WET MEADOW cont'd

These are the Red-osier (photo) Silky and Gray Dogwoods. Unlike the dogwood trees in an established forest, the dogwood shrub is a low growing, multi-trunk shrub that blooms later in the season, typically in June. Dogwood shrubs, like buttonbush and willows, provide a food source for wildlife.

The catkins, or seed pods, on the willows in the spring are eaten by many varieties of caterpillars. The caterpillars in turn are the main food source for many migratory birds such as the warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and tanagers. If you listen along the trail, you may hear the rattle of a Baltimore Oriole (photo) in the cottonwoods, or see their basket-type nest hanging from a branch out over the water.

Shrub/scrub habitats have water-logged soils; they reduce runoff from seasonal flooding by trapping the water within the soil and slowly draining over time. This water-logged area typically does not encourage much low growing or ground level plant growth.

Reptiles and amphibians like the painted turtle and green frogs (sounds like a plucked rubber band) are common in this type of wetland. The moist soil provides them a place to hibernate, along with opportunities to lay their eggs or hatch tadpoles in the spring. Larger mammals tend to avoid the shrub/scrub wetland due to the soggy soils, but unusual birds like the Sora Rail prefer this habitat due to the shallow waters and plenty of places to hide.

WET PRAIRIE

If you look out over this area, it may appear as a lawn in need of mowing. The southwestern boundaries of Cemex Reserve were once part of a thriving, dry soybean field. Now through spring flooding and by controlling the overflow of water in the marsh, this area remains wet all spring, autumn and winter encouraging plants prefering wet soils at certain times of the year.

Prairies, like wetlands, are threatened habitats: a wetland prairie makes it particularly unusual. Wet prairies contain a higher diversity of plants than any other wetland habitat. Vegetation in a wet prairie is very dense and is dominated by grasses, predominately only three to five feet high. Little Blue Stem and Side Oats-Gramma wrestle in the summer's breeze, as a red-winged Blackbird perches on the highest stalk, singing "Konk-a-ree."

Money flower, winged loosestrife and joe-pye weed (below photo) are a few of the late blooming wildflowers that smatter the tan grasses, thriving in the summer's heat and blooming in late July and on into autumn.

Wildlife is abundant in a wet prairie. Dragonflies (below photo)
damselflies and other winged insects love the moisture and warmth a wet prairie provides. They can be spotted on grass stems and flower blossoms. Grasshopper Sparrows and Common Yellow-throated Warblers all nest within this dense habitat. Other wildlife tends to use this area as temporary habitat only. Due to the fact that the prairie is wet spring, autumn and winter --- and hot and dry throughout the summer --- it does not encourage fur-bearing mammals to stay long. As you walk slowly past the prairie, however, you may catch a glimpse of white-tail deer or rabbits foraging on the edges.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Greene County Park District doing business as Greene County Parks & Trails is dedicated to the preservation of our county's natural heritage through the acquisition, protection, management and stewardship of diverse natural areas throughout Greene County. The reserves and preserves provide areas of woods, floodplain, meadow and marsh for both common and endangered species of native plants and wildlife. Reserves and preserves are protected not only for their natural resources and history, but also for public enjoyment. Reserves are intended solely for passive recreation use including nature study, art, photography, hiking, etc.

In case of emergency, contact the ranger on duty by calling Greene County Central Dispatch at 937- 376-5111 or (emergency only) at 9-1-1.

Please help preserve our natural areas and the valuable features of each park. Stay on the trails. Collect only trash and leave plants, animals, geologic and historic features undisturbed.

PARK HOURS

Sunday - Saturday
Sunrise - Sunset

Recommended Activities:
Hiking, Birdwatching and Photography

GREENE COUNTY
PARKS & TRAILS

575 Ledbetter Rd.
Xenia, OH 45385
937.562.6440
gcparkstrails.com

Cemex Reserve

Preserved by:
Greene County Park District

GREENE COUNTY | PARKS & TRAILS
Safe, Clean, Blue and Green...

Sanctuary Drive off Garland Avenue
Fairborn, Ohio

gcparkstrails.com

ABOUT THE RESERVE

Cemex Reserve is a 164-acre restored wetland lying at the northern end of the Beaver Creek Wetlands. Water comes into the reserve from Pearl's Run, a small stream with year round flow coming in from the northeast. The reserve was donated to Greene County Parks & Trails by the company now known as Cemex.

Cemex produced cement by mining various components from the earth. Once removed, Cemex worked with Wright State University's Biology Department to restore the lands back to wetland habitats including marshes, wet meadows and wet prairies.Restoration efforts included creating a clay bowl for a marsh and seeding to create a wet meadow. The wet prairie was on the fringes of the excavation and required only minor water management and seeding to allow it to flourish.

All habitats require management to maintain their quality. Cemex recognized the property needed to be placed into a public trust that could provide the necessary care and management to preserve the land. They chose to donate the property to Greene County Parks & Trails to insure the wetlands would be properly managed and could be an example for the public to see the benefits provided by wetland habitats.

