Merry Lea’s Mission

• Providing a natural sanctuary for northern Indiana’s plants & animals
• Providing environmental education for people of all ages
• Providing a setting for re-creating opportunities that benefit the human body & spirit while not exploiting the land or excessively disturbing its ecosystems

Help us fulfill our mission. Donate online at: goshen.edu/merrylea/donate

History of Merry Lea

1830s: Settlers used upland forests as woodland pastures and sources of timber, or cleared them for farming.

1880s: Ditches were dug to drain the lake and expose rich soil for growing potatoes, onions and peppermint.

1930s-1986: Luckey’s Landing Resort on High Lake was a popular public destination for camping, fishing and boating.

1964: Lee and Mary Jane Rieth began purchasing parcels of land for preservation and environmental education.

1980: The Rieths generously donated Merry Lea to Goshen College.

1991-present: Restoration of wetland and prairie ecosystems begins. Merry Lea continues to restore 75 acres of wetlands and 50 acres of prairie on what was once agricultural land.

1986: Luckey’s Landing property is purchased.

1994: Lee and Mary Jane Rieth began purchasing parcels of land for preservation and environmental education.

2005-2007: Rieth Village is constructed, becoming the first LEED Platinum certified facility in Indiana.

Ecosystems at Merry Lea

Merry Lea’s 1,189-acre nature preserve is home to a diverse selection of Indiana ecosystems.

Species spotlight:

Forests at Merry Lea

Lowland Forest
Poorly drained soils
Silver Maple, Red Maple, Burr Oak, Pin Oak, Cottonwood, Sycamore trees

Upland Forest
Well-drained soils
Red Oak, Black Oak, White Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Bitternut Hickory trees

Wetlands at Merry Lea

Bog
Peat-forming, nutrient-poor, oxygen-deficient, acidic water
Sphagnum moss

Fen
Peat-forming, nutrient-rich, alkaline water
Grasses and sedges

Marsh
Herbaceous plants
Sedges, cattails, rushes

Shrub-Carr
Neutral or alkaline water
Scrubby vegetation

Swamp
Almost year-round saturated soils
Trees and shrubs

Vernal Pond
Temporary, collects water in spring from melting snow and rainfall, dries up in the summer
Important breeding ground for amphibians

Wet Meadow
Saturated soils
Non-woody vegetation, grasses

Grasslands at Merry Lea

Meadow
Typically formed in abandoned agriculture fields
Queen Anne’s Lace, Goldenrod, Black-eyed Susan, Bee-Balm

Black Oak Savanna
Widely-spaced Black Oak trees in a field of grasses and forbs
Black Oak, Little Bluestem, Butterfly Weeds, Round-headed Bush Clover

Tall Grass Prairie
A field of grasses and forbs maintained by fire
Indian Grass, Big and Little Bluestem, Sideoats Grama, Canada Wild Rye, Black-eyed Susan, New England Aster

Trail Map

Where Earth and People Meet

Pre-1830s:
Nine hundred acres of naturally occurring wetlands and open water covered lowland areas. The Miami Nation lived in the area for centuries prior to their removal, due to the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

1830s:
Ditches were dug to drain the lake and expose rich soil for growing potatoes, onions and peppermint.

1880s:
Settlers used upland forests as woodland pastures and sources of timber, or cleared them for farming.

1930s-1986:
Luckey’s Landing Resort on High Lake was a popular public destination for camping, fishing and boating.

1964:
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Help Merry Lea fulfill its mission by:

- Staying on designated trails
- Traveling only by foot or skis on all trails
- Leaving plants and animals undisturbed
- Keeping all pets on a leash and carrying out their waste
- Properly disposing of all litter
- Using trails only during daylight hours

Trail Information

Hours:
Open dawn to dusk, 365 days a year.

Parking:
The Learning Center gate closes at 5 p.m. Please park along the side of the lane outside the gate if enjoying trails after this time.

Restrooms:
Available in the Learning Center during work hours. After hours, from April through October, porta potties are located at the Learning Center and Farmstead trailheads for visitor use.