

## NATURE RESERVES

# Harold Mitchell Nature Reserve

Hidden within the 14 hectares of the Harold Mitchell Nature Reserve is possibly the last mature Hemlock forest on the shores of Lake Erie in the Niagara Region. Located just north of the lake and directly bordering the northerly boundary of the Long Beach Conservation Area, the property was purchased in 1970 by the Federation on behalf of the Niagara Falls Nature Club. The nature reserve is named after Dr. Harold Mitchell, was an avid birder and former president of the Buffalo Museum of Science. Dr. Mitchell originally bought the property to save it from development. He then sold the land to the Federation to ensure that the property would be preserved in a natural state. Gus Yaki, a renowned Niagara region naturalist, arranged the purchase. The Niagara Falls Nature Club remains the active stewardship group for the nature reserve.

The reserve's rolling sloughs and poor surface drainage can make it a difficult place to walk. There are no formal trails, so bring high rubber boots if you want to explore the reserve's many ponds, and low ridges. In addition to the Hemlock stands, the property supports Red, Black and Sugar Maple, American Beech, Yellow Birch, and Swamp White Oak. Red and White Ash dominate in the extreme northern part. Other interesting plants to look for include Indian Cucumber-root, Spicebush, Swamp Milkweed, and Southern Arrowwood.

Songbirds abound on the property as do typical forest nesting birds such as Ovenbird and Great Horned Owls. The ponds and wetlands on the property also make it an ideal site for waterfowl breeding.

As one of the few mature stands in the area, the reserve's Hemlock forests also shelter a number of deer. It is likely that this property is an important haven for deer, where they can take shelter from the elements and give birth to their fawns.

The Wainfleet Wetlands Conservation Area and Wainfleet Bog are also nearby.

### *How to get there*

Take Hwy. 3 west from Port Colborne past Ostryhon Corners; then take Niagara Regional Rd. 3 south and then west along the Lake Erie shoreline, following the signs for Long Beach Conservation Area. Turn north on the road immediately to the west of the conservation area. There is no trail system.