

# *Sand, Wind, & Water*



A recreational  
guide to eastern  
Lake Ontario's  
dunes and wetlands

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This guidebook has been produced with assistance from  
**The Ontario Dune Coalition**,  
an organization comprised of state and county agency and  
community group representatives dedicated to educating the public  
about Lake Ontario's dunes and wetlands.

## Welcome!

Along Lake Ontario's eastern shore is a 17-mile stretch of sand dunes, wetlands, woodlands, ponds, and creeks known as the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland Area. Reaching from the mouth of the Salmon River north to the outlet of Black Pond, the area supports a diversity of plants and wildlife. Seven properties are open to the public for outdoor recreation: Deer Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Sandy Island Beach County Park, Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area, Lakeview Marsh WMA, Southwick Beach State Park, Black Pond WMA, and El Dorado Nature Preserve.

## Activities

Take a walk along the beach in Southwick Beach State Park or swim, picnic, camp, and play ball. If you prefer a more rustic setting, hiking, boating, bird watching, fishing, or hunting in the three wildlife management areas may be just what you're looking for. The numerous creeks throughout the area have slight currents, perfect for canoeing.

## Getting there

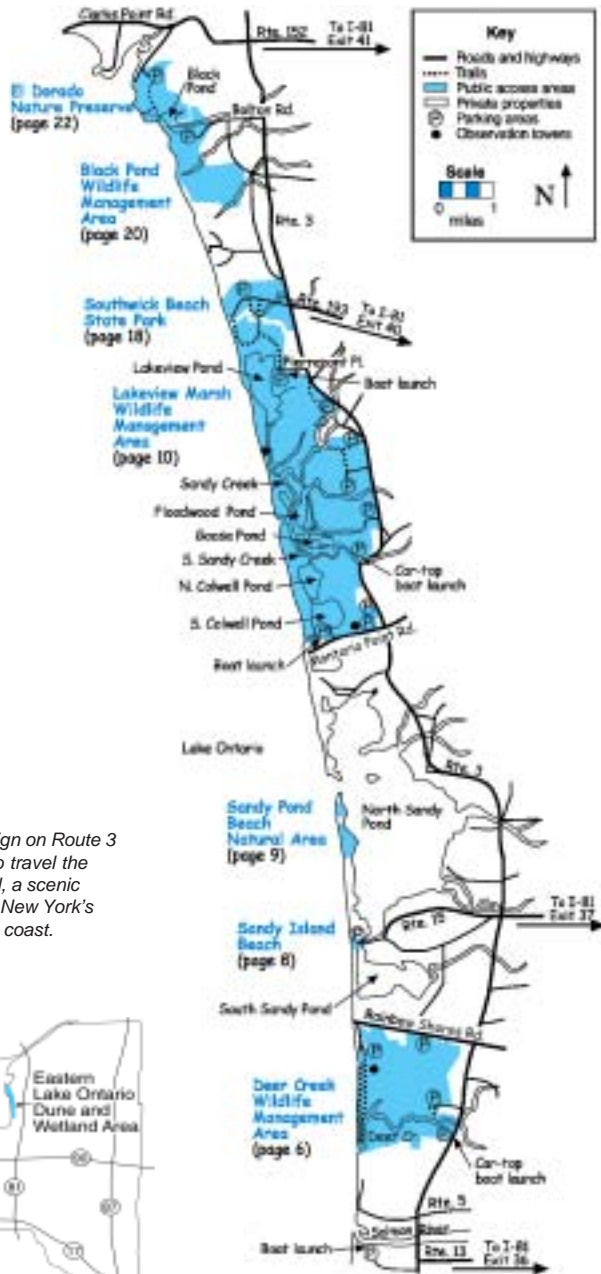
The Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland Area is easy to get to by car from Interstate 81 and Route 3. The map on page 2 shows parking areas and trails. Access information for each property accessible to the public is included in this guide. Please respect private property; use only designated public access points.

## Protect the dunes and wetlands during your visit!

**The dunes and wetlands in this area are extremely fragile and easily destroyed. During your visit, *please*:**

- stay off the dunes;
- picnic only at Southwick Beach or Sandy Island Beach;
- swim only at Southwick Beach or Sandy Island Beach with a lifeguard;
- stay on designated trails and walkways;
- take out whatever you bring in;
- leave everything you find (except litter);
- hunt and fish away from the dunes;
- make fires only in designated areas;
- camp only at Southwick Beach; and
- land boats only in designated areas.

# Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland Area



Follow this sign on Route 3 if you wish to travel the Seaway Trail, a scenic byway along New York's Great Lakes coast.



## What are sand dunes?

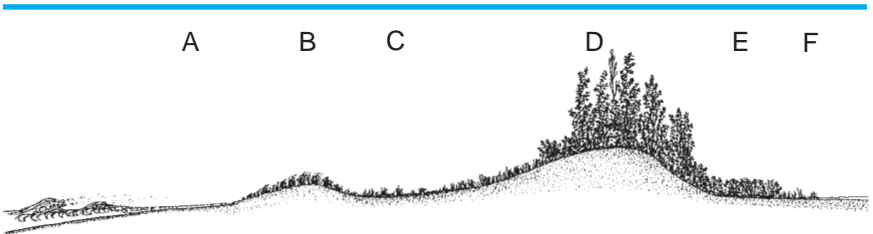
Sand dunes are basically long ridges of sand and other sediments piled on the shore by wind and wave action. The sand is held together by plants, such as Champlain and American beachgrass (see illustration on back cover). These plant's leaves trap sand and their branching roots prevent the sand from blowing away.

