

NATURAL AREAS GUIDE





CONSERVING THE LAND,
WATER AND SCENIC
CHARACTER OF
LEELANAU COUNTY



LEELANAUCONSERVANCY.ORG

Natural Areas Guide



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Who We Are



Mission: Conserving the Land, Water, and Scenic Character of Leelanau County

Since 1988 the Leelanau Conservancy has worked to preserve the natural beauty, ecological integrity, and working farms of the Leelanau Peninsula. As of 2018, we have preserved nearly 14,000 acres, including 26 Natural Areas and Preserves, 178 permanent conservation easements, and 47 miles of streams and shoreline.

The work of the Leelanau Conservancy is made possible by a committed board of directors, a professional staff, a team of knowledgeable docents, nearly 500 volunteers, and over 4,000 dedicated donors. More than 200 landowners have voluntarily worked with us to preserve their cherished family lands.

We preserve land through permanent conservation easements, land acquisition, and transfer & assist projects — partnering with private landowners, communities, farmers, and leaders at all levels of government. The majority of the land we have protected is privately owned and not open to the public, and remains on the tax rolls. However, the Natural Areas, Preserves, and Forest Reserves in this guide are all open to the public.

Inside this Guide

- Natural Areas and Preserves
- Locator maps and simple trail maps
- Brief property descriptions, features, and directions
- Beautiful Ken Scott photographs
- Membership information

More detailed trail and property locator maps, hiking information, hunting guidelines, grooming reports and other seasonal information is available at **www.leelanauconservancy.org**.



Visit Our Natural Areas



Know Before You Go

We hope you'll find time to visit our properties throughout Leelanau County. Many of our Natural Areas and Preserves have a Leelanau Conservancy sign along the road and a kiosk at the trailhead. A trail map of the property and other essential information is posted on each kiosk.

Please help us protect the plants, animals, and the habitats that sustain them by staying on the trail, respecting property limits, and carrying out your trash. Fires, camping, motorized vehicles, bicycles (except at Palmer Woods), horses, unleashed pets, and the removal or destruction of land, water, or plants are prohibited. Note: bikes are allowed only on the Palmer Woods mountain bike trails.

Hunting is allowed only on select natural areas and with Conservancy permit only. Please visit our website to download maps, permits, and car permits for those areas where hunting is allowed. Hunting permits must be approved by Conservancy staff. Please use caution when hiking during hunting season and wear orange.

General Information

- Many properties have parking lots; others require road-side parking — parking lots are identified on trail maps
- Informational kiosks at trailheads are identified on trail maps
- Many of our Natural Areas and Preserves have marked trails
- Dogs allowed on leash; please clean up after your pet
- As a rule, there are no toilet facilities at our Natural Areas; seasonally you may find them at DeYoung and Palmer Woods
- Be prepared for wet, muddy conditions and rough terrain
- Learn to identify poison ivy, which grows throughout Leelanau
- Plan for mosquitoes and other insects, especially near wetlands



Trail Map Key

Guide to Natural Area & Preserve Maps



Each Natural Area and Preserve page in this guide features a small locator map—an outline of Leelanau County with the property identified by a red dot.

Pages with properties open to visitors also feature a trail map. On these more detailed maps, Conservancy-owned or managed parcels are outlined in red; trails are marked in white dotted lines; and the blue icons identify parking lots, trailheads, and boat launch sites. The length and difficulty of each trail is described under the “Features” section.



Photo left: Preserved shoreline near Whaleback Natural Area. Above: Cedar River Preserve.

Trail Map Key



Street/Road



Natural Area/
Preserve Boundary



Trail



Leelanau TART Trail



Parking Lot



Trailhead



Scenic Overlook



Boat Launch



Mountain Bike Trails



Groomed Nordic Ski Trails



Recreation Opportunities



Find Your Leelanau Adventure

Our natural areas offer fantastic recreation opportunities in all four seasons. From hiking to photography, to cross-country skiing, to mountain biking, you're sure to find your Leelanau adventure at one of our special natural areas and preserves. Here is a sampling of recreation opportunities to try:

Birding: Lighthouse West is a great place to see raptors circling in the sky at migration time. Chippewa Run is home to dozens of songbirds.

Short hikes: Teichner and Swanson Preserves serve up lots of beauty and habitat diversity in a small area—and both feature boardwalks that end up at the lakeshore.

Trail Running: Houdek Dunes features 3.3 miles of challenging terrain for runners. Take a run at Palmer Woods, then cross the road and head just north to add to your workout at Krumwiede Forest Reserve.

Snowshoeing: Kehl Lake's hemlock trees and sheltered trails make for a beautiful trek.

Cross Country Skiing: Palmer Woods offers groomed trails and miles of skiing.

Mountain Biking: Palmer Woods's single-track, flow-style trail is one of a kind in Northwest Lower Michigan.

Paddling: The Crystal River, Cedar River and Lake Leelanau Narrows are great places to launch a canoe.

Sunset Watching: Clay Cliffs and Whaleback feature viewing platforms to take in the beauty.

Photography: At any of the above places, you'll find opportunities for fabulous photos. Please send them our way to info@leelanauconservancy.org.

Join the Leelanau Conservancy

As a private non-profit organization, the Leelanau Conservancy's staff and board partner with thousands of committed donors and volunteers to preserve the most important places in Leelanau. If you are already a member or volunteer, we thank you for your support! If you haven't yet joined our organization, we encourage you to learn more about our work and consider making a donation.

