

Nature preserves

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one-quarter mile and you will see the preserve right ahead of you. There is a small parking area marked by a kiosk and gate. One-quarter mile of the trail is handicap accessible from this point. There is a 1.7 mile loop trail and boardwalk around the preserve.

Sagaser Nature Preserve (20 acres) From Traverse City, take U.S. 31 south toward Beulah. Just before Beulah, turn right (west) on Crystal Dr. (County Rd. 704), which follows the northern shore of Crystal Lake. Approximately 1.5 miles along 704, turn right (northeast) on Nichols Rd. (before Warren Rd.). Go to the end of Nichols Rd. and park at the side of the road here. The Sagaser preserve spans approximately one mile back up the north side of Nichols Rd. The gate at the end of Nichols Rd. marks private property and is the northernmost boundary of the preserve. There are no trails at this preserve.

Seven Bridges (314 acres) From Traverse City, take U.S. 31 north to Acme. In Acme, take M-72 east to Hill Rd. and go left. Take Hill Rd. to Rapid City Rd. Turn left on Rapid City Rd. and continue to the town of Rapid City. In town, turn right on Valley Rd. Follow Valley Rd. approximately three miles. The parking area for the natural area is located on

the left-hand side, one-half mile past Underhill Rd. From Kalkaska, take M-72 west 1.5 miles to Valley Rd. Turn right (north) on Valley Rd. and go approximately seven miles. The parking is located on the right-hand side, 1.5 miles north of Dundas Rd. There are currently two pathways at this preserve. One leads the visitor through the bridges area to a meadow. The other leads to the top of Rickers Mountain on the west-side of Valley Rd.

St. Clair Lake: Six Mile Lake Natural Area (191 acres) A one hour drive from Traverse City. To get there, take U.S. 31 N. to Atwood. In Atwood, turn right (east) on C-48. Follow C-48, then C-65 to Ellsworth. In Ellsworth, take C-48 east approximately two miles to South Arm Township Park and a small parking area on the right (south) side of the road. There is a rustic boat launch on the river. Visitors can follow a wood-chipped trail to a boardwalk that overlooks St. Clair Lake. This one mile stretch of undeveloped shoreline is also excellent for canoeing.

Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area (3,300 acres) To get to the SLWA main entrance from Traverse City, take U.S. 31 north to Acme. In Acme turn right on M-72. Take M-72 east approximately eight miles to Hill Rd. and go left. Follow Hill Rd. to Rapid City Rd. Turn left on Rapid City Rd., go 2.3 miles and look for the sign and parking

area on the left-hand side. You may also visit SLWA by boat. To get to the closest public launch site, take M-72 east from Acme. Turn left on Baggs Rd. At the end of Baggs Rd. turn left on Lakeside Terrace. There are four miles of trails.

South Elk Lake Wetland Nature Preserve (30 acres) With 750 feet of frontage on the southeast shore of Elk Lake, this preserve was established to protect the water quality and shoreline of the lake. No trails or improvements are planned for this ecologically sensitive area. This preserve is accessible by boat only. Whitewater Township Park is the closest public boat launch. To get to Whitewater Township Park from Traverse City, take U.S. 31 N. to Acme. In Acme, turn right (east) on M-72. Take M-72 to Williamsburg and turn left on Elk Lake Rd. (County Rd. 605). Follow Elk Lake Rd. to Park Rd. and turn right. The park and boat launch are at the end of Park Rd.

South Island Nature Preserve (14 acres) Accessible by boat only. Crescent Shores is the closest public boat launch. To get there from Traverse City, take Front St. west (which becomes North Long Lake Rd.). Follow North Long Lake Rd. around the north end of the lake past Gilbert Park beach. Keep going straight on N. Long Lake Rd., which will turn into W. Long Lake Rd. (do not turn right to go to Lake Ann). Follow W. Long Lake Rd. and turn left on Crescent Shores Rd. South Island is located southeast of the boat launch. Getting to South Island by canoe takes approximately 15 minutes. A self-guided nature walk can be followed in a loop trail, which is less than a mile long.

Trapp Farm Nature Preserve (124 acres) Located just a short distance from downtown Beulah. To reach the main entrance from Traverse City, take U.S. 31 S. approximately 32 miles to Beulah. Just past the Cherry Hut, turn left on Narrow Gauge Rd. Follow the road less than one-quarter mile and look for the parking lot on the left. To get to the east entrance, turn left off of U.S. 31 S. onto Eldridge Rd as you are heading down the hill into Beulah. one-quarter mile down Eldridge Rd. there is an access to the preserve on the right. There is a boardwalk and trail that runs between the main entrance and the east entrance.

Torch Bay Natural Area (39 acres) From Traverse City, take U.S. 31 N. 10 miles north of Elk

Rapids turn left (west) on Traverse Bay Rd. (the dirt road directly across from Torch Crest Village.) The preserve is located at the end of the road, on the right. There is a small parking lot and a short trail loop.

Upper Herring Lake Nature Preserve (163 acres) Approximately five miles south of the town of Elberta. To get there from Traverse City, take U.S. 31 S. to Beulah/Benzonia.

Just south of Benzonia, turn right (west) on Grace Rd. (County Rd. 606). Follow Grace Rd. until you hit M-22. Turn south on M-22 and continue for a few miles. About one mile past Herron Rd., you will see the sign for the preserve on your left (next to an old schoolhouse). Park just off of M-22 near the preserve sign. There is a long two-track trail to a boardwalk. The boardwalk goes through a marsh to several ponds.

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Many of northern Lower Michigan's nature preserves feature waterfront walks and idyllic views.