

Deer Creek

The cartop boat launch on Route 3 (Great Lakes Seaway Trail) offers 2.6 scenic miles of paddling enjoyment. 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. If you are quiet enough you may catch a glimpse of wood ducks near their nesting boxes during your paddle down the creek. If fishing is your game, northern pike, yellow perch and largemouth bass are a few species that are found here.

Observation Platform

At the observation platform, you can observe many bird species lingering around the marsh. In addition to bird watching, this spot is great for sketching, photography, or just relaxing. The trees and shrubs at the south of the platform provide refuge for many insects, birds, and small animals. Count the different creatures during your stop at the overlook.



Ground Level Dune Walkover

Continuing south leads to a ground level dune walkover that takes you to Lake Ontario. The purpose of this walkover is to minimize negative impacts on the dunes. Do you see the tall blades of grass? This is beachgrass, and it is much different than the grass found in your yard. Locally it is only found along the Lake Ontario dunes. Beachgrass is the primary plant that anchors blowing sand, and begins the dune building process. Continue walking south. You will notice snow fence to the lakeward side, and the landscape looking different from areas near the parking lot. Let's continue on our journey.

Mature Dune

You are now completely enveloped in a mature dune along the largest, most extensive freshwater dune system in New York State. The sand dunes at Deer Creek Marsh WMA were once being mined for the sand, leveled for camping sites and/or trespassed by large 4x4 vehicles; the sand dunes, which buffer the invaluable wetland resource were being severely degraded. This mature dune is the result of a restoration project. In addition to a massive beachgrass planting, vehicle restrictions and law enforcement have been vital in the preservation of this incredible natural resource.

String-fence Trail

String fencing designates an acceptable pathway through the fragile dunes. Please stay within the string fencing until you reach Deer Creek's outlet at the southern tip of the property. There you may follow the cobble beach north to the parking area.

Raised Dune Walkover

Continue walking south, and you will reach a raised dune walkover that stretches from Deer Creek to the Lake Ontario shoreline. The raised dune walkover allows you to walk across the dunes--without harming them--and enjoy access to both Deer Creek and Lake Ontario. Please remember when visiting the ELODWA to cross the dunes using only designated pathways and walkovers to minimize negative impacts on the fragile ecosystem. If traveling south along the dune trail, please continue to the outlet of Deer Creek. Follow the cobble beach north to a trail that will lead you back to the parking area.

Deer Creek Outlet

The creek meanders to the Lake Ontario outlet. South of the outlet is a privately owned campground. Although the channel may be closed during the late summer, please watch for strong currents here. Please land your boat only at the outlet to prevent erosion of the dunes along the creek.

Cobble Beach

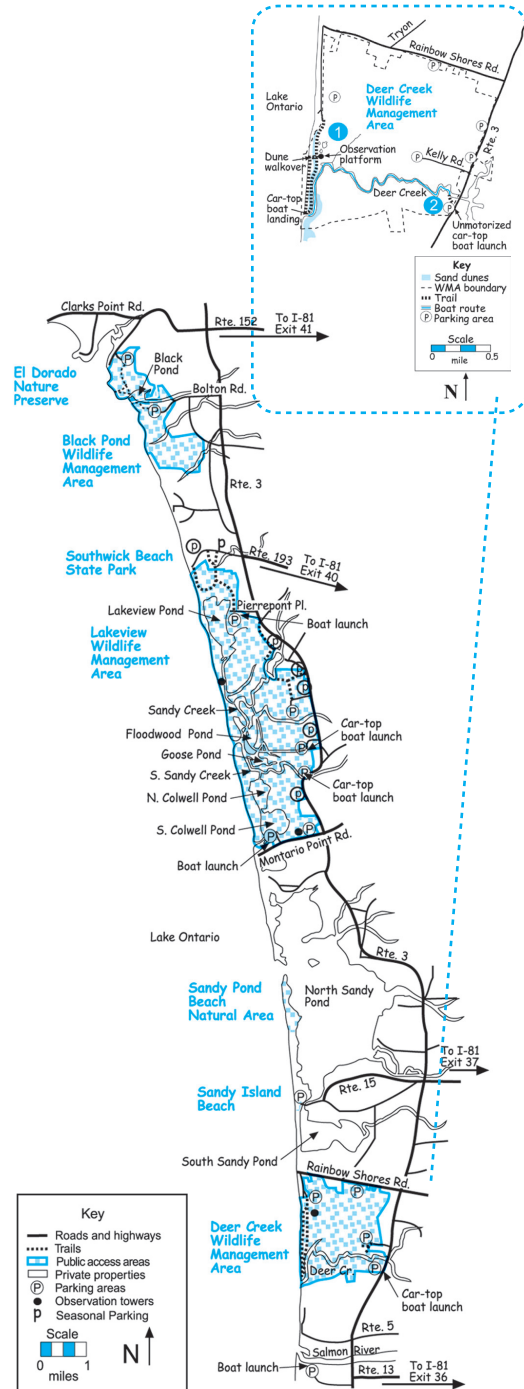
Walk north along the Lake Ontario shoreline toward the parking lot and you are sure to notice the cobble beach at Deer Creek Marsh WMA. The cobbles found along the shoreline of Deer Creek Marsh WMA are the heavier remains of glacial till that were left by the retreat of the glaciers. As one of the few cobble beaches along eastern Lake Ontario, Deer Creek Marsh WMA is an ecological treasure and a great stop for the day while visiting the region!