The dunes grow as sand is blown onto them and trapped by plants or snow-fencing, building them higher and higher. Champlain and American beachgrass are especially important since they can survive being covered with sand. As the dunes get larger and more stable, plants such as wormwood, eastern cottonwood, poison ivy, and sand dune willow take root and add to the staying power of the dune.

Another dune may form in front of the older, stable dune and the whole process is then repeated. In fact, a series of dunes may form parallel to the shore with the primary dune, or foredune, closest to the lake. The inland dune is called the secondary dune.

## Why did the dunes form here?

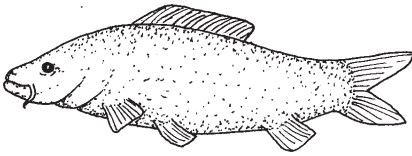
Off the eastern Lake Ontario coastline is an underwater sheet of sand that formed thousands of years ago, when the shoreline extended further west into the lake. Sand for the dunes comes from this ancient, now-underwater beach. Eventually, a very long time from now, all the sand will be washed ashore.



*The Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland Area is comprised of six main zones: A - beach; B - foredune; C - trough or swale; D - inland or secondary dune; E - backdune; and F - wetland, pond, or creek. Woodlands and meadows are found inland of the wetland zone. (Illustration courtesy of Bob McNamara)*

## What's that splash?

As you travel through the wetlands of the area, don't be too surprised if you see a splash of water next to your boat at one point or another. The carp is a familiar sight -- and sound -- in wetlands throughout New York. If you look carefully, you may see the fin on this fish's back sticking out of the water in shallow areas. Carp are generally long-lived, with many individuals living up to 20 years. They are also large, some growing up to 35 pounds. A native of Europe and Asia, carp meat is considered a delicacy in many countries.



Carp  
*Cyprinus carpio*

## Hey, where's that dune going?

Sand dunes are very fragile and easily eroded or worn away. The beachgrass and other plants holding the dune together are able to survive in the harsh dune environment -- boiling hot in the summer, freezing cold in the winter, and always breezy. But step on them, sit on them, or pick them and they don't survive long. In places where the plants have been destroyed, the sand is loose and easily blown away. A small foot path soon becomes a gaping hole in the dune as the wind eats away at it, eroding deep into the dune. Large holes in the dunes are called dune blowouts.

## Why are the dunes important?

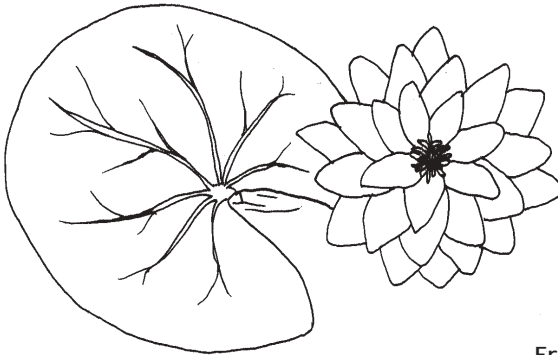
The sand dunes act as a buffer or barrier, protecting the wetlands and other inland areas from the effects of high water, waves and currents, as well as severe coastal storms. Without the dunes, property near the coast of Lake Ontario, including homes and farmland, would be damaged by springtime floods, causing serious economic impacts for local inhabitants. Damage to wetlands can lead to loss of habitat for wildlife and fewer recreational opportunities for people.

# What are wetlands?

“Wetlands” is a collective term meaning marshes, swamps, bogs, and other waterlogged areas. Inland of the dunes of Lake Ontario are low-lying areas which have formed wetlands with ponds and streams. Seasonally-wet areas next to freshwater rivers are called “riparian” wetlands. Riparian wetlands are found inland of the dunes in all three of the wildlife management areas.

Although originally thought of as useless wastelands, wetlands are very important natural resources. Wetlands:

- 1) improve water quality;
- 2) reduce flood and storm damage;
- 3) provide natural habitat for fish, plants, and animals; and
- 4) provide space for recreational opportunities such as boating and bird watching.



Fragrant water-lily  
*Nymphaea odorata*

Which of these plants can you find during your visit? Use a field guide to identify them.

### Marsh species:

- Fragrant water-lily
- Spatterdock
- Purple loosestrife
- Common cattail
- Arrowhead
- Yellow iris
- Marsh marigold
- Duckweed

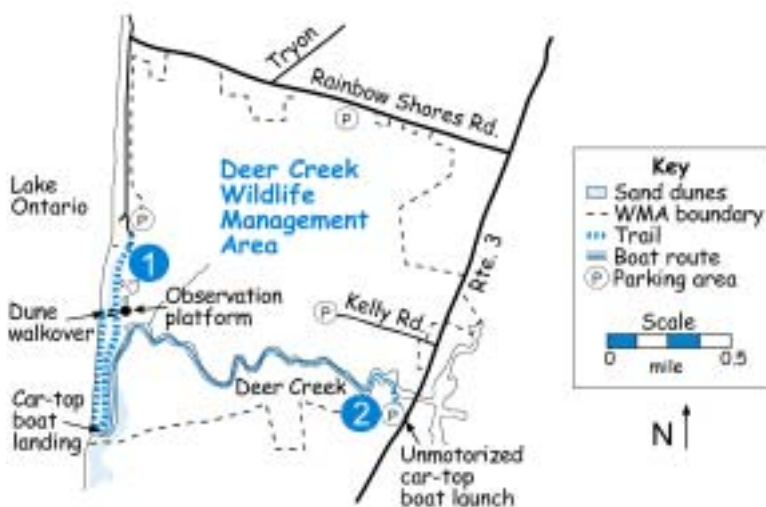
### Dune species:

- Wormwood
- Dune willow
- Poison ivy
- Champlain beachgrass
- Beach pea
- Cottonwood
- Wild grape

### Woodland species:

- Mayapple
- Jack-in-the-pulpit
- Green ash
- Sugar maple
- Eastern red cedar
- White birch
- Trillium
- Jewelweed

## Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area



### Things to do...

Deer Creek Marsh WMA is an 1,195-acre area managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation - Region 7. Take a walk along the beach, canoe or fish in the wetlands, or hike or hunt in the woods! If you're an angler, Deer Creek supports healthy northern pike and largemouth bass populations. Enjoy your visit to this beautiful area, but remember that swimming, picnicking, and landing boats are not allowed except at the outlet.