Turn to the next page or visit our website for more information:
www.leelanauconservancy.org.

Photo of Whaleback Natural Area.







Join Us!



The People Behind the Mission

The Leelanau Conservancy's staff and Board of Directors work with thousands of committed donors, volunteers, and landowners to preserve the most important places in Leelanau. Dedicated supporters and willing landowners help the Leelanau Conservancy to protect scenic viewsheds, essential wildlife corridors, high-quality agricultural land, and beautiful lakes and streams. We purchase property for natural areas, help families preserve their private lands through conservation easements, accept donated land, and partner with local and national agencies to purchase ecologically significant parcels.

Become a Member

- Call our office at 231-256-9665
- Join online at leelanauconservancy.org
- Come into our office at 105 N. First Street in Leland, Michigan
- Write to us at P.O. Box 1007, Leland, MI 49654
- Mail in the envelope included in this Natural Areas Guide

Membership Benefits

- Receive the Leelanau Conservancy Newsletter
- Get land protection updates and e-news about our projects
- Receive an invitation to our many events
- Learn about hikes, volunteer opportunities, and events
- Receive a free copy of this Natural Areas Guide and a Leelanau Conservancy Decal for your car or bike
- Make a difference in the future of Leelanau County

Left: Rare clay bluff ecosystem at Clay Cliffs Natural Area.

Open to All Visitors

Come visit these properties on your own or join a tour led by our knowledgeable docents. You'll find trails and kiosks to guide you.

A "Natural Area" is managed not only to protect its unique natural features but also to provide quiet recreational opportunities, such as hiking and bird watching.

We also have two "Forest Reserves," which are Natural Areas managed for sustainable timber harvest.

A "Preserve" contains more fragile ecosystems and is managed primarily to protect these features. Some Preserves contain trail systems but others do not.

Some properties featured in this guide are owned by townships or other units of government and were acquired through collaboration with the Leelanau Conservancy.






**CEDAR RIVER
PRESERVE**
PRESERVED 1995



Cedar River Preserve

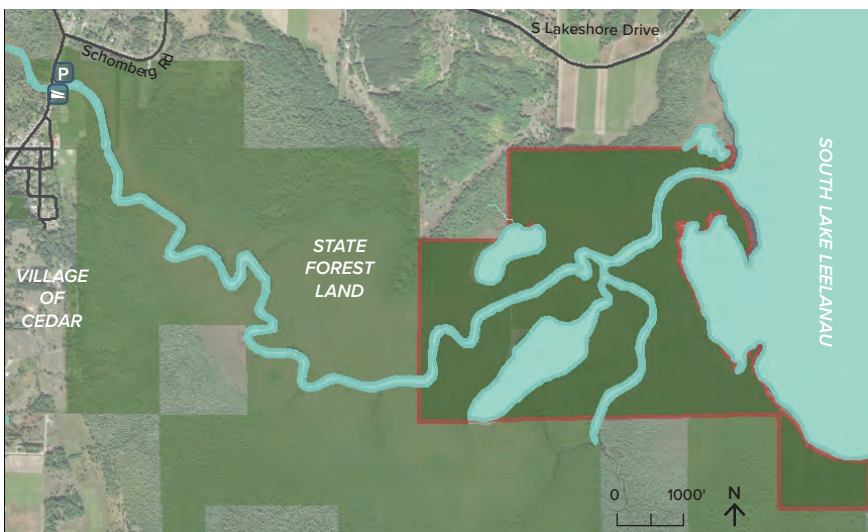
480 Acres – Preserved in 1990



This beautiful, undisturbed wetland complex in the Solon Swamp is an ecological powerhouse that protects the health of Lake Leelanau. A number of ecological communities such as fen, shrub scrub, and rich conifer swamp are a haven for wildlife, including sandhill cranes and rare plants like the carnivorous yellow pitcher plant. The Cedar River is a peaceful, quiet place to kayak or canoe and enjoy nature at its most diverse. The entire waterway from the mouth of Lake Leelanau to the Village of Cedar is protected and open to the public.

Features

- No trail system; best viewed from a canoe or kayak
- Swamp sparrow, sandhill crane, loon, osprey, kingfisher
- Blue flag iris, pitcher plant, sundew, bog lady's tresses
- White cedar, yellow birch, balsam fir, black ash, tamarack
- Fen: quaking mat of tight vegetation over open water



Parking and boat launch for Cedar River Preserve is located just north of the village of Cedar. You will paddle about two miles through state land (see map) to reach the Preserve.



Chippewa Run Natural Area

112 Acres – Preserved in 2000



Years ago when a beloved parcel on the outskirts of Empire went up for sale, the community and the Leelanau Conservancy rallied to preserve this scenic buffer which protects the village's small town character. The land includes four separate ecosystems and features a much-loved beaver pond and stream where turtles thrive. Chippewa Run is a birding paradise where dozens of species visit or live, including green herons that nest in the pine tree grove planted in 1953.

Features

- 1.5-mile trail network on rolling terrain
- Beaver pond, variety of reptiles and amphibians
- Historic apple orchard
- Majestic maple trees lining the creek
- Land contains history of Anishinaabek settlements along the creek



Chippewa Run Natural Area is located just north of the village of Empire, with parking off of M-22.