This brochure has been produced with assistance from The Ontario Dune Coalition, an alliance of private property owners' associations, not-for-profit organizations, local government, and state and federal agencies dedicated to educating the public about eastern Lake Ontario's dunes and wetlands.

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Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes & Wetlands Area



Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area



YOU can help protect these unique & fragile natural resources

Welcome to Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area

Nestled within the 17-mile stretch of the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes and Wetlands Area (ELODWA) is Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which covers 1,195 acres of property and is owned and managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Deer Creek Marsh WMA provides recreational opportunities such as beach and trail hiking, fishing, paddling, trapping, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, or just relaxing along the shore of Lake Ontario. When visiting the area, please be sure to follow all regulations for your safety and the security of the ecosystem.

Habitats of Deer Creek Marsh WMA

Whether you choose to walk the trails or paddle the creek during your visit, you will see various habitats including sand dune, wetland, woodland, pond, creek, and open lake. With the complexity of habitats existing here and at other locations along the ELODWA, the area supports a diversity of plants and wildlife. The primary reason this WMA was acquired by NYSDEC was for habitat protection or to enhance wildlife populations.

What are Wetlands?

Wetlands is a collective term meaning marshes, swamps, bogs, and other waterlogged areas. Inland of the eastern Lake Ontario dunes are low-lying areas which formed wetlands with ponds and streams. Seasonally-wet areas next to freshwater rivers are called *riparian* wetlands. You will see riparian wetlands here, and at the other WMAs along the ELODWA. According to NYSDEC, this WMA has some of the highest quality freshwater marshes in New York State.

What are Sand Dunes?

Sand dunes are long ridges of sand and other sediments piled on the shore by wind and wave action. Sand is held together by plants such as Champlain beachgrass and sand dune willow. The plants' leaves trap sand, and their branching roots prevent sand from being blown away.

Help Protect the Dunes!

- * Stay off the dunes.
- * Encourage appropriate behavior by others.
- * Help inform other visitors, whenever possible, about the reasons behind regulations and appropriate suggestions for the area's use.
- * Leave everything you find (*except litter*).
- * Participate in volunteer projects involving dune cleanup or restoration.

DUNE BLOWOUT

Beachgrass anchors sand and protects dunes from wind erosion. Foot and vehicle traffic tear out these plants. Exposed sand is blown inland and gradually a dune is lowered and lost. **PLEASE STAY OFF DUNES!!!!**

Dune Blowouts

Examples of dune blowouts are evident throughout the 17-mile stretch of shoreline. A blowout is a steep-sided valley formed when wind blows through a low or empty spot in the dunes, carving out a channel or depression. Loss of vegetation or other disturbances, such as unnecessary traffic, in one area starts the process.