

# Marsh Boardwalk Trail



*Red Winged Blackbird*

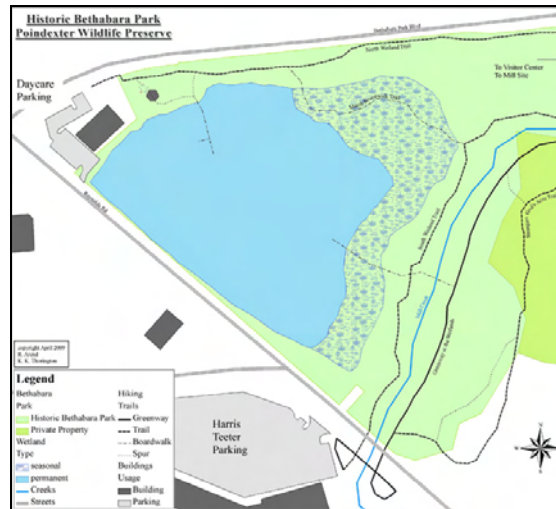
# Historic Bethabara Park

[www.bethabara.org](http://www.bethabara.org)

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for Historic Bethabara Park  
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# Welcome to the Marsh Boardwalk Trail

The trails through the Poindexter Wildlife Preserve start at the Harris Teeter parking lot and go around the marsh to a pavilion at the end of the North Wetland trail, where you may picnic. The walk to the pavilion is roughly 1/2 mile. Follow the South Wetland Trail to the Marsh Boardwalk Trail. As you take a leisurely hour's walk, we hope you will enjoy noticing the animals, plants and the process of succession you will see along the way.



*The Poindexter Wildlife Preserve*

Historic Bethabara Park is a site on the North Carolina Birding Trail, Piedmont Region.

# Succession and decay

What you see in the marsh is a pattern of succession and decay that is fairly typical of wetlands created by environmental disturbance, either human or non-human, in the Piedmont. Since 18<sup>th</sup> century Moravian settlement, the land that is now the marsh has been wetland, farmland and bottomland forest. With the widening of Reynolda Road in the mid 1970s small streams were blocked. Rising water and beaver activity killed the mature trees, leaving standing dead wood, which is good for woodpeckers and marsh birds. More recently these dead trees have fallen, making room for other marsh species. Trees and other plants, including cattails, that like their feet wet now dominate the area. Insects, turtles and snakes often sun themselves on dead logs. Herons and hawks can be seen hunting in the wetland.



*Decaying logs and Green Heron*

## Plants that like their feet wet

Lotus, cattails, and rushes are emergent vegetation, growing with their roots and the bottom parts of their stems in water. Along with small floating plants like duckweed they are at the bottom of the food web and provide food for herbivores such as insects, ducks and muskrat. The sacred lotus is an invasive plant and efforts are underway to control its spread.



*Lotus*

Larger plants like button bush and alder may grow in the water, on fallen logs, and along the edge. Alder is a favorite snack for the beaver.



*Button bush*

Around the edge of the marsh there are a number of trees and herbaceous plants that tolerate or require lots of water. Trees like red maple and sycamore are indicators of wet areas.



*Jewel-weed*

Jewel-weed is a water-loving herb that attracts hummingbirds and butterflies as well as other invertebrates. It is a folk remedy for bites and stings.

## Animal uses of marsh habitat

Many animals use marsh or other wetlands habitats for part or all of their life. Look for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and other invertebrates on your walk.



*Slaty skimmer dragonfly*

**Invertebrates:** Many invertebrates (insects, spiders, crayfish, snails and others) make their homes in the wetlands. They are food for marsh birds, mammals reptiles and amphibians. Crayfish are a particular favorite of raccoons, who leave the shells behind. Butterflies use many of the marsh plants for food. Swamp milkweed provides food for monarch caterpillars and button bush flowers attract many butterfly species.



*Red-spotted Purple Butterfly on Alder*

**Mammals:** Many of the mammals that use the wetlands regularly are hard to see because they are nocturnal. Deer and raccoons use the woods around the wetlands and can be seen from the boardwalk in the early morning or evening. You will see the remains of raccoons meals (shells and seeds and scat) on the boardwalk and viewing platforms more often than the raccoons themselves.

Otter scat looks similar to the raccoon's, but has more fish scales in it.



*Beaver*

Beaver and muskrat have influenced these bottomlands allowing them to remain wetlands into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They repair their old dams and manipulate vegetation by eating and swimming. They are sometimes visible at sunset.

Bats are our allies in the removal of mosquitoes and other emergent (having aquatic larvae and terrestrial or airborne adults) insects. In the summer and on warm nights year round bats are often visible patrolling over the stream or marsh hunting for their dinners.

**Birds:** The wetland attracts many birds. Great Blue Herons can be seen stalking food around the edge of the water and Green Herons hunt dragonflies. Kingfishers, woodpeckers and Red-winged Blackbirds often perch on the snags over the water. Wood Ducks

breed in tree cavities over water. Watch as well for Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks hunting.



*Great Blue Heron*

**Reptiles and amphibians:** Snakes We have several species of snakes in the Park. Most common are the water snakes, green snakes, and black snakes. All three groups are non-venomous and favor small mammals and amphibians as prey. One venomous snake occasionally seen is the southern copperhead. This snake is rather sedentary and will only bite if threatened.



*Black Snake*

Turtles We have several species of turtles in the Park. The sliders and painted turtles are often seen sunning on logs in the wetland. Our one land tortoise, the eastern box turtle, is found in the woods near the marsh and in the uplands.



*Turtles*

Frogs The marsh is home to many frogs including spring peepers, southern chorus frogs, green frogs and bullfrogs. The chorus of spring peepers and southern chorus frog is often deafening in early spring when breeding season begins.



*Chorus Frog (3/4 inch long)*