

Tifft Nature Preserve

Where: 1200 Fuhrmann Blvd., Buffalo NY 14203

Contact: (716) 825-6397

Website: www.tifft.org

Hours: The Visitor Center is open Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday noon to 4 p.m. Trails are open daily year-round from dawn to dusk.

Admission: Free, but a \$2 donation is suggested for guided tours.

Admission may vary for special events, check the website for information.

Parking: Free parking is available in the visitor lot near the entrance. Overflow parking is available along Fuhrmann Boulevard.

Nearby: The preserve is located across from the Buffalo Harbor State Park, with a newly built playground, picnic areas, public restrooms, and walkways along the shores of Lake Erie.

Summer events:

July 21: Sky's the Limit, featuring kite-flying demonstrations by the Great Lakes Kitefliers Society at the nearby Buffalo Harbor State Park, crafts (including kite-making) for kids, food trucks, and more. The fourth annual event will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

August 5: Insectival, an outdoor insect safari with crafts, demonstrations, and refreshments (some containing edible insects). Pre-registration required, timed entry at 10 a.m., 12 p.m., and 2 p.m. Admission is \$7.

Check www.tifft.org for more summer events.



Tifft Nature Preserve, 264 acres dedicated to conservation and environmental education in Buffalo, has something for visitors of every age. This girl is taking part in a “Creatures of the Night” program. *Photo courtesy Tifft Nature Preserve*

1950s and 1960s, the land was a dump for city refuse.

Rehabilitation began in the 1970s, with the encasement of nearly 2 million cubic feet of solid municipal waste, a process that was revolutionary for its time. Ponds were enlarged, trees and wildflowers were planted, and a 75-acre cattail marsh was preserved. In the 1980s, Tifft became part of the Buffalo Museum of Science.

Today, the site is the urban sanctuary envisioned by its founders. Animals flourish in the ponds, marshes, and woodlands. Five miles of nature trails draw visitors daily, including students on field trips, local hikers, and wildlife photographers.

The landscape is quiet, and the trails are dotted with occasional benches allowing for observation and peaceful contemplation. Clouds reflect over the waters of Lake Kirsty near the preserve's entrance, trees stretch into the sky along the wooded trails and clearings of marshes and meadows punctuate the scenic walk. Fresh air from breezes off nearby Lake Erie mix with the damp of the forest and wetlands.

“People come here to escape,” said Program Coordinator Kimberly Adriaansen. “You can be in the middle of the preserve

and feel like you are in another world, yet we are so accessible from the city at the same time.”

The site is popular with bird-watching enthusiasts and has been designated an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society for its diversity of species. Researchers have documented more than 250 different birds at the site, including those that use the preserve as a stopover during migration because of the proximity to Lake Erie. On the list of regular visitors: the common loon, osprey, bald eagle, red-shouldered hawk, peregrine falcon, terns, wrens, and bitterns.

Adriaansen said that birders and wildlife photographers frequent the preserve during “rain, fog, snow, and sunshine.” Community members share their sightings on the preserve's Facebook page.

“You are able to see the preserve's beauty through their eyes,” she said.

Timothy Gryckiewicz is a photographer who regularly visits Tifft and enjoys the beauty.

“In my early years, Tifft helped cultivate a passion in nature and wildlife,” Gryckiewicz said. “Now, it cultivates my skills as a photographer with its stunning marshes and array of wildlife. There's no other place quite like it in the area.”