

WEBSTER PARK NATURE PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

2023



WEBSTER PARK NATURE PRESERVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Columbus Nature Preserves

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department has 20 designated nature preserves that encompass over 2,850 acres across Franklin and Delaware County. Nature preserves provide for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of ecologically significant land through research, awareness, and education. The first city nature preserves were adopted in 1988 with additional preserves added in 2004, 2010, and 2016. In 2022, the designation process of nature preserves was added into Columbus City Code.

Webster Park Nature Preserve

 **230 Webster Park Ave. Columbus, OH 43214**

Webster Park Nature Preserve in Clintonville is one of Columbus' oldest parks. The 1.65-acres of land was granted to the City of Columbus in 1909 to remain in its natural state. In 1926, Webster was established as a wild bird sanctuary and wild flower preserve and in 2016, Webster was designated as a city nature preserve. Surrounded by residential development, Webster is an island of high-quality habitat. Webster has a perennial stream, a groundwater-fed forested wetland, a significant population of skunk cabbage, native wildflowers, and mature forest.



Features and Amenities

Features

- Mature upland forest
- Forested wetland with skunk cabbage
- Designated bird sanctuary and wildflower preserve



Listed Species

• Indiana bat*
(*Myotis sodalists*)

• Northern long-eared bat*
(*Myotis septentrionalis*)

• Monarch butterfly^
(*Danaus plexippus*)

*Endangered **Threatened ***Species of Concern ^Candidate Species

Habitat



■ Upland Forest (65%)

■ Forested Wetland (35%)

Recommendations

To maintain, conserve, and restore Webster Park Nature Preserve:



Keep the Nature Preserve in its original state and limit activities to pedestrian trail use only. Webster contains a high-quality forested wetland, surrounded by mature forest that supports a variety of birds and native wildflowers.



Remove invasive lesser celandine and other invasive plants. Lesser celandine has overtaken native plants, and is present throughout Webster. Removal of lesser celandine should be performed first and remove other invasive plant species as resources allow.



Install additional signage. Provide signage about the Nature Preserve and its boundaries, educational signage on park features, and to prohibit feeding wildlife.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Nature Preserve Management Plan is the culmination of efforts of the Columbus community, individuals, and groups who devoted their time and energy to the future of the City of Columbus nature preserves. We sincerely appreciate everyone who made this plan possible through their enthusiasm, commitment, creative input, and support. A special thank you to the following organizations for their leadership throughout the planning process:

Columbus Recreation & Parks Department

Columbus City Council

Columbus Mayor's Office

Columbus Recreation and Parks Commission

Nature Preserve Advisory Council

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Webster Park Known Species List (2022)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Columbus Nature Preserves Overview

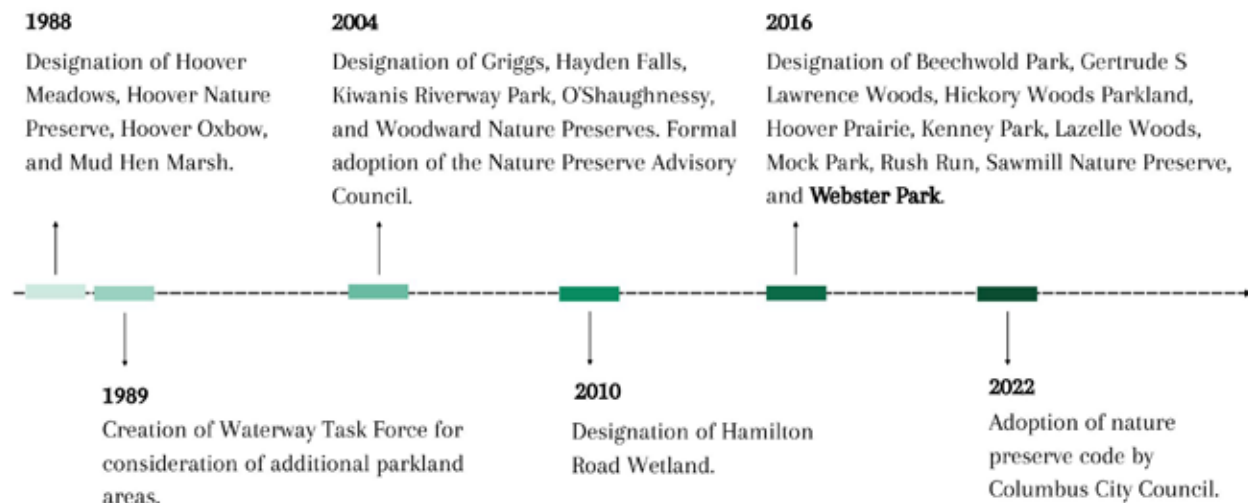
The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) works to preserve the local natural heritage for the Columbus community to enjoy. CRPD recognizes environmentally unique and sensitive areas as designated nature preserves. The Columbus Nature Preserve system is one of a few city nature preserve programs in the state of Ohio.