Clay Cliffs Natural Area

104.5 Acres – Preserved in 2013



This stunning Natural Area, created in partnership with Leland Township with support from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, protects 1,700 feet of shoreline on both Lake Leelanau and Lake Michigan. The sheer clay bluff hosts a rare and fragile ecosystem where eagles swoop over the lake in search of prey. Clay Cliffs' hardwood forest shelters one of Leelanau's most prolific wildflower sites, dotted with blooming trillium in spring. See panoramic lake views from the overlook at the top of the bluff and sparkling views of Lake Leelanau from the meadow.

Features

- 1.5-mile trail system on flat and hilly terrain
- Breathtaking view from 200 feet above Lake Michigan
- Raptor perch on the cliff, Lake Michigan shoreline birds
- Fantastic array of spring wildflowers: Dutchman's breeches, trillium, spring beauties



Clay Cliffs Natural Area is located two-and-a-half miles north of the village of Leland, just off of M-22.



DeYoung Natural Area

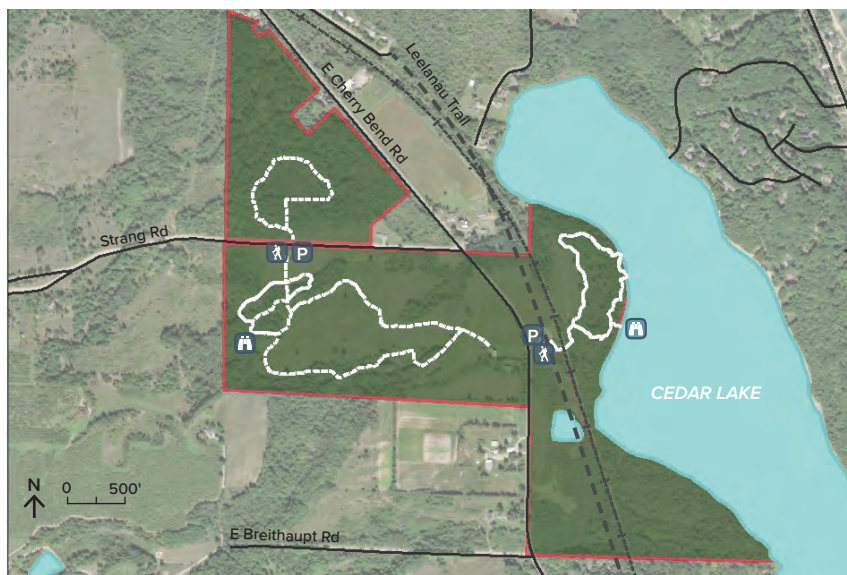
191 Acres – Preserved in 2006



The DeYoung Natural Area combines an historic farmstead with a mile of shoreline on Cedar Lake and was preserved with support from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The farmstead dates back to 1855 and the area is named for the innovative farmer Louis DeYoung. The Leelanau TART trail bisects this property and a Universal Access trail leads to a lakeside fishing and wildlife observation deck. Upland trails wind around a historic farmstead, hardwood forests, open fields and two streams. Elmwood Township owns the lakeside portion of the property, which is managed by the Leelanau Conservancy.

Features

- Universal access trail (.7 mile) leads to Cedar Lake fishing pier
- Upland trail system (1.8 miles) around a historic farmstead
- Forested stream valley lush with horsetail, cedar swamp
- Woodpeckers, nesting wood warbler, green heron



DeYoung Natural Area is located about four-and-a-half miles north of Traverse City, along E. Cherry Bend Rd.



Finton Natural Area

35 Acres – Preserved in 2000



Max and Mary Finton donated this parcel to the Leelanau Conservancy to ensure that its natural beauty remained preserved forever. Finton Natural Area is part of a critical wildlife corridor that spans the tip of the Leelanau Peninsula, including Conservancy Natural Areas, Leelanau State Park, and private conservation easement land. This corridor of preserved lands shelters and feeds wildlife traveling from Northport Bay to Cathead Bay. Finton's maple and beech forest forms a tight canopy, resulting in little ground cover other than spring ephemerals.

Features

- .5-mile trail on flat terrain
- Level two-track connects Northport Point Road to Woolsey Lake Road
- Spring trillium
- Migratory songbirds
- Splendid autumn colors
- Trail suitable for winter snowshoeing
- Great walk for those with limited mobility



Finton Natural Area is located about three miles north of Northport: look for sign and access on Woolsey Lake Road. Park on Woolsey Lake Road or Northport Point Road.



