

Cedar Bend Nature Area



Hairpin turn on the road through Cedar Bend Nature Area designed in 1905. Photo from a 1910 postcard (courtesy of Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan).

How Can You Help?

- Landscape your own property with plants native to southeastern Michigan. Many invasive plant species originate from ornamental plantings. NAP has a native landscaping brochure series to help you get started.
- Compost yard waste in your back yard or through the city's composting program.
- Volunteer! NAP is always in need of volunteers to help with restoration and monitoring projects.
- Spread the word about a beautiful, mature woodland that needs our care. Every day many people traverse Cedar Bend, most without realizing that they have journeyed back in time.

City of Ann Arbor
 Natural Area Preservation
 1831 Traver Road
 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105
 (734) 794-6627
 TDD (734) 432-0762
 fax: (734) 997-1072
 e-mail: nap@a2gov.org
 website: www.a2gov.org/nap

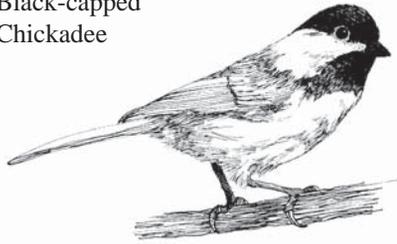
Brochure developed by Natural Area Preservation volunteer Brian Glass as an Academic Service Learning project at Eastern Michigan University.



Printed on recycled paper

A Piece of Ann Arbor's Natural and Human History

Black-capped
Chickadee



White-breasted
Nuthatch



Tufted
Titmouse



Cedar Bend Nature Area

Cedar Bend Nature Area (19.5 acres), originally combined with Island Park, is one of Ann Arbor's oldest city parks. It is bounded by the tight turn in the Huron River for which it is named, residential areas, and the University of Michigan's North Campus. Parking is located on Cedar Bend Drive off of Broadway Street and on Island Drive in Island Park (where the nearest rest rooms are located). The trails can be slippery at times, so please take care, especially on the steeper slopes.

Cedar Bend brings to life a forest of pre-settlement times. Tall oaks and hickories surround you. Flowering black cherries and dogwoods highlight spring; native wildflowers bloom spring through fall; and flocks of chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice enliven the quiet beauty of the winter woodland.

Human History

Land purchased as early as 1897 was turned over to the newly formed Ann Arbor Park Commission in 1905. O.C. Simonds, a landscape architect from Chicago and a graduate of the University of Michigan (1878), was brought in for consultation. This early advocate of using native plants in landscaping was a pioneer in the art of designing landscapes to look natural. In his report on the Cedar Bend property he urged only enough development to allow the public to "see the beauty which now exists along the river and hillside." He later went on to design Nichols Arboretum as well as other city parkland along the Huron River.

The Park Commission report for 1905 describes the "driveway" designed by Simonds and its route from the park entrance near the Wall Street bridge, along the bank of the Huron, and finally up the wooded river bluffs. The description matches the current Island Drive and its unpaved route through the nature area to Cedar Bend Drive. In 1916 an ordinance was passed making the route one-way from Cedar Bend Drive down to river level, and so it remains today.

Natural History

The woodland of Cedar Bend is a relatively dry forest. Black oak, shagbark hickory, and black cherry are among the most conspicuous tree species. Characteristic wildflowers include mayapple and Jack-in-the-pulpit. In all, 195 species of plants have been recorded in Cedar Bend, including the state threatened upland boneset. Unfortunately, 51 of these species are not native to Michigan. The "invasive species" among these non-natives significantly disrupt native plant communities.

Year-round birds include Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch. During the winter months they form mixed-species flocks with Downy Woodpeckers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and sometimes Brown Creepers. Cedar Bend is used both by permanent residents like woodpeckers and by tropical migrants including several species of wood warblers. In very early spring Mourning Cloak butterflies emerge from hibernation. Mammals are many, fox squirrels and chipmunks the most visible. Deer can also be seen, and the excitable little red squirrel provides a surprise.

Tackling the Problems

Invading buckthorn, honeysuckle, Norway maple, tree-of-heaven, and garlic mustard are severely impinging on native plant species in Cedar Bend. Yard waste and other dumping destroys the beauty of the park and disturbs the natural ecosystem. Also, heavy usage combined with steep slopes causes significant erosion.

To address these problems the Natural Area Preservation Division (NAP) of the City of Ann Arbor Department of Parks and Recreation has begun invasive species removal, native tree planting, prescribed ecological burning, and erosion control. The latter includes installing water bars (logs that divert water from steep trails). For details on controlled burning see the fact sheet "Prescribed Ecological Burns" available from NAP. See the "Park Neighbors and Yard Waste" fact sheet regarding yard waste dumping, also available from NAP.



Historical photo of sharp-lobed hepatica. Photo circa 1930.