

## **Guide by Cell – Feeder Road**

### **Feeder Rd/Feeder Canal:**

#### **Stop 15. “A Remnant of the Past”**

Welcome to the Feeder Road Trail at INWR. Right now you are standing by a long, man-made body of water called the Feeder Canal. Men using only hand shovels and wheelbarrows dug the feeder canal between the years of 1823 and 1825. Its main purpose at that time was to serve as an extra water supply to the Erie Canal by diverting water from Tonawanda Creek to Oak Orchard Creek. As it was dug, the spoil was piled up next to the canal to create a road, which we now know as Feeder Road. Once built, this road served as the main route from Akron to Medina, until Route 77 was constructed and took its place. The Feeder Canal no longer plays a role in the Erie Canal system, and it is now a part of the Mohawk Pool that you can see just past the thin tree line to the right of the canal.

As you go along the trail, watch for other “Guide by Cell” signs posted at various locations. They will help you to interpret the surrounding habitat. Please keep in mind that if you are listening to this tour from October 1<sup>st</sup> to February 29<sup>th</sup>, you can walk down the side trails off this road. However, please do not go into the wetlands, as it can be dangerous to you and it may disturb the natural ecosystems. If you are listening from March 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, you can walk and bike on the Feeder Road, however you may not go off of it, so that breeding birds remain undisturbed. If you have any questions about these restrictions or anything else during your visit, please feel free to stop at the refuge headquarters on Casey Road. This audio tour is brought to you by the Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Contributions to future Friends of Iroquois endeavors would be greatly appreciated and can be made at the refuge headquarters. Just look for the donation box provided by the Friends at Headquarters. Thank you for your support!"

### **Wetland management:**

#### **Stop 16. “It’s All About the Water.”**

Wetland management is a very important process at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. It allows the refuge to encourage certain vegetation to grow, which in turn allows particular wildlife to feed and flourish on those plants. To make this happen, the plants in managed wetlands need to dry out for a period of time in order to germinate. So the refuge periodically drains the water from the marsh to allow that process to begin.

Look carefully for annual plants growing in the drained wetlands. These plants produce large quantities of seeds and serve as great energy sources for ducks. During waterfowl migration, thousands of ducks can be attracted to areas such as these. The waterfowl depend on this marsh to replenish their energy supplies, in a marvelous process known as stopover-ecology. The management of water levels is an important component by which the refuge encourages that natural process.

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### **Emergent Marsh/ Cayuga Subimpoundment/Mohawk West Pool:**

#### **Stop 17. “Where are All the Trees?”**

You are now looking over a large emergent marsh to the west. Here at INWR, this 40-acre wetland area is known as the Cayuga Subimpoundment. The water in this wetland is deliberately kept shallow in order to make it ideal for shorebirds, ducks, and wading birds.

As you look around, you will notice that there are almost no trees in the marsh. That is because not many tree species can survive in constantly standing water. For at least part of each season, trees need to have oxygen reach their roots, and that only happens when soil dries out. As you go farther down the trail, you will notice a transition from marsh to flooded woodland forests. Note that the habitat change can be attributed to the amount of standing water.

#### **Invasive Species:**

#### **Stop 18. “Alien Invaders”**

Invasive species such as oriental bittersweet, phragmites, honeysuckle, and even carp found in the surrounding pools pose threats to native wildlife species on this refuge. Invasives often outcompete native wildlife for resources and as a result, dominate the ecosystems. Here at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, there are efforts underway to remove invasive species. This is, however, very difficult due to the ability of the invasives to grow quickly and spread across the landscape.

#### **Upland woods:**

#### **Stop 19. “Forest Diversity”**

Upland forests like the one you see here are characteristic of much of eastern North America. Historically, this was the dominant ecosystem in this area during pre-Columbian times. Because our winters are so long and cold, the growing season in these forests extends only 90 to 120 days. The forest, therefore, consists of fast-growing hardwood species such as maple, beech, and birch trees. Beech nuts are incredibly important to native wildlife such as white-tailed deer, raccoons, and foxes as they provide a nutrient rich food source. American beech is also a common tree species in the breeding habitats of birds such as wood thrush, hooded warblers, and Canada warblers. You may catch a glimpse of these striking birds during the summer months when they breed before they migrate for the winter.