1

### Wetlands/Dune Trail

Length: 0.9 mile (one way)

Difficulty: Easy

Type of use: Hiking

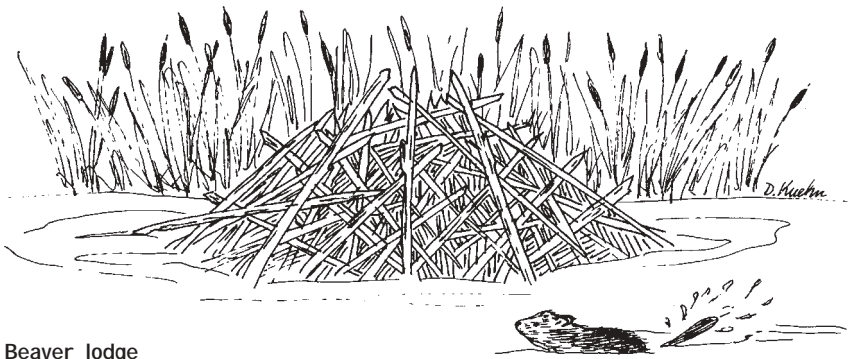
This trail follows an abandoned road, offering views of Deer Creek's wetlands and dunes. After about 0.2 mile, a path to the right cuts over to the beach. Continue on the main trail and you will soon reach an observation platform and a dune walkover to the beach. The observation tower offers a spectacular view of the marsh. From here, the main trail continues south through the dunes. Please stay within the string fencing until you reach Deer Creek's outlet. Follow the beach north to return to the parking area.

*How to get there: Take Rainbow Shores Road west to the end, and take a left turn. This dirt road eventually forks. Take the left fork to the parking area. The trail starts on the other side of the metal gate.*



## What's that pile of sticks?

Beaver lodges resembling piles of sticks abound in the many creeks and channels found throughout the dune and wetland area. Beavers build their lodges from the bottom up, using logs, branches, rocks, and mud. The entrance to each lodge is underwater, which keeps out unwanted guests. Inside the lodge is a dry floor with a bed of twigs, leaves, and grasses. If you see a lodge that looks like a beaver lodge but is made of cattails, you've found a muskrat lodge.



Beaver lodge

2

## Deer Creek

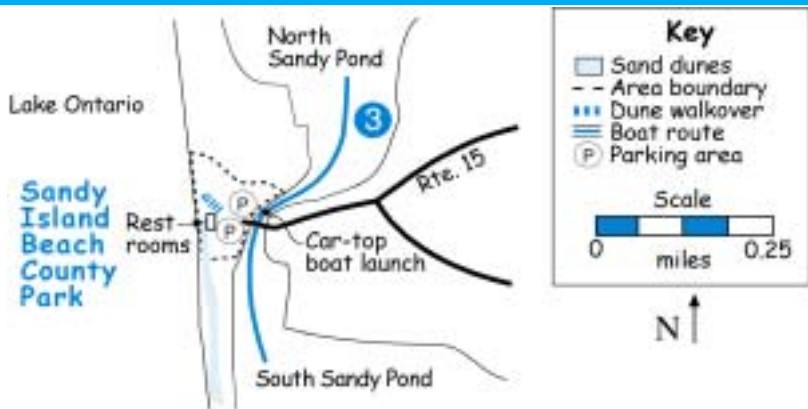
Distance: 2.6 miles (one way)

Type of use: Unmotorized car-top boats

Deer Creek meanders through cattail marshes, past Wood Duck nesting boxes and muskrat and beaver lodges, and between the fore and secondary dunes along the Lake Ontario coast. By traveling between the dune ridges, you get a feel for how the dunes act as a barrier, protecting the wetlands and inland areas from wind and waves. The creek eventually leads to the Lake Ontario outlet. Brennan Beach Campground is on the south side of the outlet. Watch for strong currents here. Please land your boat only at the outlet to prevent erosion of the dunes along the creek.

*How to get there: A parking area for Deer Creek's unmotorized boat launch is on the west side of Route 3, 1.2 miles south of Rainbow Shores Road. After parking here, a 0.1-mile portage leads you to the creek.*

## Sandy Island Beach County Park



### Things to do...

Sparkling blue water and a warm stretch of beach welcome you and your family to this Oswego County family attraction. The refreshing Lake Ontario water and white sandy beaches provide hours of enjoyment for the entire family. The park is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, 10 a. m. to sunset. Certified lifeguards are on duty from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, from mid-June to Labor Day. A concession stand, changing areas and bathroom facilities are available.

3

### North and South Sandy Ponds

Distance: Depends on boater.

Type of use: Both ponds are open to motorboats. However, only unmotorized car-top boats are permitted to launch from Sandy Island Beach.

