

NATURE GUIDE

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve diverse despite small size

BY SARAH HENRY
Record-Eagle staff writer

You don't have to be a Boy Scout to enjoy the great outdoors, especially in northern Lower Michigan, where the wilderness is abundant.

Educational and entertaining experiences await those who venture to Thorne Swift Nature

Preserve in Harbor Springs, according to John Riggs, resident manager.

Many woodland creatures roam the spacious 30 acres of land — some of the cuddly, fuzzy variety, but also those with sharp teeth and quills.

Observant hikers might catch a glimpse of a hawk or eagle silently gliding

above the treetops or encounter a porcupine or fox rustling in the bushes.

"There's a lot of wildlife here," Riggs said. "I think the coolest ones are the weasels. One was really neat because it tried to run up one of our naturalists' legs."

Riggs said the weasel was irritated because the naturalist surprised it and caused it to drop the chipmunk it was carrying.

"I heard a scream and thought it was a bear," he said.

Besides close encounters with local wildlife, Thorne Swift offers several educational programs for both children and adults, Riggs said.

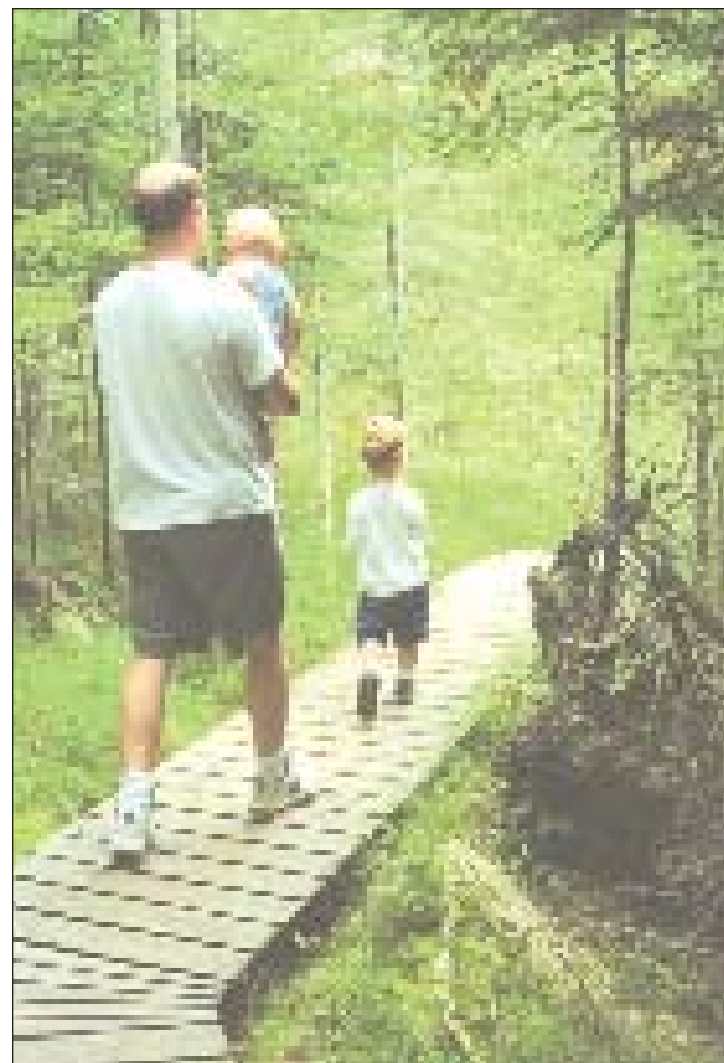
Programs for adults might include visits around the campfire with Native American storytellers, making birch bark crafts or classes that focus on a specific type of animal.

"Raptor programs are neat because the fellow that does it has the bird sit on his arm and takes it hunting with him," Riggs said.

Children have the opportunity to explore the dunes bordering Little Traverse Bay and learn about beach ecology, pond ecosystems, plant life and animals.

"The cool thing about it is it's so diverse in its ecosystems," Riggs said. "It's only 30 acres, but there's so much in such a small area."

The preserve harbors a variety of habitats, including a cedar swamp, dry forest, a pond, streams



and a public swimming area on Little Traverse Bay.

Thorne Swift became a nature preserve after a West Traverse Township resident learned the land was pegged for development in 1981. She bought the land and donated it to the Little Traverse Conservancy, according to Riggs.

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve is open from 10 a.m. until a half-hour after sunset seven days a week through Labor Day. Admission is \$3 per carload, excluding residents of West Traverse Township and members of Little Traverse Conservancy.

Thorne Swift: 526-6401, www.landtrust.org/NaturePreserves/ThorneSwiftInfo.htm



Record-Eagle file photos

Although Thorne Swift Nature Preserve is only 30 acres, it features diverse ecosystems, including a cedar swamp, a dry forest, a pond, streams and a public swimming area on Little Traverse Bay.

Camp Pet-O-Se-Ga "On Beautiful Pickerel Lake"



- Cabin Rental
- Recreation Facility
- Nature Trails
- Trout Stream
- 2 Playground Facilities
- Picnic Area
- 61 Campsites, 45 w/water
- Swimming Beach
- Grills
- Dump Station
- Horses Welcome
- Restroom & Shower

29 New Sites 50 AMP w/water

STAY WITH US FOR
SUMMER FUN!

— CAMPGROUND OFFICE —
10900 Camp Petosega Road
Alanson, MI 49706
(231) 347-6536