

GRASS BAY PRESERVE

An Unfolding Discovery

**LOCATION:**

Northern Lower Peninsula



SIZE: 915 acres

**TRAIL LENGTH:**

1.0 mile out-and-back



DIFFICULTY: Easy

**BECOME A COMMUNITY SCIENTIST:**

Help us keep track of the species at our preserves by using iNaturalist to record your observations. Learn more at [nature.org/miexplore](https://www.nature.org/miexplore).



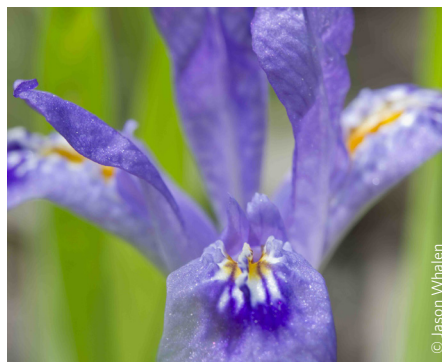
The diverse landscape of the Grass Bay Preserve was created over thousands of years as the waters of the Great Lakes slowly receded, leaving behind the sandy dunes and wetlands you can see today. As you hike down the trail toward the beach, you are also descending through history! © Jason Whalen

Surround yourself in Michigan's natural diversity.

The Grass Bay Preserve is home to 12 of Michigan's 13 native conifers and 12 orchid species, as well as unique wetland and dune species such as the Lake Huron tansy, easily identified by its round, yellow flower heads. All told, more than 300 plant species can be found on the preserve.

The preserve is also a paradise for a multitude of migratory birds. The songs of neotropical migrants such as the black-throated blue warbler and the prairie warbler can be heard throughout the preserve in the spring and fall. Other migratory species, such as the monarch butterfly, can also be found here in the summer.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) acquired the first part of Grass Bay Preserve with the help of the Federated Garden Clubs of Michigan in 1980. Over time, we expanded it to its current size. As a result, the preserve now extends along two miles of Great Lakes shoreline. After leading visitors through the varied landscape of forest, coniferous swamp, interdunal wetland and coastal fen, the preserve trail ends on the beach, revealing beautiful views of Lake Huron.

**YOU SHOULD VISIT IF...**

You love spotting rare species! Three species of wildflowers found nowhere but the Great Lakes region all thrive at Grass Bay—the diminutive purple or white dwarf lake iris (pictured above), Pitcher's thistle and Houghton's goldenrod. The Lake Huron locust is a small grasshopper also unique to this region, which depends on undisturbed dune habitats.

Other plant and wildlife species to watch for include:

- Purple fringed orchid
- Marsh fern
- Eastern teaberry
- American beech
- Canada mayflower
- Northern water snake
- Narrow-leaved sundew
- Bald eagle