Both South and North Sandy Ponds can be accessed from the Sandy Island Beach car-top boat launch site located on the narrow channel connecting the two ponds. From the boat launch, travel south under the small Route 15 bridge to access South Sandy Pond. The same narrow, marshy channel when taken north will lead you to North Sandy Pond. While both ponds offer great fishing and paddling opportunities, South Sandy Pond receives less motorboat traffic.

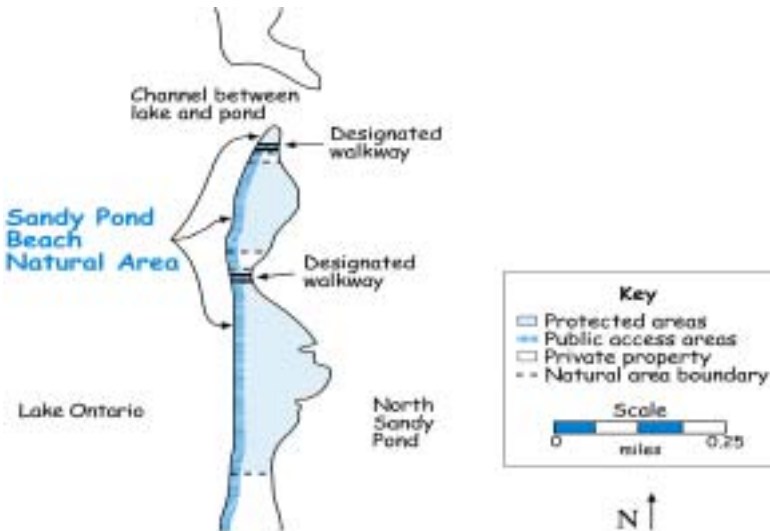
How to get there: Take County Route 15 west to Sandy Island Beach County Park. Immediately after passing by the entrance booth, take a right and park in the parking area to the right. The boat launch is located near the southeast corner of the parking area. A parking fee is charged.

# Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area

## Things to do...

Between the Lakeview Marsh and Deer Creek Marsh WMAs is Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area, a recreation area and wildlife preserve owned by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Sandy Pond Beach is jointly managed by The Nature Conservancy and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation - Region 7. The Friends of Sandy Pond Beach provide volunteer support.

This beach and dune area is located on a small peninsula of land that separates Lake Ontario and North Sandy Pond. It is open for beach use, hiking, and birdwatching. While in the area, please cross the dunes only on designated walkways. Avoid the string-fenced bird sanctuary at the northern tip of the peninsula, as well as other protected areas. There is a string fenced trail to a bird observation area on the east side of the peninsula. Sandy Pond Beach is accessible by boat. Boats can be landed in the shallow waters offshore. The beach property between Route 15 and the natural area is privately owned.



# Lakeview Marsh Wildlife Management Area

## Things to do...

Lakeview Marsh WMA, a 3,461-acre area adjacent to Southwick Beach State Park, is managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation - Region 6. This area has hiking trails, boat launches, hunting and fishing access, an observation tower, two observation platforms, and much, much more! Fishing is permitted by boat in Lakeview's many ponds and creeks. Hunting is permitted in inland areas of the WMA only. A bird's-eye view of Lake Ontario's dunes and wetlands can be seen from the observation tower located on Montario Point Road.

Some of the most beautiful areas in this WMA can only be seen by boat. There are two designated launches for boats with motors less than 10 horsepower and one for car-top boats only (see map). Picnicking, landing of boats, fishing and hunting are not allowed along the natural beach of this WMA, but are allowed elsewhere. Swimming is not allowed anywhere in this WMA. Dogs must be kept on a six foot leash while on the beach.

Explore the area by following the Lake Ontario Dune Trail through the wetlands and over the dunes. You can enter the trail from Southwick Beach State Park or from the Pierrepont Place boat launch. A description of this trail is given on page 19.

If you are interested in hunting, observing wildlife, or a bit more of an adventure, several gravel roads and trails lead into Lakeview WMA (see map). When exploring these routes, bring along a map so that you do not wander onto private property.



## 4

### North and South Colwell Ponds

Distance: 0.9 mile (one way)

Types of use: Motorized and unmotorized boats

North and South Colwell ponds are in the southern section of Lakeview Marsh WMA. A boat launch on the southern shore of South Colwell Pond receives much use by both motorboat operators and canoeists. Boats can travel from this launch site to Lake Ontario via the outlet on the southwestern corner of South Colwell Pond (this channel is shallow in certain locations -- proceed cautiously). A short channel at the northwestern corner of South Colwell leads to North Colwell. Watch for beaver in this channel. Early in the spring (when the weed level is low), traveling to South Sandy Creek is sometimes possible through a narrow channel on the northern side of North Colwell Pond.

*How to get there: Take Montario Point Road west. Go 0.7 mile to the dirt road on the right which leads to the Montario Point Boat Launch on South Colwell Pond.*

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## 5

### South Sandy Creek

Distance: 1.9 miles (one way)

Types of use: Motorized and unmotorized car-top boats

Cattail marshes surround this creek which connects with Floodwood and Goose Ponds, Sandy Creek, and Lake Ontario near its western end. As you pass Goose Pond on your right, you'll see a colony of Bank Swallows nesting in the sand dune on your left. (Keep your distance from this colony -- Bank Swallows abandon their nests when disturbed.) The outlet to Lake Ontario is just ahead -- watch out for strong currents and waves here!