Hatlem Creek Preserve

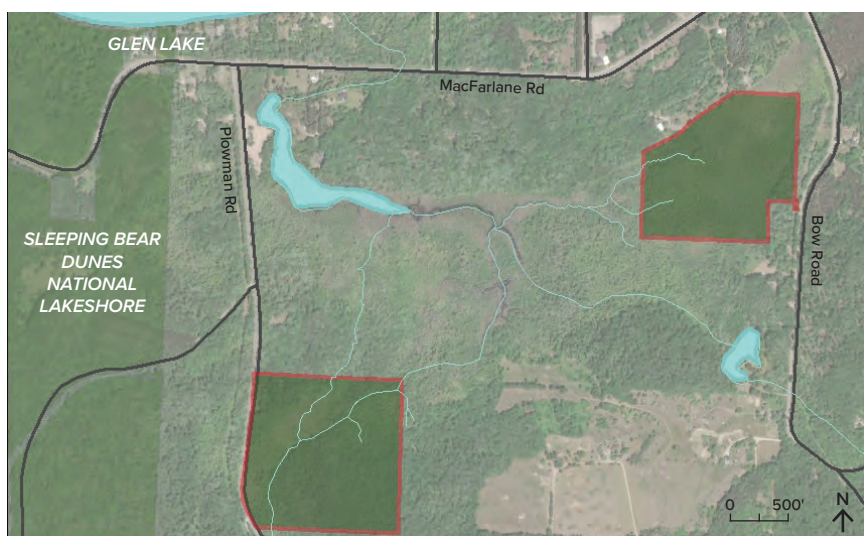
72 Acres – Preserved in 2011



Hatlem Creek is the prime tributary flowing into Glen Lake. The protected creek frontage (over ½ mile) and surrounding wetlands are an essential part of the Glen Lake Watershed. A rare bubbling marl spring, nearly 100 square feet in size, feeds one of the streams year around. The state and federally endangered Michigan monkey flower grows within the preserve because of the cool, flowing water. The preserve is a wildlife haven with red-shouldered hawks nesting in the closed canopy and trout and salmon spawning in the stream.

Features

- No formal trails: easy walk following an old logging road near the Plowman Road entrance
- Red shouldered hawk, wood thrush
- Michigan monkey flower, Canada anemone, Jack-in-the-pulpit, star flower, cardinal flower, variety of fern species
- Maple, yellow birch, white and black ash, ironwood, balsam poplar



Hatlem Creek Preserve is located about two miles west of Burdickville, off of Plowman Road. The east parcel is accessed through a private conservation easement off of Bow Road. Please respect private property.



Houdek Dunes Natural Area

370 Acres – Preserved in 1998



Houdek Dunes is a living example of the wonders of dune succession. This diverse Natural Area contains forested stabilized dunes, dunes that continue to shift and change, and even blowout dunes—green islands in a sea of sand. Pockets of unusually old white birches grow and pink lady’s slippers bloom in profusion along sandy trails. This property protects much of Houdek Creek, the largest tributary flowing into Lake Leelanau. Houdek Dunes Natural Area has expanded with additions over the years and includes a diverse array of wetland and upland ecosystems.

Features

- 3-mile trail system on sloped terrain
- Hike includes sandy trails and stairs
- Giant white birches, striped maple, aspen, tamarack
- Diverse array of wildflowers, including plentiful pink lady’s slipper
- Houdek Creek viewing platform
- Canopy birds: blackburnian warbler, scarlet tanager



Houdek Dunes Natural Area is located about five miles north of Leland along N. Manitou Trail (M-22).



Jeff Lamont Preserve

40 Acres – Preserved in 2008



Friends and family of Jeff Lamont came together to preserve this land in his memory. Jeff, whose family owns a cottage nearby, died of cancer just after his 21st birthday. He adored Leelanau County, and so coming together to create this preserve helped those who loved Jeff to remember and to heal. This forested wetland at the tip of the peninsula features a magical trail through maple, hemlock, and beech trees, dotted with pink lady's slippers and other wildflowers. A dense wetland thicket with ferns and six-foot-tall cattails provides important wildlife habitat.

Features

- Short mossy hemlock trail on flat terrain
- Tunnel of maple, hemlock, and beech trees
- Ferns covering the forest floor
- Diverse spring wildflowers, pink lady's slipper
- Canopy birds: scarlet tanager, black-throated blue warbler
- Wonderful trail for those with limited mobility



Jeff Lamont Preserve is located about three miles north of Northport along E. Christmas Cove Road.



Kehl Lake Natural Area

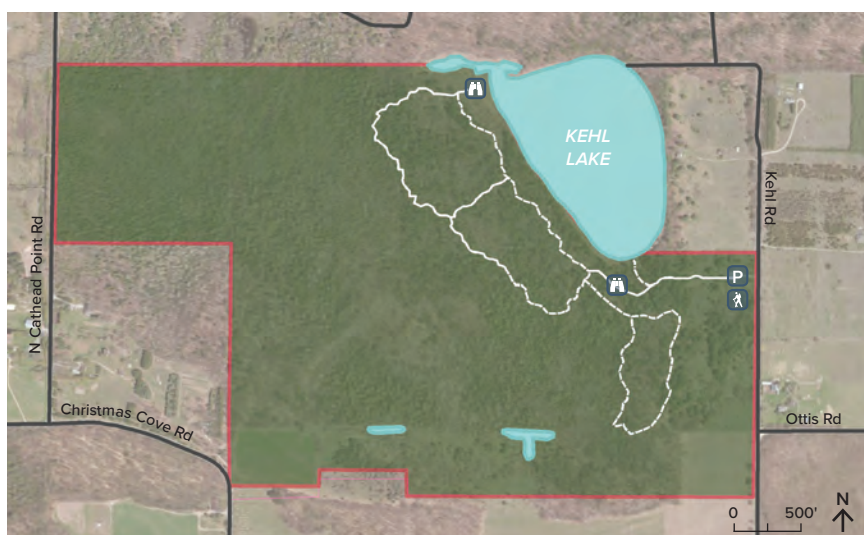
279 Acres – Preserved in 1992



Located between the Leelanau State Park and Cathead Bay is a pristine jewel known as Kehl Lake. Most of its shoreline is protected along with wetlands and a towering mixed forest. The old-growth hemlocks and white pines surrounding the lake provide food and cover for wildlife, particularly birds. The wetlands contribute to the water quality of both Kehl Lake and Lake Michigan. This Natural Area is part of a critical flyway for migrating birds and is also part of an extensive wildlife corridor of protected lands at the tip of the peninsula.