All Columbus nature preserves are managed by CRPD and advised by the Nature Preserve Advisory Council (NPAC). The NPAC, previously known as the Hoover Nature Preserve Advisory Council, was formally created by City Resolution with the designation of Hoover Nature Preserve, in 1988. In 2004, it was formally renamed by Resolution. The council is composed of nine (9) members. Within the Columbus Nature Preserves, the purposes and objectives of the NPAC are to:

1. Advise and make recommendations to the Executive Director of CRPD concerning the management and wise use of the natural resources.
2. Advocate for the conservation, protection, enhancement, and wise use of the natural resources.
3. Foster the development and application of science-based resource policies and practices and to promote through education and example, and ethic that recognizes the interdependence of people and the environment.

The first city nature preserve was adopted in 1988, for the purpose of protecting and maintaining the drinking water supply at Hoover Reservoir. Additional preserves were designated in 2004, 2010, and 2016. The timeline below lists the year each nature preserve was designated. Note that these properties were acquired years prior to their designation. To date, the system includes over 2,850 protected acres across 20 nature preserves. Of the 20 nature preserves, ten are adjacent to Griggs, Hoover, or O’Shaughnessy Reservoirs and therefore, jointly managed by Columbus Department of Public Utilities (DPU) Division of Water.

Columbus Nature Preserve Timeline



1.2 Management Plan Purpose

This management plan details the site history, amenities, landscape context, habitat types, plant and wildlife species, and recommendations. This plan fulfills Columbus City Code 919.27's requirement for a management plan to provide the framework for management, restoration, and protection of the nature preserve. The intent is to ensure the long-term viability of the nature preserve's natural resources while allowing visitors to experience nature.

2 SITE HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 Preserve History

Webster Park Nature Preserve ("Webster") is about 1.65-acres in size and was designated as a nature preserve in 2016. It is located on Franklin County Parcel ID #010-251571. Webster is one of Columbus' oldest parks and was granted to the City of Columbus by the Columbus Lands Company in 1909 to serve in its natural state as a bird sanctuary. Where in 1926, Webster was officially established as a wild bird sanctuary and wild flower preserve by City of Columbus Ordinance 37-075.

2.2 Location Description

Webster's address is 230 Webster Park Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Webster is located in the neighborhood of Clintonville, within the Northmoor area, north of North Broadway Avenue, east of the Olentangy River and Bike trail, south of Whetstone Park, and west of High Street.

Webster is completely surrounded by a residential neighborhood, bounded on the north by North Delta Place, on the east by East Delta Place, on the south by Webster Park Avenue, and on the west by Olentangy Boulevard.

Surrounding land use includes residential housing with intermixed forested area. See "Webster Park Nature Preserve" location map.



Perennial unnamed tributary to the Olentangy River.



230 WEBSTER PARK AVE, COLUMBUS OH 43214

Webster Nature Preserve

 Preserve Boundary



3 AMENITIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

3.1 Amenities

Webster does not have any trails. Public access is from paved public streets that surround the Preserve. There are street lights surrounding the perimeter.

3.2 Natural Resources

Webster contains flat topography, with steeper slopes along the southern boundary adjacent to a stream.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 500-year floodplain exists within the forested wetland area.