*How to get there: The South Sandy Creek boat launch can be found on the west side of Route 3, just north of South Sandy Creek. A handicapped-accessible fishing pier and restroom are located on this site.*

## 6

## South Sandy Creek Trail

Distance: 0.6 mile (one way)

Types of use: Hiking

This trail parallels South Sandy Creek as it weaves through wooded and wet meadows and ends at an observation deck overlooking the broad expanse of Lakeview marsh and the distant sand dunes. The woodland portion of the trail is a good place to look for warblers, wrens and other small birds skittering about the black willow and box elder. The open marsh is home to a variety of waterfowl, marsh birds and shorebirds. Look for frogs and turtles at two small ponds near the beginning of the trail. South Sandy Creek is home to a variety of fish including pike and bass, and has seasonal runs of trout and salmon, making it a popular fishing stream. You may also spot a muskrat or beaver creating a "V" shaped wake in the creek.

*How to get there: The South Sandy Creek trail can be found on the west side of Route 3, just north of South Sandy Creek. A handicapped-accessible fishing pier and restroom are located on this site.*



Purple loosestrife  
*Lythrum salicaria*

### Marsh invader!

As you venture into the wetlands, you may notice a tall, spiky plant with small purple flowers known as purple loosestrife. It is not native to North America but came here by accident from Eurasia in the early 1800s through maritime and canal traffic. This plant competes with native wetland plants, such as cattails, rushes, and sedges, crowding them out and eliminating natural vegetation and habitat. Although this plant is beautiful to look at, please do not pick or transplant it since this helps it to spread.

Why is loosestrife a problem? Because it doesn't provide good nesting material, cover, or food for wildlife, unlike native plant species. Not even muskrats will eat it! The plants are resistant to decay and over time raise the ground level by trapping organic material in their root systems, filling in the wetland.

## 7

## Floodwood and Goose Ponds

Distance: Floodwood Pond - 0.3 mile across;  
Goose Pond - 0.5 mile across;  
Mud Brook - 1.2 miles (one way).

Types of use: Motorized (not recommended) and unmotorized car-top boats

Goose Pond is just south of Floodwood Pond. Both offer peaceful settings, perfect for bird watching. Mud Brook, a dead-end channel starting at the northeastern corner of Floodwood Pond, leads deep into the WMA and offers spectacular bird watching. This channel is not suitable for motorboats because of its shallowness and high density of aquatic vegetation.

How to get there: *Access to Floodwood and Goose Ponds is by water only via Sandy Creek, South Sandy Creek, or Lake Ontario.*

## 8

## Meadow Trail

Length: Main trail - 1.8 miles (entire loop);  
Side trail to Sandy Creek - 0.3 mile (one way).

Difficulty: Easy

Type of use: Hiking

The meadows, woods, and wetlands along this trail are great for bird watching! After walking around the gate that signals the start of the trail, hike until the trail ends at an intersection with another trail. Taking a right will lead you to Route 3; a left turn will bring you to Sandy Creek. Once on Route 3, take a right and follow it back to the dirt road leading to the parking area. This trail can be muddy, so wear a pair of boots!

How to get there: *Drive down the gravel road on the west side of Route 3, 0.9 mile north of South Landing Road. This road ends at a parking area. Park here and walk back up the gravel road to the curve in it. In the meadow to your left is a metal gate. The trail begins on the other side of this.*



## Cape or Champlain Beachgrass: What's the difference and who cares?

As you've walked the beach, you've probably noticed the abundance of beachgrass on the dunes. But did you realize that you were looking at an endangered species? Champlain beachgrass is a very rare plant species found only along Lake Champlain, the St. Lawrence river and Lake Ontario. Until 1998, it was thought that the beachgrass found along the E. Lake Ontario dunes was a different, more common type of beachgrass called Cape. Cape beachgrass was developed from the wild American beachgrass on Cape Cod and transplanted to the E. Lake Ontario dunes for erosion control until scientists realized they were planting a non-native species. In fact, current research shows that the Cape beachgrass may be overwhelming the native Champlain beachgrass - acting like an invasive weed.

Currently, Cape beachgrass is found mixed with the native Champlain species, but telling the two apart is difficult. The easiest method is to watch for when the grass flowers. If it flowers from late June to early July, it's Champlain beachgrass. If it flowers from late July to early September it's Cape beachgrass. Landowners wishing to plant beachgrass on their property should contact one of the organizations listed at the back of this booklet.

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### Lakeview Pond Boat Route

Distance: Boat launch to Lake Ontario outlet - 2.5 miles (one way);  
Boat launch to fork in Sandy Creek - 2.9 miles (one way).

Types of use: Motorized (10 hp or less) and unmotORIZED boats

Travel south through Lakeview Pond to a channel at its southern end which leads to Sandy Creek. If you follow Sandy Creek to the right (west), you will eventually pass Floodwood Pond on your left and approach the Lake Ontario outlet on your right. Watch for strong currents and waves at the outlet!

If you would like a longer excursion, follow Sandy Creek in the opposite direction (to the east). The creek eventually forks into two branches at the boundary of the WMA. The island between these branches is private property.

How to get there: Access to this route is from the Pierrepoint Place boat launch at the end of Pierrepoint Place (0.2 mile north of the intersection of Hessell Rd. and Route 3).

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## North Skinner Road and Trail

Length: Road - 0.6 mile (one way);  
trail - 0.4 mile (one way).

Difficulty: Easy

Types of use: Hiking and mountain biking

This is an unmaintained road, suitable for mountain bicyclists and hikers. Watch carefully for where the road ends -- there is no longer a bridge across Sandy Creek, although its stone abutments remain. A trail that starts near the bridge abutment travels west along the creek through meadows and eventually comes to a dead end.

How to get there: Access N. Skinner Rd. just north of the intersection of Hessel Rd. and Route 3 on the west side of Route 3.



Poison ivy  
*Toxicodendron radicans*

### A touchy subject!

Be on the look-out for poison ivy during your visit! This plant grows ankle high in the dunes; along the edges of meadows, trails, creeks, and woods; and as a vine up the trunks of trees.