Features

- 2-mile trail network on moderately sloped terrain
- Majestic white pines, cardinal flowers bordering the lake
- Expansive forested wetland, bird viewing platform along marsh
- Blackburnian warbler, blue-headed vireo
- Land once used for Ottawa and Chippewa camps
- Fabulous ferns and spring ephemerals



Kehl Lake NA is located about 3.5 miles north of Northport. The parking lot is off Kehl Rd just north of Ottis Rd.



Krumwiede Forest Reserve

110 Acres – Preserved in 2007



A glacial moraine formed this high ridge between two scenic wooded and pastoral valleys. It is part of the magnificent hillside that is visible to travelers as they pass through the historic Port Oneida district. This is a high-quality working forest where sustainable forestry practices may be observed. Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is located less than a mile away. Krumwiede Reserve, in its natural, forested condition, contributes immensely to the ecological integrity of both Leelanau County and the National Lakeshore.

Features

- 1.9-mile trail on mild to steep terrain
- Northern hardwood forest
- Giant glacial boulders, wild raspberries, ephemeral pond, northern wet meadow
- Spring peepers, red-backed salamander
- Yellow-rumped warbler, bald eagle, black-throated green warbler, barred owl



Krumwiede Forest Reserve is located about seven miles east of Glen Arbor, off of Wheeler Road.



Leland Village Green

Preserved in 1990



An important element to the small-town feel of Leland, the Village Green provides a lovely oasis at the end of the shopping district. Visitors and residents read their mail, wander through the beautiful native plant gardens, or simply take a moment to relax in this picturesque little village. A cobblestone walkway leads to our “Leelanau Preservers” tile wall. The tiles represent donations for land preservation made by families and individuals over the years. Each Memorial Day Weekend, the Wildflower Rescue Committee holds a native plant sale at the Village Green.

Features

- Cobblestone walkway leads to Leelanau Preservers tile wall
- Native wildflowers planted by Wildflower Rescue Committee
- Native plant sale held every Memorial Day Weekend



The Leland Village Green is located at the corner of Main Street and Pearl Street in the Village of Leland.



Lighthouse West Natural Area

42 Acres – Preserved in 2004



The tip of the peninsula jutting out into Lake Michigan is the last stop for migrating birds to rest and feed before crossing the big water to the Upper Peninsula. With its 642 feet of cobble shoreline, Lighthouse West Natural Area is part of an extensive array of protected lands at the “tip.” Together with the Leelanau State Park and a number of private conservation easements, over 2,000 feet of shoreline and over 600 acres form a critical wildlife corridor. This Natural Area was made possible with help from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Features

- 1.2-mile trail network on flat terrain; 800-foot rigorous trail and stairs down a steep bluff to Lake Michigan beach
- Over 125 species of birds: wood warblers, scarlet tanager, indigo bunting, raptors, waterfowl, bluebirds
- Ancient lake levels evident, giant boulders, dramatic example of old field/farm succession



Lighthouse West Natural Area is located about eight miles north of Northport along Lighthouse Point Road (CR-629) and Cathead Bay Drive.



Narrows Natural Area

71 Acres – Preserved in 2001



The iconic wetland that joins North and South Lake Leelanau is a beloved county landmark, seen from the bridge on M-204 and by boaters who traverse the channel. It is one of the finest remaining emergent wetland complexes on the lake; three parcels were protected over a 10-year period including the Leugers Preserve. Once slated to be a marina, this area provides abundant habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. The Lake Leelanau Lake Association played an important role in its preservation.

Features

- No trail system, best viewed by boat
- 2,350 feet of protected shoreline
- Wetland birds, rare plants, and other unique wildlife
- Over 120 plant species identified in this extraordinary wetland complex
- Site of historic lumber mill



Narrows Natural Area is visible from the heart of the village of Lake Leelanau, north of the Narrows Bridge.



