

Dresden Wildlife Habitat Site

Oldcastle Company: The Shelly Company

Location: Dresden, Ohio, USA

Size: 96 acres

Certifications:

- *Wildlife at Work*, 2007; Recertification 2009
- *Corporate Lands for Learning*, 2008; Recertification 2010

Awards & Recognition:

- Nominee, *Corporate Lands for Learning of the Year*, 2010



Partnerships: Boy Scouts of America troops, Girl Scouts of America troops, Tri-Valley Middle & High Schools, West Muskingum School District, Muskingum County Soil & Water Conservation District, Ohio Department of Natural Resources

The Dresden Wildlife Habitat site is a 96-acre former aggregate mining facility adjacent to the Muskingum River in southeastern Ohio. Previous mining practices resulted in the creation of several lakes and ponds that are interspersed with riparian flood plain forest and seasonally wet meadows. Riparian zones, forests and grasslands provide habitat for a number of species, including great blue herons, kingfishers, ospreys, bald eagles, beavers, river otters and white-tailed deer. Typical plant communities include species common in Southeast Ohio, such as cottonwood, sycamore, willow and silver maple. Understory plants common in the region include equisetum, poison hemlock and Virginia creeper. Open field grasslands are populated with smooth brome grass and tall fescue. Low-lying, seasonally wet areas include a variety of sedges and rushes.

Wildlife

Great blue herons, ospreys, kingfishers, bald eagles, beavers, river otters, wood ducks, white-tailed deer

Foliage

Cottonwood, sycamore, willow, silver maple, smooth bronze grass, tall fescue, varieties of sedges and rushes, equisetum, poison hemlock, Virginia creeper, switchgrass, ox-eye daisy, wild quinine, New England aster, wild bergamot and Indian grass

Additional Features

Blue bird nest box trail, bat house, osprey nesting platform, wood duck nesting boxes, pollinator garden

To achieve greater biodiversity at the site, the Dresden wildlife team partnered with numerous employees, community groups, local schools, scout troops, agencies and organizations to create a Wildlife Management Plan to improve the native prairie and lakeside habitats and to identify, inventory and monitor yearly activity on the site.

Native prairie habitat creation efforts began in April 2006, when employees prepared a 6-acre portion of the site for planting. Following disking and removal of undesirable vegetation, employees and community volunteers installed warm season grasses and wildflowers native to Ohio and helped to plant switchgrass, ox-eye daisy, wild quinine, New England aster, wild bergamot and Indian grass. Additionally, volunteers planted a pollinator garden and constructed nesting boxes and a blue bird nest box trail to further enhance the prairie habitat. To improve lakeside habitat for wildlife species, employees and volunteers provided basking logs, brush piles and platforms in and around water resources. Several grass and tree species were also planted to control bank erosion in wetland areas.

Today, the former aggregate mining facility is now a certified Wildlife Habitat Council *Wildlife at Work* and *Corporate Lands for Learning* site that provides environmental-based education to schools, scouts, community groups and organizations for all ages to raise awareness, improve leadership skills and encourage responsible behavior towards natural resources and wildlife. The Dresden wildlife team, assisted by the environmental clubs and science teachers at Tri-Valley Schools, developed a curriculum that incorporated the Project WILD lessons and supports the academic goals of the schools. Boy Scouts have utilized the site to earn their highest honor the Eagle Scout award – by constructing 11 projects to provide wildlife and site enhancements. These projects include: informational

kiosk, shelter houses, weather-resistant garbage and recycling containers, trail sign markers, wetland steps, floating boat dock, footbridge, osprey nesting platform and wood duck nesting boxes.

In addition, the Dresden site is host to many community and employee engagement activities including Earth Day Celebration, Fall Festival, Christmas Tree Donation Drive and Employee Bass Tournament. Throughout the year, many groups take advantage of the 96-acre wildlife site through hiking, canoeing, camping, boating and other nature adventures.

The Dresden Wildlife Habitat site is the first and only Oldcastle certified Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) *Corporate Lands for Learning* program. ■