The appearance of poison ivy varies. Its leaves can have either smooth or jagged edges and are sometimes shiny. They are always arranged in groups of three. Clusters of whitish-green flowers often blossom in the summer, followed by dull white berries in the fall.

Oil from all parts of the plant -- leaves, roots, stems, flowers, and berries -- can cause a rash. You don't even have to touch the plant to get one! Touching clothing, shoes, or even pet fur that has picked up the plant's oils may cause a rash.

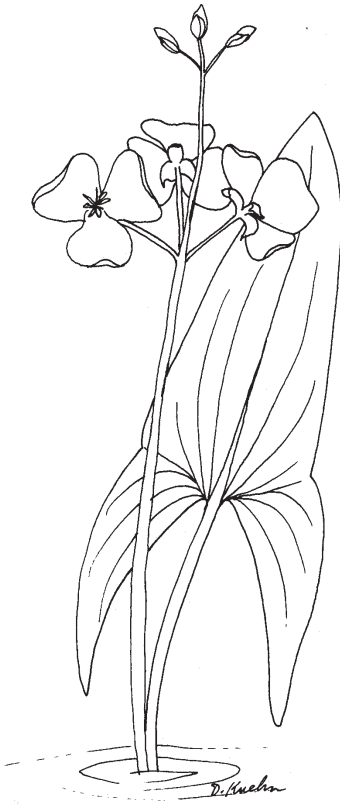
If you think you have come in contact with poison ivy, wash your skin with cold, soapy water to keep the oil from being absorbed. If you get a rash, don't scratch -- this will irritate your skin even more. Instead, use calamine lotion to relieve the itch.

## Covered with water!

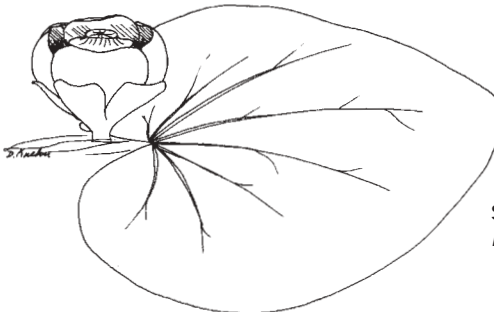
Would a sugar maple tree survive in the same wetland that cattails thrive in? Not without the cattail's special root system! Cattails have special airways in their stems which enable oxygen to travel down to their roots. Other plants that live in watery areas also have special adaptations that help them survive.

Plants that have only their roots and part of their stem under water, like the cattail and arrowleaf, are called "emergent" plants. "Aquatic" plants, such as the spatterdock and waterlily, actually float on the water, with only the upper portions of their leaves and flowers in the air. Other aquatic plants, such as the watermilfoil (identified by its whorls of feathery leaves), have their leaves entirely underwater. Both emergent and aquatic plants provide important cover and food for insects, fish, and other wildlife.

The best way to view these water-loving plants is by boat. The creeks and brooks throughout the dune and wetland area provide habitat for many different species of aquatic and emergent plants. Bring along a field guide for identifying them!



Broad-leaved arrowhead  
*Sagittaria latifolia*



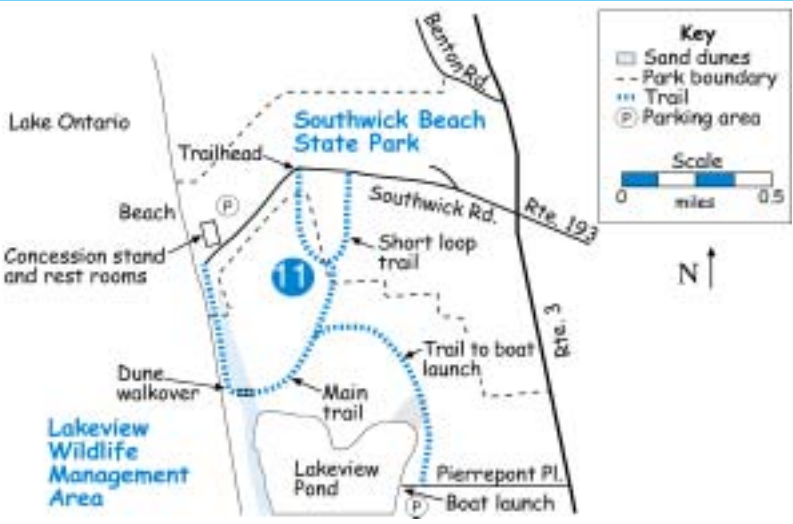
Spatterdock  
*Nuphar variegatum*

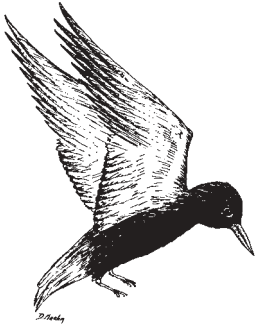
# Southwick Beach State Park

## Things to do...

Want to swim, picnic, camp or walk along a beach? Then Southwick Beach State Park is where you want to be! Accessible by car, this 500-acre park is open from early May through Columbus Day Weekend for day and overnight use. Although the park is closed during the winter, the nature trail and beach are accessible for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Like most New York State Parks, an entrance fee is charged when the park is open.

Southwick Beach has picnic tables and grills, a playground, basketball court and free-play field. Swimming in Lake Ontario is allowed during the summer when lifeguards are on duty. The park, however, does not have facilities for boats. If you wish to stay overnight, there are both tent and trailer campsites available. Making reservations for campsites is a good idea during the summer due to the limited number of sites. To make campsite reservations, call 1-800-456-CAMP or make online reservations by visiting [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com).