Palmer Woods Forest Reserve

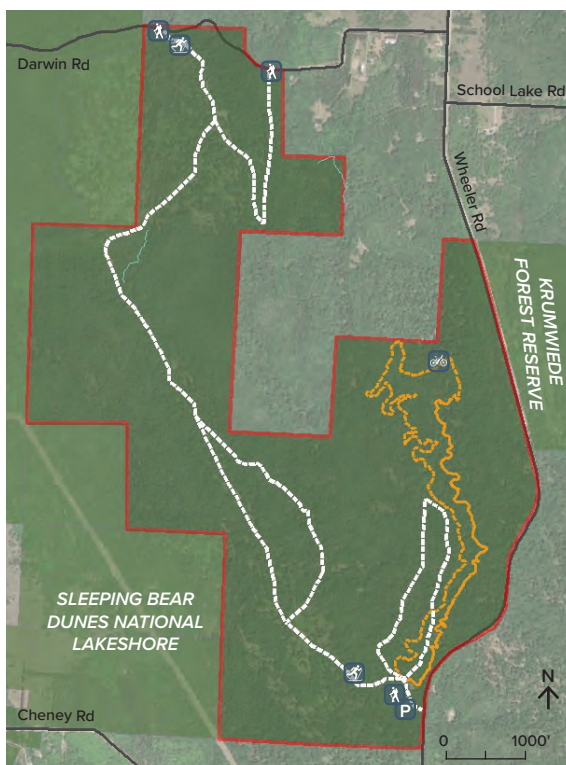
721 Acres – Preserved in 2016



Nearly 600 donors from all across Leelanau and the country stepped up to help permanently conserve this beautiful property. The Palmer Woods Forest Reserve contains miles and miles of trails through rolling hills and a contiguous hardwood forest that stretches over two miles north to south. It is located just over a mile from Big Glen Lake and just beyond the bluff that marks the western edge of Miller Hill. It's a great place to spend the day hiking, biking, or skiing and to experience the rewards of being outdoors in Leelanau in all seasons.

Features

- 7.4 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails on varied terrain
- Shares a 2.4 mile border with Sleeping Bear Dunes N.L.
- The elevation reaches 1070ft
- Predominantly a beech–sugar maple forest, with 34 species of trees in total
- Black bear, coyote, bobcat
- Two deer exclosures totaling 35 acres



The Palmer Woods Forest Reserve parking lot is located along Wheeler Road near Port Oneida. Photo by Maia Hausler.



Swanson Preserve

83 Acres – Preserved in 2010



The Swanson Preserve protects 2,000 feet of Little Traverse Lake shoreline and two distinct wetland communities, critical to the health of the lake and to wildlife and plants. The preserve is one of our most ecologically diverse, with 207 documented plant species, including the uncommon cut-leaved water parsnip (*Berula erecta*). An easy loop trail through cedar forest utilizes boardwalks to cross over two cold groundwater streams and gives access to the lakefront. The 13-acre farmstead, known as “Sonny’s Farm” is now a privately-owned conservation easement.

Features

- .4-mile boardwalk constructed from invasive black locust trees
- Towering white pines, cedar swamp
- Showy and yellow Lady Slippers, rare fern species
- River otters along wooded shoreline
- Marsh birds, abundant waterfowl
- “Sonny’s Farm” is protected with a conservation easement and owned by a local farmer



Swanson Preserve is located at the base of Sugar Loaf Mountain Road, along M-22.



Teichner Preserve

43 Acres – Preserved in 1996



The first 20 acres of this Preserve was created when Martha Teichner donated beloved family lands to honor her parents, Hans and Miriam. The Preserve has since doubled in size and includes 200 feet of natural shoreline on Lime Lake, framed by mature cedars. A boardwalk traverses the fragile forested wetland and offers views of a vibrant and healthy ecosystem. Come spring, the sounds of birds, frogs and trees creaking in the wind fill the air, while wildflowers can be viewed from the boardwalk. Tamarack, elm and a giant surviving American chestnut tree also call Teichner home.

Features

- Boardwalk over wetlands, 200 feet of natural shoreline
- Wild rose, white pussy toes, blue flag iris, cardinal flowers
- Fern species: rattlesnake, interrupted, and maidenhair
- Black and white ash, red and sugar maple, cottonwood
- Conifers such as balsam fir, hemlock and tall, lacy tamarack



Teichner Preserve is located about four miles north of Maple City, along S. Lime Lake Road.



Whaleback Natural Area

40 Acres – Preserved in 1996



This 10,000-year-old glacial wonder near Leland is an iconic landmark that helps to define our unique Lake Michigan coastline. Whaleback's fragile bluff rises 300 feet and can be seen from many vantage points in Leelanau County. A viewing platform offers fantastic views of the Manitou Passage—especially at sunset. Over 1,200 feet of shoreline is protected here. Huge oak trees and mature hemlocks create a cathedral-like canopy that shelters bald eagles, and the varied terrain hosts unusual plants like the thimbleberry, which is extremely uncommon in this region.

Features

- 1-mile trail over hilly, wooded terrain
- Spectacular views of Lake Michigan
- Cathedral-like forest canopy, thimbleberry patch
- Abundant spring wildflowers, Jack-in-the-pulpit
- Scarlet tanager, black-throated blue warbler, American redstart



Whaleback Natural Area is located about one-and-a-half miles south of Leland off of M-22.



Partnership Projects



Hall Beach – Preserved in 1996

Hall Beach, adjacent to “Van’s Beach,” lies at the scenic south breakwall of Leland’s harbor. The Leelanau Conservancy and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund provided over 90 percent of the funding for the purchase of this beautiful Lake Michigan beach, which is now owned by Leland Township.

Leelanau State Park Addition – Preserved in 2008

The Leelanau State Park was expanded by 51 acres and 1,400 feet of shoreline when the Leelanau Conservancy helped to secure support from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and transfer this spectacular property to the Park. The State Park addition and its beautiful shoreline are adjacent to the campground on Lighthouse Point.

Nedows Bay – Preserved in 1998

In 1998 the Leelanau Conservancy assisted Leland Township in a project that doubled the size of Bartholomew Park (also known as Nedows Bay). This popular park and swimming area on Lake Leelanau is located in Leland at the end of Pearl Street. We received a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund that helped to add 163 feet of Lake Leelanau frontage to this park, which now is owned and managed by Leland Township.

