



FIELD NOTES

Wrack Lines

April, 2018

Have you ever noticed the piles of natural debris that wash up on the shoreline? These are called wrack lines. In Michigan, wrack lines tend to be made up of marram grass, shells, drift wood, seaweed, and the occasional plastic item. Believe it or not, they have an important role in the coastal ecosystem.

Many different microorganisms and insects call them home, creating an excellent food source for local bird populations. Wrack lines also provide nutrients for new plant life as they decompose. Finally, wrack lines provide a wind block that causes sand to deposit on their leeward sides, becoming the beginning of dune development.

Check out wrack lines the next time you are walking one of our region's beautiful stretches of protected shoreline.