**Black Tern**  
*Chlidonias niger*

## For the birds!

Many different birds live in Lake Ontario's dunes and wetlands. While walking along the beach, you'll see Herring Gulls and small shore birds such as a Spotted Sandpiper. If you canoe down one of the WMA creeks, you may catch a glimpse of a Wood Duck, an American Bittern, or the uncommon Black Tern. The large stork-like Great Blue Heron is also a common sight in the marshes. Woodland and shrubby habitat near the lake teems with warblers, vireos, and flycatchers during spring migration in May. Bring along binoculars and a field guide!

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## Lake Ontario Dune Trail

Difficulty level: Easy

Distance:

Main trail - 2.0 miles (entire loop);

Short loop trail - 0.7 mile (entire loop);

Trail to Lakeview Marsh WMA boat launch - 0.6 mile (one way).

Type of use: Hiking

This trail travels through Lakeview Marsh WMA and then loops back to Southwick Beach. Along the way, you'll see many different habitats, from woodlands to abandoned apple orchards, meadows, red cedar - maple forests, marshes, and finally sand dunes. It's one of the best ways to see the transition from woodland to dune habitat. A dune walkover on the trail enables you to cross the dunes without harming them. After crossing the walkover, take a right turn onto the beach and follow it back to Southwick Beach State Park. A guidebook for this trail is available on request. This trail can be muddy so wear boots!

There are two side trails off the main route. The first that appears on your left loops back to the main entrance road in Southwick Beach State Park and is great if you want a short hike. The second trail to the left leads to the Lakeview Marsh WMA boat launch.

How to get there: Take Route 3 to the Southwick Beach State Park entrance road. The trailhead is opposite the park's entrance booth.

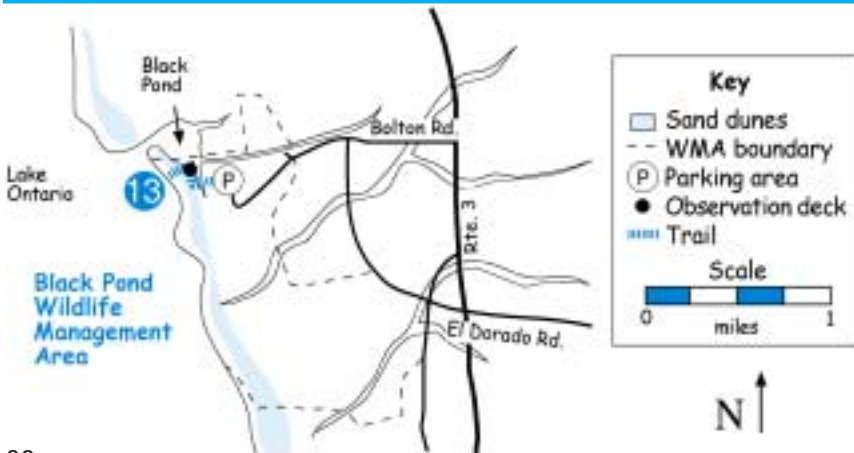
# Black Pond Wildlife Management Area

## Things to do...

The scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities are spectacular in this 526 acre Wildlife Management Area managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation - Region 6. Hikers will enjoy the handicapped accessible boardwalk trail that meanders across a Silver Maple woodland, an open water marsh, and through 70' tall sand dunes on it's way to an undeveloped Lake Ontario beach. Deer are common in the area, as are gray squirrel, porcupine, red fox, and coyote. Due to the excellent bird watching opportunities, this area was designated an Eastern Lake Ontario Marshes Bird Conservation Area by New York State in 2001. Birds seen here include Great Blue Herons, Scarlet Tanagers, Bald Eagles, and a large variety of migrating shorebirds.

Fishermen will enjoy fishing for bullheads and panfish from the fishing deck along the trail. Hunting and trapping opportunities abound and are allowed in the wetlands and interior of this area during the appropriate seasons. Please remember to stay off the dunes while pursuing these activities

Swimming is not allowed here. Dogs must be on a six foot leash when on the beach.



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## Black Pond Trail

Length: 0.47 mile (entire trail)

Difficulty: Easy

Type of use: Hiking;  
Handicap accessible

This trail is a wildlife watchers delight. As the raised boardwalk trail meanders through a flooded maple woodland, an open marsh, and to an observation/fishing deck on Black Pond, look for deer, muskrat, beaver, and mink. Great Blue Herons can be seen wading along the edge of the pond looking for frogs and small fish.

Follow the signs to the beach and you will pass through an old dune blowout on your way to the spectacular beach. Upon reaching the beach, you will have a wonderful view of Lake Ontario, minus shoreline development.

Beachwalkers should keep their eyes open for Bald Eagles and the occasional Peregrine Falcon. The north end of the beach is part of the El Dorado Nature Preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy. This is a good area to observe shorebirds during migration. Please note the sign on the right as you enter the Preserve. It describes the area and lists the special use rules.

