



*Discover
the treasures of
Sandusky, Ohio!*



EAST SANDUSKY BAY WATER TRAIL



Parks, Recreation & Horticultural Services

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Designation was made possible
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**PARKS, RECREATION
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Erie MetroParks



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East Sandusky Bay Water Trail

The 15-mile East Sandusky Bay Water Trail was designated on Saturday, June 2nd, 2007, as the third official Water Trail in the state, and the first Ohio Water Trail on a Lake Erie Bay.

The East Sandusky Bay Water Trail provides the opportunity to enjoy scenic views, wildlife, cultural history, and great recreational opportunities from the waterfront of Sandusky Bay and Lake Erie.



Trails For Ohioans

Trails are an important component of Ohio's outdoor recreation system. They come in various lengths, run through different environments, and accommodate a multitude of outdoor activities from hiking and biking to horseback riding and paddling. Trails are managed and maintained by a variety of groups including all levels of government and many trail organizations.

Recognizing the many benefits of a statewide trail system, and in an effort to increase awareness of the benefits of water trails, ODNR initiated the Ohio Water Trails program. The goal of this program is to promote awareness of public paddling access by partnering with local communities to develop designated water trails.

By definition, a water trail, also known as a blueway, is a route along a river or across other bodies of water, such as a lake or salt water, for people using small beachable hand-powered watercraft, such as kayaks, canoes, day sailers or row boats. Water trails are most often identified by the land facilities that support water travel. These include launch and landing sites (trailheads), campsites, rest areas, and other points of interest.

Water trail plans are initiated at the local level. Communities, user groups, or park districts recommend existing sites for a proposed trail, and the Ohio Water Trails team evaluates the trail, working with local partners to ensure safe, suitable access. The goal is to designate trails across the state and produce publications such as this one that promote safe access and wide use.

Bay Hazards

To have a safe trip, boaters must be aware of the various types of hazards encountered here. Learn to manage your risk appropriately.

Allow for the wind

Unlike most river-based routes, where currents are of utmost importance, wind is usually the most common hindrance to any enjoyable experience on the East Bay. Water trail users may avoid much of its negative impact by paddling in the wind shadow (the lee) of the shore.

High winds can produce water and current level changes near the bridges that provide water access in and out of the East Bay. Care should be exercised when approaching bridges during breezy conditions.

High winds can expose mud flats, tree branches, and other obstructions in only a matter of minutes.

Risk of Collision

Powerboat traffic is prevalent, especially in the Pipe Creek Channel. Although State law gives non-motorized boats the right of way, common sense and courtesy should be foremost in the mind of watertrail users at all times. Each operator of a vessel must take all necessary action to avoid a collision. It must be done in ample time and taking into account any special circumstances due to the weather, boat traffic, and limits of other boats. If there is any doubt of the risk - it shall be deemed to exist. Use sound, voice, and/or hand and arms to signal intention.

Hunters

Stay alert for the sight and sound of hunters along the trail. (See Mandatory Routes during certain seasons).

Heavy Vegetative Growth

Similar to strainer hazards on a river, heavy vegetative growth can be a potential hazard on the Bay. Boats and paddles can become entangled or entrapped. Boaters should always be on the lookout for submerged objects and above-water hazards.

Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia

Sudden immersion in cold water can be deadly. The initial "cold shock" can cause immediate involuntary gasping, hyperventilation, panic, and vertigo - all of which can result in water inhalation and drowning. It can also cause sudden changes in blood pressure, heart rate, and heart rhythm that also may result in death. The longer you are immersed in cold water, the harder it is to control your body. Manual dexterity and coordination deteriorate rapidly, and within 30 minutes, hypothermia (cooling of the body's core temperature) can begin. Loss of consciousness and death with or without drowning can result.

The best prevention for cold water immersion is to take all measures to avoid capsizing your boat. Keep your lifejacket securely fastened to help keep your head above water if you fall overboard.

You don't have to be submerged to succumb to hypothermia - wind chill, rain, and perspiration can contribute to the condition. Uncontrollable shivering, slurred speech and lack of coordination are early symptoms. To guard against hypothermia, dress in layers using materials that wick moisture away and retain heat, such as silk, polypropylene, fleece, and wool. Every boater should be able to recognize and know how to treat hypothermia.

Rendering Assistance

The operator of a vessel is obligated to provide assistance that can be safely provided to any individual in danger. When assisting, help should never be in a manner that will injure or endanger anyone's life, including the rescuer.

Outdoor Ethics

Plan Ahead.

- Scout the area before boating on it.
- Call local contacts to find out about current weather and wind conditions or events that may affect your trip.
- Check for lake warnings and flood information.

Prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies.