Floodplain areas provide habitat for fish and wildlife, recharge groundwater, and improve surface water quality.

The following soil is mapped within Webster:

- **Cardington-Urban land complex** soils are comprised of loamy till with slight to moderate slopes described as very deep, moderately well drained soils composed of debris that accumulate at the bottom of a glacier.

3.2.1 Streams

Webster is located in the Lower Olentangy Watershed, specifically the Mouth of the Olentangy River Watershed (Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Hydrologic Unit [HUC] #050600011103). This watershed is located within a largely urban environment, making Webster an important feature for urban wildlife.

The Olentangy River is a major river which flows through Columbus, from the north at the Delaware Dam to the south confluence with the Scioto River. The Olentangy River provides high-



Buttercup flowers and a mixture of grasses within the forested wetland.



Perennial unnamed tributary to the Olentangy River flowing along a forested wetland, dominated by skunk cabbage.

quality aquatic habitat for State-listed endangered, threatened, or special concern aquatic species.

Webster contains a high-quality perennial stream that is an unnamed tributary to the Olentangy River. The stream is classified with an Ohio EPA Headwater Habitat Evaluation Index Class 3, the highest quality headwater stream based on physical habitat. This stream contains good quality physical habitat, with a mixture of cobble and gravel, little siltation, and deep pools.

Webster also contains a small ephemeral stream, flowing out of a pool within a forested wetland and into the unnamed tributary to the Olentangy River. See “Webster Park Streams & Wetlands” map.

3.2.2 Wetlands

Webster includes approximately 0.6-acre of a groundwater-fed forested wetland, dominated by native vegetation such as skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), and box elder (*Acer negundo*).

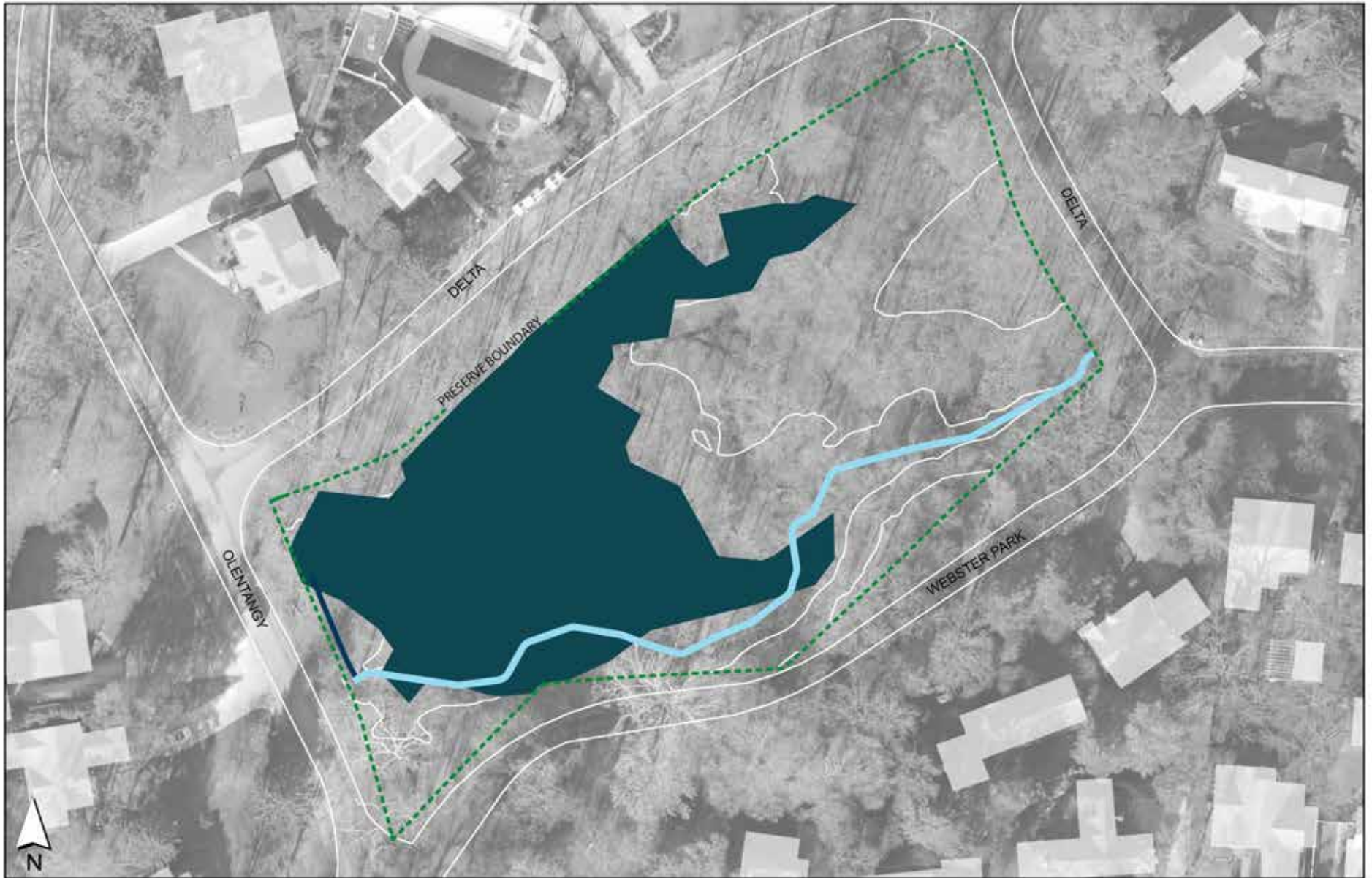
Using the Ohio EPA Ohio Rapid Assessment Method, the wetland is considered higher quality having good habitat and hydrology qualities that are desired to be protected, with a preliminary Ohio EPA wetland Category of a high 2.