*How to get there: Follow Bolton Road west to its end. At the end of Bolton Road turn left onto a gravel roadway. Follow this 0.75 mile to the trailhead parking area.*



Jack-in-the-pulpit  
*Arisaema atrorubens*

### Northern Jack (or is it Jill?) -in-the-pulpit

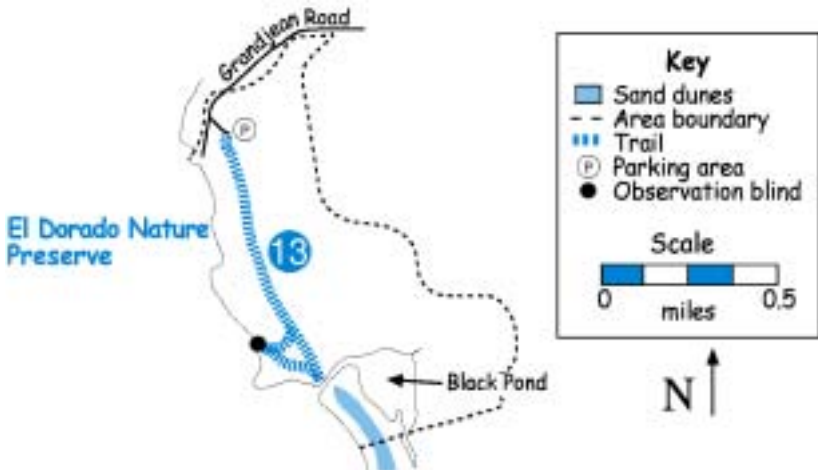
The green-and-white-striped Northern Jack-in-the-pulpit is found in woodlands of Canada and the northeast U.S. in the spring. This wildflower actually changes sex as it ages. When it is small, the Jack-in-the-pulpit is a pollen-producing male. But as it gets larger, it becomes a seed-producing female. If injured, the plant can revert back to its male form.

# El Dorado Nature Preserve

## Things to do...

Birdwatching is the activity of choice at this 360-acre preserve. El Dorado Nature Preserve was established by The Nature Conservancy in 1968, with support from birders, to protect a vital resting and feeding area for migrating shorebirds traveling thousands of miles between the Arctic and South America. The birds feed on dense populations of insects and other invertebrates that are attracted to rich blooms of algae found in shallow nearshore pools. In the spring and fall, migrating songbirds also find abundant food and shelter in brushy and forested habitats along the shore.

To minimize human disturbance and provide the best possible views of birds, please stay on the trails, speak softly, and do not collect or disturb plants, birds, or wildlife. Swimming, camping, hunting, fishing, trapping, and motor vehicles are not allowed. El Dorado is open daylight hours, spring to fall.





## El Dorado Nature Preserve Trail

Length: 1.3 miles (entire loop)

Difficulty: Easy

Type of use: Hiking

This trail travels through extensive areas of red cedar forest and wet, mixed woods which form a buffer zone for the shorebirds, water birds and waterfowl visiting the shoreline of the preserve. The forest also provides habitat for many passerines. After following the trail for about one half mile, a trail to the right will take you to a bird watching blind. From there you can view shorebirds feeding on the insects and crustaceans they find in the algae mats.

Continue south on the path to the high dune overlook. From this overlook you can view the dunes of Black Pond Wildlife Management Area, the tallest dunes in the north-eastern U.S. outside of Cape Cod. At this point you can either continue across the outlet and follow the beach to Black Pond WMA, or follow the trail behind you back to the El Dorado parking area. If you decide to cross the Black Pond outlet, a string fenced trail may be present. If so, please stay within the string fencing to reach Black Pond WMA. A word of warning: Currents in the outlet can be dangerous!

*How to get there: Turn west off of Route 3 onto County Route 152 and drive 1.5 miles. Turn left at Grandjean Road. Where the pavement ends, take the left fork at the "El Dorado Nature Preserve" sign.*

### A marsh leopard?

When you walk the trails in the wildlife management areas during the spring and summer, you can't help but see northern leopard frogs jumping out of your way. Spotted like a leopard, the northern leopard frog lives on a diet of small animals such as insects, spiders, earthworms and centipedes. It uses its sticky tongue to catch its prey.



**Northern leopard frog**  
*Rana pipiens*

## How many of these birds can you spot during your visit? Use a field guide to help you identify them!

- Common Loon
- Double-crested Cormorant
- American Bittern
- Great Blue Heron
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night Heron
- Turkey Vulture
- Canada Goose
- Wood Duck
- Gadwall
- American Black Duck
- Mallard
- Green-winged Teal
- Greater Scaup
- White-winged Scoter
- Common Goldeneye
- Bufflehead
- Common Merganser
- Osprey
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Harrier
- Red-tailed Hawk
- American Kestrel
- Ruffed Grouse
- Wild Turkey
- Semipalmated Plover
- Killdeer
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Sanderling
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
- Least Sandpiper
- Common Snipe
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Ring-billed Gull
- Herring Gull
- Glaucous Gull
- Great Black-backed Gull
- Caspian Tern
- Common Tern
- Black Tern
- Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl
- Chimney Swift
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Eastern Wood-Pewee
- Least Flycatcher
- Eastern Pheobe
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Eastern Kingbird
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Purple Martin
- Tree Swallow
- Bank Swallow
- Barn Swallow
- Black-capped Chickadee
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Brown Creeper
- House Wren
- Wood Thrush
- American Robin
- Gray Catbird
- Brown Thrasher
- Cedar Waxwing
- Yellow Warbler
- American Redstart
- Ovenbird
- Northern Waterthrush
- Mourning Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Scarlet Tanager
- Eastern Towhee
- Chipping Sparrow
- Field Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow
- Northern Cardinal
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Indigo Bunting
- Bobolink
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Baltimore Oriole
- Purple Finch
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- Evening Grosbeak
- House Sparrow

*For more  
information...*

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*We hope you've enjoyed your visit to the Eastern Lake  
Ontario Dune and Wetland Area!*

For more dune information, visit our dune website at  
<http://www.nysgdunes.org>

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Champlain beachgrass  
*Ammophila champlainensis*



Canada wild-rye  
*Elymus canadensis*