- Know the locations of all hazards. Be prepared to portage (carry your boat) around these hazards.
- Be prepared for any unknown event. Know how to get to roads if you must "walk out." Know the local emergency phone number and where you are along the trail in case you need to request emergency assistance.

Be aware of all Ohio boating laws as well as any local rules and ordinances.

- Be sure you have any required safety equipment onboard including a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved, lifejacket for each person.

Travel on durable surfaces - rock, gravel and sand.

- Use existing, improved access sites.
- When using a natural river bank to launch your boat, stay clear of vegetation or mud to minimize your impact.
- Don't wander while portaging. Stay on the trail if there is one.

Dispose of waste properly - pack it out.

- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Never throw cigarette butts, fishing line, bait containers or any other garbage into the water.
- Plastics are especially dangerous to wildlife.
- Baggies, 6-pack rings and other clear plastics float on the water - invisible to fish, birds and other wildlife.

Leave what you find.

- Appreciate artifacts and natural objects, but leave them undisturbed.
- Avoid introducing non-native species, including live bait, by cleaning equipment between trips.

Respect wildlife.

- Observe from a distance; don't feed, follow or approach wildlife.
- Stay clear of bald eagle nesting sites.
- Control pets or leave them at home.

Be considerate of other visitors.

- Avoid boisterous behavior. Let nature's sounds prevail.

Respect the privacy and rights of landowners.

- Although the access points highlighted in this guide are located on public property, most of the shoreline along the water trail is privately owned. Respect the privacy and rights of landowners by obtaining permission before entering any privately-owned land.
- Many landowners enjoy the peace and solitude that the water provides on their property. Share the same courtesy that you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is usually welcome.

Fishing East Sandusky Bay



If Sandusky Bay were anywhere inland in Ohio, it would be Ohio's largest and best inland lake. Since it is attached to Lake Erie it is frequently overlooked as one of the best warm water fishing areas in Ohio. Sandusky Bay is a great place to catch largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, crappie, channel catfish, bullheads and yellow perch.

Timing, habitat, and fishing method are key to success in fishing Sandusky Bay. The best time to catch crappie is in spring as the crappie move into the shallow shoreline to spawn. Crappie spawn when water temperatures reach 55° F usually mid-April to May. They generally move in along the shoreline to spawn in about 1 to 2 feet of water. A good technique to catch crappie is to maneuver quietly along the shoreline and to fish a minnow about 1 to 2 feet below a bobber. Toss the bait along the edge of structure or vegetation.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass are protected by special fishing regulations for Lake Erie waters including Sandusky Bay. You may not keep any black bass from May 1 through the last Friday in June; bass caught must be released immediately unharmed. Black bass are also protected by a 14-inch minimum length limit at all times. Black bass can be caught just about any time during the summer. There are a variety of techniques effective to catch black bass. One of the most popular techniques is to flip tube baits or spinner baits along the shoreline around structure or floating docks.

July and August are the best times of the year to catch channel catfish. The best method is to fish tight-lined on the bottom with a variety of baits—night crawlers, live fish, or stink baits such as chicken livers.

Late-spring through fall is the most productive time to catch yellow perch in Sandusky Bay. The most effective technique is to fish on the bottom with shiners on a perch spreader.



Birds of Sandusky Bay

Lake Erie is Ohio's biggest bird magnet. Of the 418 species so far seen in the state, over 390 have been found on the lake or in adjacent habitats. So, pack your binoculars as you prepare to embark on your aquatic journey!

In spring and fall migrations, the waters of East Sandusky Bay can be alive with waterfowl: geese, swans, and ducks. Among the most conspicuous are tundra swans, stopping over en route to their Arctic nesting grounds. One of the largest birds in Ohio, one of these swans can weigh over 14 pounds. They are joined by plenty of lesser fowl, including American wigeon, both blue-winged and green-winged teal, and Northern shoveler. These species are all "dabbling ducks" that feed by tipping up to reach the bottom in shallow waters. In deeper waters, watch for diving ducks; species that make extended plunges to the depths. Lesser and greater scaup, redhead, canvasback, and ring-necked ducks can all be common.

A waterfowl-like bird you are sure to notice is the double-crested cormorant. These goose-sized black birds with long, slinky necks sit low in the water, and dive for fish. Once rare in Lake Erie waters, their populations have exploded in recent years and they are now abundant.

Watch for herons, especially around Pipe Creek Wildlife Area. The most common is the great blue heron, but you may see another large, all white heron,

the great egret. More furtive are black-crowned night-herons. These fairly small gray and black herons with glowing red eyes are sometimes seen roosting in dense vegetation along shorelines around Pipe Creek.

