

Great Lakes Palustrine Sand Plain

This is a sparsely vegetated, herbaceous (non-woody) community that occurs on most sandy Lake Erie shores, protected from waves by man-made features such as breakwalls or natural features such as sand dunes. The community is characterized by beds of rushes, reeds, and sedges, many of which can only be found in this type of habitat.

The abundance and species of plants found in this community are affected by the seasonal rise and fall of lake water levels. The seeds of many plants that compose this community can remain dormant in underwater sediments for decades during years when lake levels are high. When lake levels recede, these plants flourish on the newly exposed flats, sometimes revealing rare plants that have not been seen in years. Indeed, this community supports close to half of the 77 state-listed rare plants at Presque Isle State Park (PA). Two species new to the flora of Ohio and Pennsylvania, Tuckerman's panic grass and ovate spikerush, were discovered within this community during the low lakes levels of 1988 and 1992. Several uncommon, showy plants such as fringed gentian, pink gentian, silverweed, and Kalm's lobelia are also members of this ephemeral community.

The Palustrine Sand Plain provides an important feeding and resting habitat for migrating shorebirds. Leopard frogs, Fowler's toads, and tiger beetles can also be found.

Where to Go

- East Harbor State Park (Ottawa County, OH)
- Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve (Lake County, OH)
- Presque Isle State Park (Erie County, PA)
- Veterans Park and Indian Point Park, Lake Metroparks (Lake County, OH)



Fringed gentian



Rose pink



Fowler's toad



Umbrella flat sedge



Tiger beetle