



Forrest Woods Nature Preserve



ACREAGE: 257
 OWNERSHIP: Black Swamp Conservancy
 ACCESS: By permit only through Black Swamp Conservancy
 WEB SITE RESOURCES: <http://www.blackswamp.org/>



The vooferous red-eyed vireo is the most numerous neotropical migrant breeding in the deciduous forests of eastern North America. One male was documented singing over twenty-two thousand songs in one day. Territories can be as little as an acre or two, so even small woodlands can host several pairs.

Rivers are America's arteries, distributing plants and animals throughout the landscape. Marie DeLarme Creek, a tributary of the Maumee River, flows through the center of Forrest Woods. Near Fort Wayne, Indiana, a low-lying glacial outwash terrace has provided a natural conduit from Mississippi River drainages into the Great Lakes. For eons, southern species have migrated through this gap and infiltrated western Ohio as a result. Some of them occur in Forrest Woods, perhaps the best remaining riparian woodland on the Till Plains.

Forrest Woods lies on the southern periphery of what was once Ohio's greatest expanse of wetlands—the Great Black Swamp. The area stretched from present-day Lake Erie west to Indiana and south to the Maumee River, and early settlers avoided it like the plague. It wasn't until the 1820s when the first roads were hacked through the swamp, but by the late 1800s nearly the entire quagmire had been drained and transformed to croplands.

Visitors to Forrest Woods, especially during spring floods, will experience the daunting landscape faced by Great Black Swamp trailblazers. Towering wetland trees like green ash, swamp white oak, and American basswood shade the swampy oxbows. Part of the package are mosquitoes, sometimes in dense clouds. Braving the insects is worth it—this is one of Ohio's only remaining old-growth tracts of river bottom woods in western Ohio.

Heavy spring rains inundate the bottomland swamp forests. Standing water pools for weeks in oxbows and depressions, creating habitat for specialized plants such as raven-foot sedge and leafy blue flag, both rare in Ohio. Botanists found an odd parasitic morning-glory relative here, cuspidate dodder, a first for Ohio and far removed from its western range.

Forrest Woods is a vital refuge for breeding birds, as most of the great swamp forests that covered western Ohio no longer exist. Birds like yellow-throated warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, and cerulean warbler nest here but are rare elsewhere in the region.

Protection of Forrest Woods has ramifications far beyond conserving this woodland and Marie DeLarme Creek. As the stream flows into the Maumee River, its water quality directly influences that of the Maumee, one of Ohio's officially designated scenic rivers. The Maumee is also Lake Erie's largest tributary, so its waters have a direct impact on the health of our greatest lake.



Top: Large and handsome, the Blanding's turtle can easily be recognized by its high-domed carapace and bright yellow throat. Never common, this species has a rather limited range. The Forrest Woods population is the southernmost known in the state.



Left: One of twenty-four species of salamanders in Ohio, the secretive four-toed salamander has been recorded from widely scattered locales throughout the state. Four-toeds breed in forested wetlands. Their eggs are laid under a cloak of moss, and adults remain to guard them until they hatch.