Gulls will be conspicuous on your journey, with ring-billed and herring gulls the most common. The former is smaller, with yellow legs, while the latter is noticeably larger and has pink legs. Occasionally, a great black-backed gull is seen – the largest gull in the world. Due to their jumbo size, dark back, and white head, they are sometimes mistaken for bald eagles. Your chances of spotting a real eagle are great; there is an active nest in nearby Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve, and the eagle population along Lake Erie has skyrocketed in recent decades.

Finally, East Sandusky Bay is well-known for the numbers and diversity of shorebirds that it attracts. Of the 47 species recorded in Ohio, at least 33 have been found here. Many species occur in large numbers. This group includes plovers like the killdeer, and sandpipers. When boating near rocky riprap, watch for spotted sandpipers, which often forage on the rocks. They issue a loud peet-weet call when flushed and fly with distinctive shallow quivering wingbeats. Many of the shorebirds that pass through Sandusky Bay breed in the highest reaches of the Arctic, and winter in distant South America. The wetland habitats of the bay are vital resting and refueling grounds, and essential to conserving these global wanderers.

East Sandusky Bay Water Trail Visitors Guide

#	NAME	DISTANCE (to next point)	INFORMATION
1	Big Island Preserve & Canoe Launch	0.5 Miles	Parking & Launch Capabilities
2	Pier Track Point	0.1 Miles	Fishing, and Future Launch Site and Parking
3	Castaway Bay Marina Transient Dock	1.0 Miles	Dining, Lodging, Shopping and Restrooms
4	Pipe Creek Turn Around Point	2.3 Miles	Scenic Views and Wildlife
5	Hoffman Preserve Landing (Future)	0.3 Miles	Campground, Convenience Store
6	Putnam Marsh Canoe Landing (Future)	0.4 Miles	Future Water Access
7	Airport Preserve Observation Deck (Future)	1.0 Miles	Future Water Access
8	Community Foundation Preserve Landing Limited access due to nesting Bald Eagles	0.4 Miles	Launch Capabilities—Long Carry from Parking (May be closed Jan-Jun)
9	Steinen Wildlife Area Platform (Future) Limited access due to hunting	1.4 Miles	Future Water Access (May be closed Sep-Oct)
10	Wyandot Wetland Meadows Preserve Observation Deck and Landing (Future)	6.1 Miles	Future Water Access
11	Kiwanis Park Landing (Future)	1.8 or 0.2 Miles	Future Water Access and Parking
	Choose Powerboat Area by Water or Alternate Route by Land to Return to Start at Big Island Canoe Launch		
Total Distance 15.3 Miles			

Paddling Equipment Checklist

- ☐ Canoe, Kayak or Raft
- ☐ Paddle
- ☐ Lifejacket - keep it snug
- ☐ Whistle or sound signaling device
- ☐ Proper footwear (No flip flops or bare feet)
- ☐ Sunscreen, sunglasses and hat
- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ Dry bag for clothing, camera and cell phone
- ☐ First Aid kit and throwbag

Stop the Spread of Aquatic Species

- Inspect your boat and equipment and remove any vegetation before leaving the area.
- Rinse your boat and equipment thoroughly to remove any aquatic organisms.
- Air dry your boat and equipment for as long as possible before boating on another waterway (five days is optimal).

Resources & Contacts

EMERGENCY911

City of Sandusky Department of Parks,
Recreation & Horticultural Services419-627-5879

Erie MetroParks419-625-7783

Sandusky/Erie County Visitors & Convention Bureau419-625-2984

Erie Soil & Water Conservation District419-626-5211

ODNR Office of Coastal Management (Sandusky office)419-626-7980

ODNR Division of Natural Areas & Scenic Preserves614-265-6453

ODNR Division of Watercraft (Sandusky office)419-621-1302

ODNR Division of Watercraft (boating laws & safety tips) ...1-877-4BOATER

ODNR Division of Wildlife (Sandusky office)419-625-8062

ODNR Division of Wildlife (hunting, fishing, wildlife)1-800-WILDLIFE

U.S. Geological Survey (real-time water-flow conditions)

www.ci.sandusky.oh.us

www.eriemetroparks.org

www.shoresandislands.com

www.erie-county-ohio.net

www.ohiodnr.com/coastal

www.ohiodnr.com/dnap

www.ohiodnr.com/watercraft

www.ohiodnr.com/wildlife

www.waterdata.usgs.gov

East Sandusky Bay Water Trail Legend

- Water Trail
- Mandatory Route (Jan-Jun)*
*Due to Bald Eagle Nesting Zone
- Mandatory Route (Sep-Oct)**
**Due to Nearby Hunting
- Existing Points of Interest
- Future Points of Interest
- Existing Features
- Proposed Features
- Alternate Walking Route
- Pipe Creek Channel—Powerboats
- Boating Hazard

Access points are public lands, other lands are private.



A Joint Partnership

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