Suttons Bay 45th Parallel Park – Preserved in 2007

In 2007, the Leelanau Conservancy pitched in to help complete Suttons Bay Township’s new 45th Parallel Park, located north of Suttons Bay along M-22. We provided part of the funding for this park, which is jointly owned by Suttons Bay Township and the Michigan Department of Transportation. It includes 435 feet of frontage on the bay, a roadside pull-off area on M-22, and 46 acres that will one day feature hiking trails and scenic overlooks.

Crystal River – (See next page)



Partnership Projects Continued

Crystal River – Preserved in 2004



The Crystal River meanders between Glen Lake and Lake Michigan and was preserved in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SBDNL). Over a several-year period, the Conservancy worked with multiple parties and secured funding to preserve this sensitive dune and swale topography. The preserved land includes a mile of shoreline recognized as globally rare habitat. In 2003, the Conservancy also purchased the fragile seven-acre oxbow portion of the river and transferred it to Glen Arbor Township protected with a conservation easement. This area is now owned and managed by SBDNL.

Features

- No trail system; best viewed from a canoe or kayak
- Wood ducks, waterfowl, playful otter, spawning salmon
- Purple-fringed orchid, ferns, red cardinal flower
- Visit the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore or Visitors Bureau websites for recreational information



Best Seen on a Guided Hike

These Leelanau Conservancy properties are ecologically sensitive or difficult to find. We manage these Preserves primarily to protect their natural features and they do not have trail systems. Visiting these Preserves with one of our docents or staff members is the best way to experience these unique places.







Belanger Creek Preserve

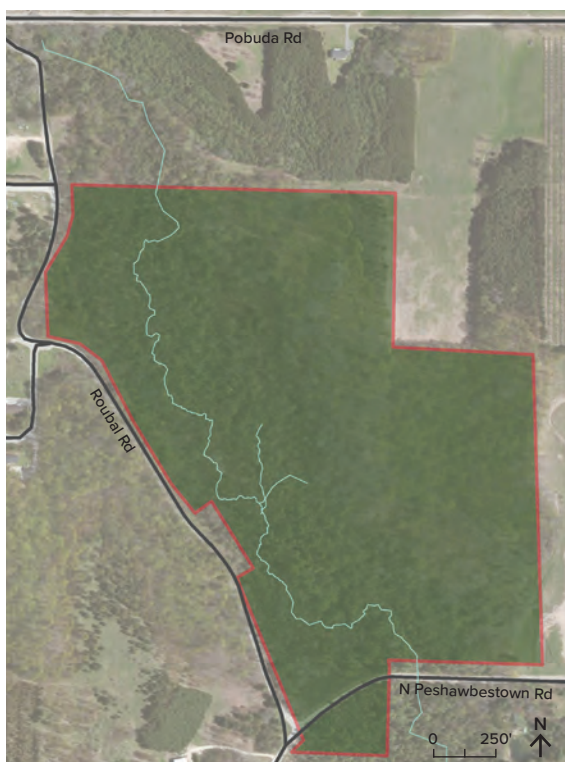
68 Acres – Preserved in 1992



A Belanger Creek floristic survey documented an astounding 170 species at this Preserve, including 30 wildflowers. In spring, the steep hillsides are full of trillium, and sunny marsh marigolds line over a half-mile of protected stream frontage. This Preserve includes a rich conifer swamp with giant cedars, an old farming field, and a beech–sugar maple–hemlock forest with songbirds, raptors, fox and deer. Six seeps and eleven springs feed into Belanger Creek. The surrounding 5,600 acres all drain into the stream, a crucial part of the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed. A boardwalk along Peshawbestown Rd. owned by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians provides amazing views of wetlands and spring wildflowers.

Features

- No trail system, dense wetland
- Brown and brook trout in Belanger Creek
- Hemlock, cedar, white pine, yellow birches, aspen, ironwood
- Yellow lady's slipper, goldthread, marsh marigolds, wild leeks
- Monarch butterfly habitat
- Indigo bunting, barred owl, eagle sightings



Belanger Creek Preserve is located about two-and-a-half miles south of Omena along Roubal Road and N. Peshawbestown Road.



Frazier-Freeland Natural Area

13 Acres – Preserved in 2001



Frazier-Freeland Preserve protects the wetlands and water of Weaver Creek, an important stream that flows into Grand Traverse Bay near Omena. Wildlife and numerous bird species make their homes in this Preserve. Ross and Marilyn Smith donated this land to the Conservancy. Ross recalls, “I remember riding on a hay wagon, pulled by draft horses when this property was used as a hayfield. It subsequently became a strawberry field and then went fallow. Now Mother Nature has taken over and native grasses have established themselves again.”

Features

- No trail system
- Dense thicket makes it largely inaccessible
- Haven for deer and other wildlife
- The Preserve is part of a large corridor of protected lands near Omena. Among them, the Putnam Farm and Saving Birds Thru Habitat's Charter Sanctuary.



Frazier-Freeland Preserve is located about one mile south of Omena, off of Freeland Road.