Skunk cabbage is a wetland obligate plant, indicative of loamy, peat soils. Skunk cabbage prefer to grow within areas containing groundwater seeps, which are present throughout the wetland. Skunk cabbage is a flowering perennial plant and is one of the first plants to emerge in the spring. Skunk cabbage has a remarkable ability to produce heat that allows it to emerge and bloom even when the ground is still frozen.



Skunk cabbage, a native perennial herb, present within the forested wetland.

In addition to the groundwater, the wetland receives water from an adjacent stream and drainage from the surrounding landscape. This wetland contains vernal pools that provide habitat for breeding amphibians in the spring. In addition, the forested wetland improves water quality, filtering drainage that flows through the wetland before entering the Olentangy River. See “Webster Park Streams & Wetlands” map.



Webster Streams & Wetlands

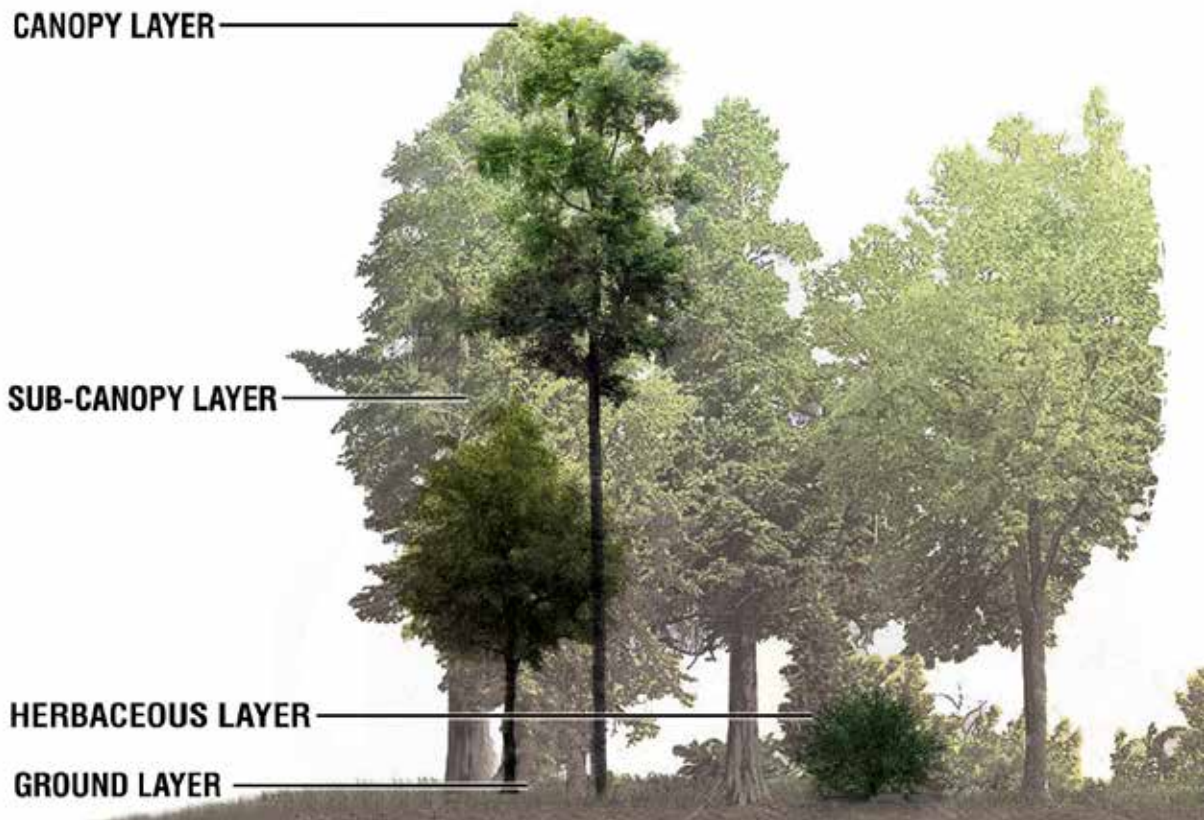


- Perennial Streams
- Ephemeral Streams
- Wetlands
- 5' Contours



3.3 Vegetation and Habitat

Commonly observed native tree species include sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) within the upland forest habitat. Box elder (*Acer negundo*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) dominate the forested wetland habitat.



The sub-canopy is open, with spicebush and green ash saplings in areas closer to the forested wetland.

The herbaceous layer is dominated by spring ephemeral wildflowers, including the following:

- bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)
- cutleaf toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*)
- mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)
- squirrel corn (*Dicentra canadensis*)

- Virginia blue bells (*Mertensia virginica*)
- Virginia spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)
- yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*)



