE** The coastal habitats at Dike 14 provide the ONLY quality habitat for birds along 100-miles of highly urbanized Lake Erie coastline between Huron and Mentor.
- **SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS & DIVERSITY OF BIRDS at DIKE 14**
 - 281 species of birds documented at Dike 14
 - 23 of Ohio's 29 Endangered Species
 - 3 of Ohio's 3 Threatened Species
 - 2 Federally Endangered Species
 - 54 out of 68 Audubon Watch List Species
 - Spring Migration: 4 months, February-June
 - Fall Migration: 5 months, July-December
 - 10,000-20,000 birds/month during migration
- **A HIGH PERFORMANCE SITE** The number and diversity of birds utilizing Dike 14's 88-acre site compare equal to the numbers and diversity found at far larger sites: such as the 575-acre Old Woman Creek State Nature Preserve in Huron and the 650-acre Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve in Mentor.

Bird migrations across Lake Erie

Excerpts: Article by J. P. PERKINS, *Audubon Magazine* 1964

"Bird migrants from both the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways overlap in the Great Lakes area. Although the distances over open water are not nearly as far as those of the Gulf (of Mexico) and Caribbean Sea, the hazards are as great or greater: the spring and fall flights often coincide with sudden and violent seasonal storms in which migratory birds die by the thousands."

"There are areas [across each of the Great Lakes] where birds tend to congregate and cross the water in massive waves at the height of the migration seasons."

Lake Erie has three such migration routes, See Map:
Sandusky, Ohio to Point Pelee, Ontario
Cleveland, Ohio to Erieau, Ontario
Presque Isle, Pa. to Long Point, Ontario

Nature Conservancy of Canada

The Canadian counterpart to Cleveland's Dike 14 includes Ontario's coastal town of Erieau, the Greater Rondeau Bay Important Bird Area, and the Clear Creek Forest, located on the shore of Lake Erie and designated by the Nature Conservancy of Canada as priority habitat for bird species at risk.

Audubon Society

Audubon Society has designated Cleveland's 88-acre Dike 14 as an Audubon Important Bird Area, deserving of the highest conservation priority.

Commentary: NATIVE PLANTS at DIKE 14

Excerpts: Report by JAMES K. BISSELL, Curator of Botany, The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, June 6, 2001

"The size of the [Dike 14] property, 88 acres, is large enough to support open meadow habitats, shrub thickets and forest habitats.

There (is) a great diversity of native herbaceous meadow plants within the open areas ... I was impressed by the diversity of birds...especially surprised to hear the wood thrush singing in the willow-cottonwood forest.

Although there are a few invasive, alien plants (canary grass, phragmites, mugwort & purple loosestrife), the dominant shrub on the property is a native willow, sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*). Sandbar willow is native to Lake Erie beaches and river shores.

The forest and shrub communities are dominated primarily by three native species: sandbar willow, peach-leaf willow (*Salix amygdaloides*) and eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoids*)... [species that are] typical of young forests within high quality natural areas bordering Lake Erie.

Much of the open meadow areas are dominated by native goldenrod...[tall goldenrod, early goldenrod and giant goldenrod]

There are large stands of common milkweed within the open meadows and I was surprised to see a few of the wetland milkweed, swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*).

I would suggest adding some other woody plants such as sugar maple, red oak, basswood, tulip tree, black cherry, sassafras and red maple to the forest area on the property. Native prairie could be established within some of the meadow openings...

Establishment of the area as a park would provide a great resource for the Museum. The great diversity of birds and the equally nice diversity of native plant species would make the area a great destination for Member's or staff field trips. I look forward to returning to the site."