Mebert Creek-Greeno Preserves

217 Acres – Preserved in 1993

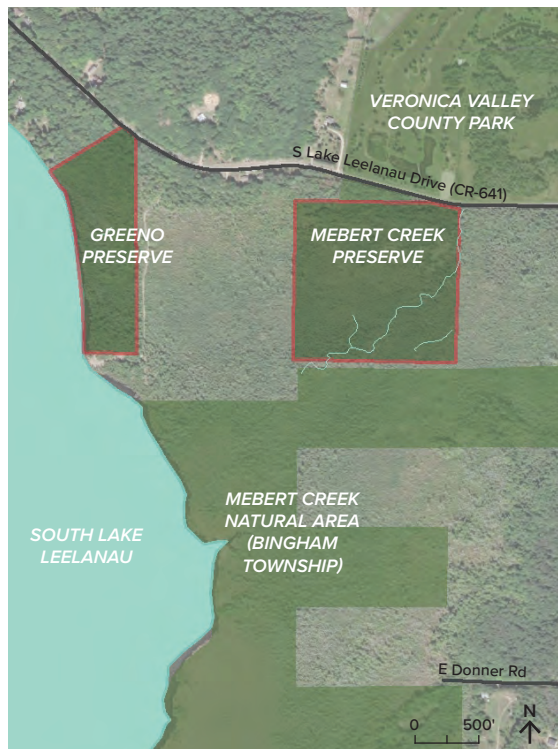


This complex of protected lands takes in four projects that happened over a 21- year period. We purchased the largest parcel (156 acres) and then helped Bingham Township to acquire it with help from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (see map). Later, John Greeno donated 21 acres. In 2015 we acquired 40 acres located across from Veronica Valley known as the Mebert Creek Preserve. The sum total provides a tapestry of wetland habitat and an undisturbed haven for rare and threatened plants. Here, Mebert Creek flows into Lake Leelanau and the area is one of the region's most diverse wetland complexes, with over a mile of shoreline on Lake Leelanau. It is a critical filter for excess nutrients and protects water quality of the lake.

(Properties outlined in red are owned by the Leelanau Conservancy.)

Features

- No trail system; best seen from the water
- Extremely dense wetland, very difficult to navigate
- Great diversity of trees: birch, ash, red maple, basswood, white pine, tamarack, cedar
- Ferns, wild roses, yellow lady slippers
- Otter, bobcat, other wetland wildlife



Mebert Creek - Greeno Preserve is located about five miles south of the village of Lake Leelanau, off of S. Lake Leelanau Drive (CR-641).

Fragile Ecosystems with Limited Access

Some Preserves are better left undisturbed because they contain fragile plants, animals, or landscapes. We're protecting these places from human impact, and therefore limited access is allowed.







GULL ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARY

PRESERVED 1995



Gull Island Preserve

7 Acres – Preserved in 1995



Gull Island, off the coast of Northport, is preserved as a sanctuary for thousands of herring gulls, whose populations have declined in the last 25 years. Herring gulls are different from the more common ring-billed gulls in our region. Herring gulls, which nest on Gull Island from April to June, mate for life and will abandon their nests at the slightest disturbance. In a long term study conducted on Gull Island, banded birds have returned for as many as 24 years. A crumbling stone cottage on Gull island, once known as Bellows Island, is a part of Northport's history.

Features

- Visiting Gull Island is highly discouraged during shorebird nesting season (March-July).
- Sanctuary for herring gull colony; long-term research site
- Blue-winged teal, mute swan, cormorant, Caspian tern, red-breasted merganser





Soper Natural Area

80 Acres – Preserved in 1991



Edna Soper donated 42 acres in honor of her late husband James to ensure the survival of lady's slippers on this beautiful parcel of land. In 2008, 38 acres were added to the Soper Natural Area. The Leelanau Conservancy is actively managing this property to help restore the showy lady's slipper population, which declined dramatically in the 1990s due to fluctuations in the water table. Our efforts to ensure the survival of this treasured summer beauty are ongoing and so we ask visitors to take extra care if venturing into the dense wetland portion of this Natural Area.

Features

- No trail system
- Limited access due to careful wildflower management
- Haven for wildflowers: twinflower, toothwort, trailing arbutus
- Red maple, birch, willow, blistery-barked balsam fir





Acknowledgments



Natural Areas Guide Supporters

Thank You

- Ken Scott, who took the beautiful photographs in this guide (unless otherwise noted)
- Docents for leading hikes at our Natural Areas and Preserves
- Stewardship volunteers for helping to maintain our Natural Areas, Preserves, and Forest Reserves
- Trail Stewards for monitoring our trails all year round
- Board members and volunteers for sharing expertise and helping to carry out programs
- All our generous members and supporters for helping to ensure the beauty and ecological integrity of Leelanau County



Left: Cardinal flowers at Teichner Preserve. Above: Old orchard at Chippewa Run Natural Area.

The Leelanau Conservancy

There's no place
like *Leelanau*.

Since 1988, the Leelanau Conservancy has worked to preserve the natural beauty, ecological integrity, and working farms of the Leelanau Peninsula. We have preserved nearly 14,000 acres, including privately owned land, family farms and the 26 Natural Areas and Preserves featured in this guide. Recognized as one of the nation's leading land trusts, the Leelanau Conservancy was among the first in the country to become accredited through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. With the support of our dedicated members and volunteers, we serve as a conduit for thousands of people who love Leelanau County and want to preserve this special place for future generations.



The Leelanau Conservancy
105 N. First Street, P.O. Box 1007
Leland, MI 49654
231.256.9665
www.leelanauconservancy.org