Virginia blue bells blooming within the park. These species typically bloom from April to May and are a popular spring wildflower to observe.

“Webster Park Habitat Types & Invasive Species” map illustrates the general vegetation coverage within Webster. The following habitat types were identified:

1. Upland Forest
2. Forested Wetland

The “Webster Park Known Species List (2022)” is included as an attachment.

3.3.1 Upland Forest

Webster consists of about 1.1-acres of upland forest, which includes portions of mature forest dominated by large diameter trees. This forest serves as an important riparian area for headwater streams and is habitat for a number of plant and animal species, including potential habitat for protected bat species. Bats use forests during the summer to roost and often prefer to forage along riparian stream corridors like the one found in Webster.



Upland Forest



Upland Forest



Webster Habitat Types & Invasive Species

Habitat Types:

- Forested Wetland (0.64-acre)
- Upland Forest (1.01 acres)

Invasive Species:

- + +
+ + Lesser Celandine (1.28 acres)
- Winter Creeper and Lesser Celandine (0.38-acre)



3.3.2 Forested Wetland

Webster includes a forested wetland (see section 3.2.2 for details). Wetlands provide several important services, including the filtration of water to improve downstream water quality; flood retention; habitat for wildlife, including critical breeding habitat for amphibians; and carbon storage.



Forested Wetland



Forested Wetland

3.3.3 Invasive Vegetation

Dominant invasive species include: lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*) and wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*). Lesser celandine is present throughout Webster, including the forested wetland. This species is a low-growing, perennial wildflower, which blooms early in the spring. The species creates a dense carpet of vegetation, preventing native wildflowers and plant diversity from surviving.