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### **Seneca pool/forest wetlands:**

#### **Stop 20. “Some Cavities are Good to Have!”**

Forested wetlands, such as the one you see here in Seneca pool, are great habitats for cerulean warblers and cavity nesting birds such as wood ducks, and hooded mergansers.

You may be wondering, how can trees grow in water. Well this is due to the fact that this area does not remain wet all year round. It is dry during the summer growing season and since that allows oxygen to seep down into the soil, trees such as red and silver maple, green and black ash, eastern cottonwood, and American elm can flourish.

If you look closely, you may see some cavities in some of the trees. These are most likely made by woodpeckers, but in their later stages these holes serve as nesting sites for other birds.

Before you move on, take a moment to enjoy the special sounds of the forest. The gentle rustling of leaves produces one of the sweetest of nature’s sounds. And if you listen closely, you will also likely hear the calls of our many songbird species. They are hard to spot because they are most often in the tree canopies. But don’t let that stop you from enjoying their songs!

### **Grassland:**

#### **Stop 21. “A Prairie-like Setting?”**

The management plan for INWR calls for the preservation of at least four diverse habitats: emergent marshes, flooded woodlands, upland forests, and grasslands. All four of these ecological conditions are deliberately maintained in order to provide habitats for the unique species that depend on them.

If normal succession were allowed, grasslands like this would give way to shrubs. And those shrubs would eventually give way to forests. To prevent that, these grasslands are maintained through the process of prescribed burns or mowing once every three or four years. In general, grasses are resistant to burning or mowing because their roots survive when their stems are burned or cut. They re-sprout into new fresh growths shortly after they are disturbed. The grasslands here at INWR, are great nesting and foraging habitats for birds such as northern harriers, sparrows, woodcock, and bobolinks.

Bobolinks are very impressive birds, flying over 20,000 kilometers to and from South America every year. Look for these lovely birds as they flutter over the grasses during the summer months. In winter, you might be fortunate enough to see a short-eared owl coursing over the grasslands.

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### **Floating dock/hunting blind:**

#### **Stop 22. “This Looks Like a Good Spot for Ducks.”**

At this point, you will probably notice a man-made structure down at the water’s edge. This is a floating dock leading to a covered observation platform. It is used for handicapped waterfowl hunting during the permitted hunting seasons. At other times it serves as a blind for nature photographers.

While here, try to get a close look at some of the native wildlife inhabiting these wetlands. It is likely you will see some of the many Canada geese that live here. But look also for ducks like wigeons, pintails, and wood ducks. If you are lucky, you might even catch a glimpse of the resident nesting pair of bald eagles as they soar above the trees. Bald eagles are in the process of making a historic comeback. In fact, the State Department of Environmental Conservation reported the 2017 breeding population in NY has reached a record breaking 323 pairs!

### **History/cabins:**

#### **Stop 23. “Put Here By People”**

Here, you may notice two trees that are not like the others in this area. Look for ones with smooth bark and deep green leaves. These are two sycamore trees that are not typically found away from the water’s edge. These trees are thought to have been planted by humans back at a time when a cabin stood in this area.

Much of this surrounding area was once used for farming and/or hunting. The cabin has since been removed but the signs of human activity still remain. As you explore INWR, look for other signs of human influence. For instance, look for trees that are lined up in an unusual fashion like the ones you may see on the Swallow Hollow trail where an old Christmas tree farm once stood, or even an old fence erected by a previous inhabitant.

### **Recreation/restrictions/end of trail:**

#### **Stop 24. “Enjoy Your Visit”**

You have now reached the end of the guide by cell audio tour. You should feel free to continue along the Feeder Road Trail for about another mile and a half, where the trail ends at the Dunlap Road parking lot. However, keep in mind that driving past this point is not allowed. If you are listening to this tour from October 1<sup>st</sup> to February 29<sup>th</sup>, you can walk down the side trails however, please do not go into the wetlands, as it can be dangerous to you and it may disturb the natural ecosystems. If you are listening from March 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, you can walk and bike on the Feeder Road, however you may not go off of it. If you have any questions about these restrictions or anything else during your visit, please feel free to stop at the refuge headquarters on Casey Road. Contributions to future Friends of Iroquois endeavors would be greatly appreciated and can be made at the refuge headquarters. Just look for the donation box provided by the Friends at Headquarters. Thank you for your support!"