



Division of Wildlife
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
BIG ISLAND WILDLIFE AREA

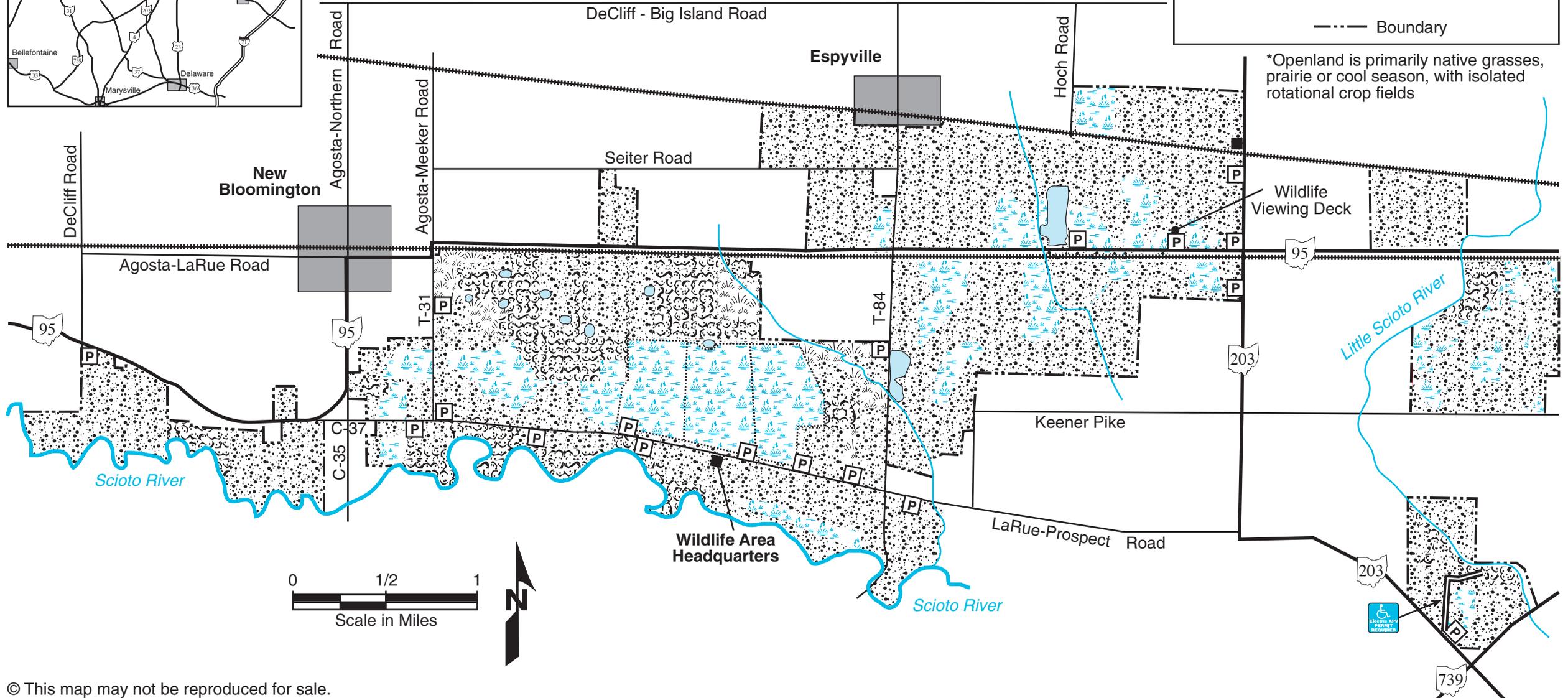
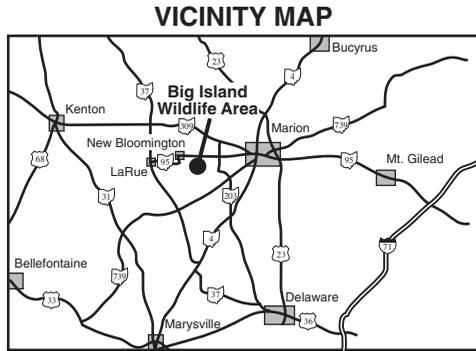
Marion County

Public Hunting & Fishing
5,872 Acres

LEGEND

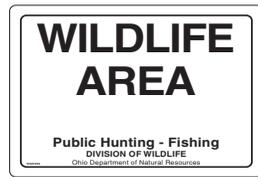
	Marshland		Parking
	Openland*		Building
	Woodland		Accessible Electric APV Trail - Permit Required
	Brushland		Dike
			Boundary

*Openland is primarily native grasses, prairie or cool season, with isolated rotational crop fields



BIG ISLAND WILDLIFE AREA

Marion County



DISTANCE FROM MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

5 miles from Marion
20 miles from Kenton
32 miles from Bellefontaine
46 miles from Lima
47 miles from Findlay
59 miles from Columbus

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

This 5,872-acre wildlife area is located five miles west of Marion on State Route 95. The terrain is very flat. Sixty percent of the area is openland consisting of cropfields, meadow, and prairie grasses in large open fields. Second- and third-growth hardwoods occupy another 20 percent of the area. Pin oak, hickories, and silver maple are common species in the upland woods. Sycamore, box elder, ashes, and silver maple occur along the Scioto River. Ponds, potholes, and over 1,200 acres of marsh and wetlands occupy approximately 20 percent of the area.