Wintercreeper covers approximately 0.4-acre within the upland forest area, especially along slopes and within the northeastern portion of the Preserve. Wintercreeper is an aggressive creeping vine that smothers native plants. The large amount of lesser celandine and wintercreeper pose a threat to native wildflower diversity; therefore, the removal of these invasive plants is a priority.



Wintercreeper with areas of lesser periwinkle, covering a section of upland forest.

See “Webster Park Habitat Types & Invasive Species” map for an illustration of invasive species locations.

Other invasive species present in smaller numbers include:

- burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)

- *English ivy (Hedera helix)*
- *garlic mustard (Alliaria petiolate)*
- *honeysuckle (Lonicera spp.)*
- *lesser periwinkle (Vinca minor)*
- *privet (Ligustrum spp.)*

3.4 Listed/Protected Plant and Wildlife Species

Plant and wildlife species data below were requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) data and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Natural Heritage Data (NHD). Webster is within the potential habitat ranges of the following endangered, threatened, or species of concern plants and/ or wildlife. Therefore, these species may be found within the Nature Preserve.

Plants

No USFWS federally listed plant species or ODNR state listed plant species ranges or records are known to exist within Webster Park.

The following records or ranges for wildlife were identified within Webster:

Mammals

The Federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalist*) and northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) are found in Ohio. These bats face extinction due to the range-wide impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent.

These species hibernate, therefore are not typically found in trees in the winter. However, when not in hibernation, they use the trees within forests for foraging, roosting, and raising their young in the summer, and often return to the same forests. The mature forest in Webster provides suitable habitat for the bats.

Insects

The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is a candidate for being considered Federally Threatened or Endangered (due to the significant decline in their numbers). Monarchs seek milkweed plants for food and laying eggs as part of their annual migration from as far north as Canada down to central Mexico. Wildflowers present in Webster provide suitable food sources for monarch butterflies.

3.5 Wildlife

With its wide range of habitat types, Webster supports healthy and diverse populations of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. A species list of wildlife documented in Webster is attached.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2022, Columbus City Code was amended by enacting Section 919.27 - Nature Preserve Code, to designate portions of parks as nature preserves for the benefit of present and future residents of the City of Columbus. The purpose of the Nature Preserve Code is to identify, protect, and manage Nature Preserves. The management of Nature Preserves includes ensuring it is maintained in its existing, near-natural, or restored state. In order to continue to benefit the residents of Columbus and follow Nature Preserve Code, the following actions are recommended.

4.1 Protection

4.1.1 Maintain Pristine, Native Habitat

Webster Park Nature Preserve serves as a bird sanctuary and features a forested wetland and high quality perennial headwater stream. Continued protection of the natural resources within Webster is vital to ensure these resources remain for future generations. Since Webster is located within a highly urbanized watershed, contains a sensitive, high quality forested wetland, and is small in size, it is recommended that park users have a “leave no trace” mentality when visiting Webster.

It is important to understand the natural resources within Webster, in order to prioritize management activities. One consideration would be to update the listing of observed species of flora and fauna within Webster once every five years. This update should include a thorough survey of species through multiple seasonal field visits. Documenting the specific location of sensitive species and habitat in GIS could be used to protect the most rare or sensitive resources.

4.1.2 Plant Management

All native plants are to be left alone in their original state. If trees naturally fall, they are to remain where they land to provide habitat for wildlife. If trees are designated as a severe risk, trees should be cut to the remainder of a 20-to-30-foot stump of standing dead habitat.

4.1.3 Invasive Species Removal

Invasive plant species, including lesser celandine and wintercreeper are dominant in areas of Webster. In addition, privet, English ivy, garlic mustard, honeysuckle, and lesser periwinkle are also present. Although eradication of invasive species is desirable to preserve the native biological diversity, extensive time and effort, as well as costs, are involved with this goal.

If addressing the invasive species at Webster, removal of lesser celandine should be the first priority. This is due to the extensive coverage of lesser celandine and the threat to native wildflower diversity. Native herbaceous plants should be planted in areas where heavily dominated invasive species areas have been cleared.