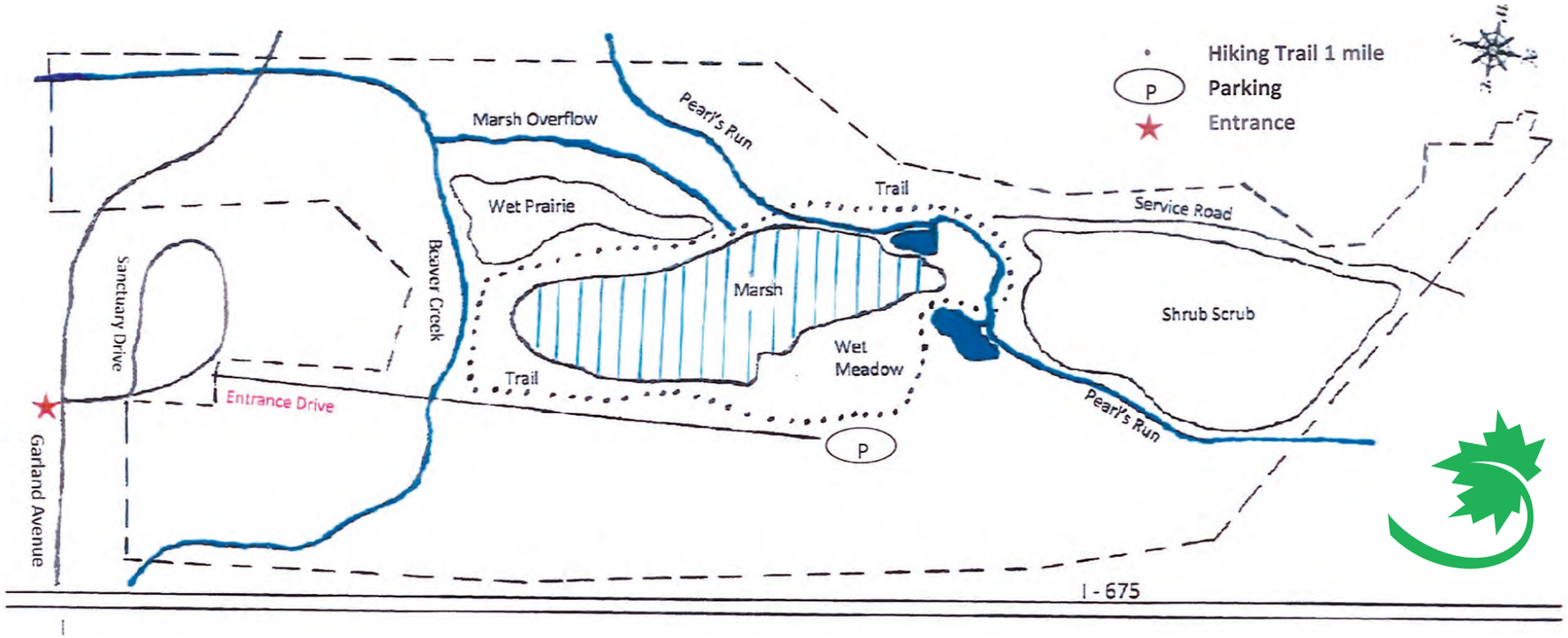
The park agency has adopted a land management plan for the reserve and will continue the efforts of invasive removal and wetland enhancement for years to come.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are some of the most important, but most threatened of habitats, and were dominant in Ohio as late as the 1800s.

Initially thought to be useless, insect and animal infested, as well as unable to raise crops, the wetlands were drained to become more productive. But time and experience has taught us that we were wrong in our assumptions.

Wetland soils actually trap sediment and pollutants, while absorbing tremendous amounts of water that helps to reduce flooding downstream.



More than 90 percent of all wildlife spends all or part of their lives in a wetland habitat. Continually moving waters make wetlands prime breeding area for salamanders, frogs, and other reptiles and amphibians, but not mosquitoes as they prefer stagnant waters.

Dense vegetation provides cover and food for wildlife.

Wetlands consist of three major components: water at or above the surface for prolong periods of time during the year; hydrophytic plants - plants whose roots can sustain prolonged submergence in water; and anaerobic soils- highly organic soils lacking oxygen.

In Ohio, we have many types of wetlands including marshes, bogs, fens, wet prairies, wet woods and shrub scrub wetlands.

The type of wetland is determined by the type of plants growing within the area.

MARSH

Marshes are the wettest of all vegetated wetlands, typically formed in shallow depressions like Cemex Reserve. Herbaceous plants, such as common cattail, bull rushes, and soft stem rush, are the dominant species of a marsh. Waterfowl such as ring-neck ducks, redhead and scaups visit the marshes in late autumn and early spring. Great blue heron (cover photo) and Canada geese reside year-round in marshes, as do deer, muskrat, northern water snakes, painted turtles (photo) and green frogs.

WET MEADOW

Wet meadows differ from wet prairies by the diversity of plants that grow within. A prairie's dominant plants are grasses, where as meadows and shrub/scrub wetlands are dominated by sedges and low growing shrubs.

Without taking a second look, sedges could be mistaken for a common lawn grass. But if you run your fingers down along the base of the sedge, you can feel the triangular edge, thus creating the saying "sedges have edges." Another way to denote the difference is that sedges tend to grow in clusters, or clumps, some with very distinctive seed heads, almost resembling a bottle brush.

In a shrub/scrub wetland, shrubs are the dominant plant. If you look throughout this area you, will see shrubs with a red or burgundy stem. These dogwoods thrive in the habitat found in a wetland area.

(Wet Meadow details continued on reverse/next page...)