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The Big Island Wildlife Area lies within a former wetland prairie, one of the larger prairies that existed in Ohio at the time of settlement. Agricultural development of the area did not begin until the late 1800s, because of the poor drainage. Farming on these poorly drained soils was a marginal enterprise, with bumper crops harvested during years of favorable weather and practically no crops produced during poor years. Most of the once expansive tall grass prairie on the area was lost because of the intensive agricultural use and drainage work that occurred prior to purchase by the Division of Wildlife.

Purchase of the land for this wildlife area began in 1958. Management work in the past has included the protection and improvement of existing woodland, nest box installation, planting of trees and shrubs and prairie and other grasses for nesting cover, contract grain farming for increased food supply, and wetland construction.

A 382-acre marsh, constructed in 1971, is flooded in the fall by water pumped from the Scioto River. This seasonally-flooded marsh provides nesting, feeding, and resting grounds for wetland dependent birds and furbearers and is especially attractive to spring and fall migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. The abundance of wetland wildlife attracted to the marsh along with the overall diversity of the area makes Big Island a popular area for hunters and wildlife watchers. This area is a Watchable Wildlife Area, one of 80 included in the *Ohio Wildlife Viewing Guide*.

Habitat management activities on this wildlife area are ongoing and are constantly improving the area, especially for wetland and grassland dependent wildlife species. Since 1996 nearly 3,800 additional acres were purchased to enlarge the wildlife area. These 3,800 acres have been restored to a combination of prairie grassland habitat and shallow wetlands, which has made Big Island the site of the largest wetland prairie area on public land in Ohio.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Cottontail rabbit, mourning dove, and ring-necked pheasant are the principal small game species. Waterfowl and woodcock are important migratory game birds. Wood duck, mallard, blue-winged teal, and green-winged teal are the most abundant ducks. Canada geese commonly occur on the area especially during spring and fall migrations. Hunting for deer, fox squirrels, and wild turkey is also popular. Nongame bird species frequently observed in the wetland and grassland areas include bitterns, Northern harrier, bobolink, upland sandpiper, herons, grebes, numerous shorebirds, bald eagles, and trumpeter swans.

All of the furbearers common to central Ohio are found here and trapping for muskrats is popular.

The seasonal marsh, wetlands, and all of the ponds on Big Island are managed primarily for wetland wildlife, therefore, fishing is mostly limited to the Scioto River on the area's south side.

HUNTING, TRAPPING, AND FISHING

The woodlots in the north and west section of the area provide the best squirrel and woodcock hunting, and the adjacent brushland is popular for rabbit hunting. The bottomlands adjacent to the Scioto River also offer good rabbit hunting. Ring-necked pheasants are found mostly in the large, open prairie grass fields. Waterfowl hunting is good throughout the area in the marshes and along the Scioto River. Hunting success for waterfowl, rabbits, and pheasants is expected to increase substantially as the recently restored wetland and grassland habitat becomes established.

The Scioto River offers fair to good fishing opportunities for smallmouth bass, rock bass, channel catfish, bullhead, carp, and suckers. Undercut banks, riffles, and obstructions in the river provide the best spots for concentrations of these species.

PUBLIC USE FACILITIES

State highways and county roads provide good access to the area. Numerous parking lots are located throughout the area. A Watchable Wildlife viewing deck located along State Route 95 provides an excellent view of the open prairie and wetland habitat and the numerous birds that occupy these areas.

SPECIAL USE WATERFOWL HUNTING BLIND AND ELECTRIC POWERED ALL PURPOSE VEHICLE HUNTING LANE

A waterfowl hunting blind is reserved for open use only by persons who are confined to wheelchairs. Additional waterfowl hunting opportunities are available along an Electric Powered All Purpose Vehicle (EPAPV) accessible hunting lane located on a portion of Big Island Wildlife Area at the intersection of SR 203 and SR 739. Access is by EPAPV permit only.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further information may be obtained from the Wildlife District One Office, 1500 Dublin Road, Columbus, Ohio 43215; telephone (614) 644-3925.

TURN IN A POACHER

Ohio's TIP, "Turn In a Poacher," program is helping to curtail poaching throughout the state. TIP is designed to involve the public in reporting wildlife violations. Citizens who observe wildlife violations should call the TIP toll-free hotline, 1-800-POACHER.