Removal efforts may be accomplished by the continued organization of volunteer events through Webster Park partners. Friends of Webster Park and Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) have both implemented efforts in controlling invasive species within the

Preserve. The application of pesticide should follow the standards described in the CRPD Integrated Pest Management Policy Statement. In some cases, planting of native species may be required once invasive plants are removed.

4.2 Conservation

4.2.1 Visitor Management

To provide a safe and enjoyable visitor experience while protecting Webster's natural resources, CRPD will use strategies to achieve resource protection. These practices may include visitors having minimal impact on the natural area by respecting plant and wildlife, disposing of waste properly, and being considerate of others.

4.2.2 Community Involvement

CRPD should continue to partner with Friends of Webster Park, a volunteer group created in 2005 as a response to the increase in invasive plants in Webster. Along with invasive plant removal, Friends of Webster Park have also organized litter pick-up events and have hosted events benefitting Webster.

CRPD should also continue to partner with Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) pertaining to invasive plant removals in Webster Park. FLOW is a non-profit that has organized invasive plant removal at Webster.

Engage neighbors and community members around Webster through volunteer event signs posted in Webster and posted on social media. Events may include education on encroachment, invasive species removal, litter pick-up events, plantings, and others.

4.2.3 Deer Management

A consistent deer population is present within Webster. It is advised that the deer population be monitored. If guidance is provided by USFWS or ODNR, deer control practices may be put in place. In addition, adjacent resident education may be required to ensure no deer feeding or other methods of attraction are occurring.

4.3 Enhancement

4.3.1 Signage

Webster has a main park sign along with a summary of the Nature Preserve regulations. Additional signage along the preserve boundaries is recommended to aid in limiting encroachments.



ATTACHMENTS

Webster Park Known Species (2022)	
Plants	
Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar Maple
<i>Acer negundo</i>	Box Elder
<i>Ageratina altissima</i>	White Snakeroot
<i>Alliaria petiolate</i>	Garlic Mustard
<i>Asimina triloba</i>	Pawpaw
<i>Cardamine concatenate</i>	Cutleaf Toothwort
<i>Cercidiphyllum</i>	Katsura Tree
<i>Claytonia virginica</i>	Virginia Spring Beauty
<i>Dicentra canadensis</i>	Squirrel Corn
<i>Eranthis</i>	Winter Aconite
<i>Erythronium</i>	Fawn Lilies
<i>Erythronium americanum</i>	Yellow Trout Lily
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Burning Bush
<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>	Winter Creeper
<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	American Beech
<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Lesser Celandine
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Green Ash
<i>Hedera helix</i>	English Ivy
<i>Juglans</i>	Walnut
<i>Ligustrum spp.</i>	Privet
<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Spicebush
<i>Liquidambar</i>	Sweetgum
<i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Japanese Honeysuckle
<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	Virginia Bluebells
<i>Picea</i>	Spruce Tree
<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>	Mayapple
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Black Cherry
<i>Quercus alba</i>	White Oak
<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	Swamp White Oak
<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	Bur Oak
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Northern Red Oak
<i>Quercus shumardii</i>	Shumard Oak
<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>	Bloodroot
<i>Solidago</i>	Goldenrod
<i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i>	Eastern Skunk Cabbage
<i>Verbesina occidentalis</i>	Yellow Crownbeard
<i>Vinca minor</i>	Lesser Periwinkle

Webster Park Known Species (2021)	
Birds	
Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Branta Canadensis</i>	Canada Goose
<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Northern Cardinal
<i>Columba livia</i>	Rock Pigeon
<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	American Crow
<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Ring-Billed Gull
<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i>	Hairy Woodpecker
<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	Red-Bellied Woodpecker
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow
<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	Downy Woodpecker
<i>Poecile carolinensis</i>	Carolina Chickadee
<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	White-breasted Nuthatch
<i>Spinus tristis</i>	American Goldfinch
<i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	Carolina Wren
<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	American Robin

Webster Park Known Species (2022)	
Mammals	
Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	White-Tailed Deer
<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	Eastern Gray Squirrel
<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>	Eastern Cottontail