PURPLE FRINGED ORCHID**EASTERN TEABERRY****PITCHER'S THISTLE**

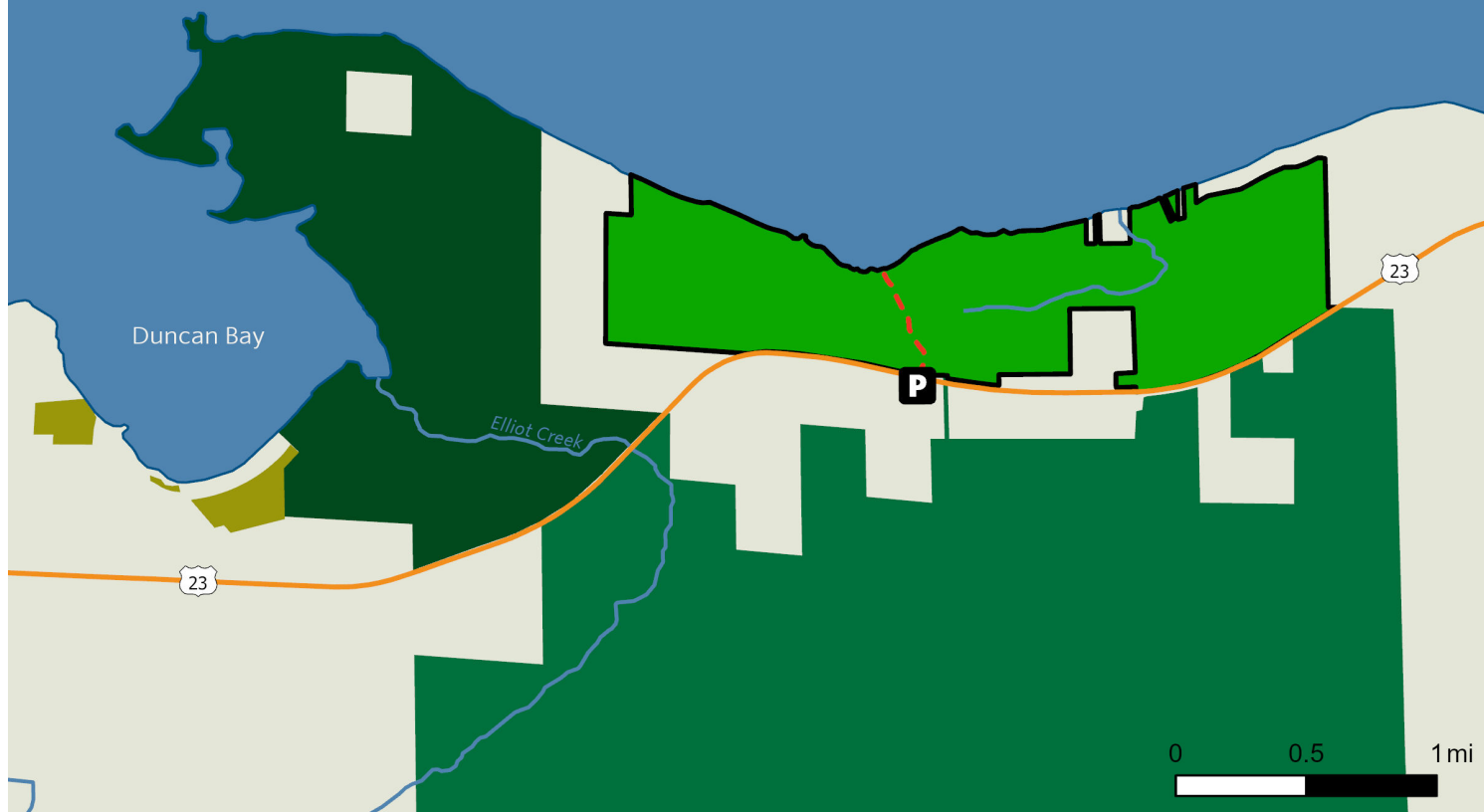
GRASS BAY PRESERVE



Cheboygan
5 miles



LAKE HURON



LEGEND

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Grass Bay Preserve | Atlanta State Forest Area | Preserve Trail (0.5 mi) |
| Little Traverse Conservancy | Cheboygan State Park | Roadside Parking |

HOW TO GET THERE

Directions from Cheboygan, MI: Head east on US-23 S for 5.4 miles. The trailhead is located on the north (left) side of US-23, approximately 0.2 miles past Thirsty's Bar and Grill. Look for the green metal posts marking the trailhead. *Note: There is no on-site parking lot available at this location. Exercise caution if you choose to park along the roadside.*

MAKE TODAY A NATURE DAY!

Nearby points of interest include:

- Cheboygan State Park, 3 mi: michigan.gov/dnr
- Duncan Bay Nature Preserve, 5 mi: landtrust.org
- Thomson's Harbor State Park, 49 mi: michigan.gov/dnr
- Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, 73 mi: thunderbay.noaa.gov
- Alpena Township Nature Preserve, 77 mi: alpenatownship.com
- Lodging, food and more: cheboygan.com and visitalpena.com

TIPS FOR A GREAT VISIT

- The Grass Bay Preserve is open year-round. Spring and fall are the two best seasons to spot migratory birds and wildflowers on the preserve.
- Expect narrow and uneven terrain on the trail.
- If you visit during the deer hunting season (**early September to early January**), wear **bright colors and exercise caution**. All hunters must have a TNC permit and state license.
- Please leave pets at home.
- No swimming, camping or fires permitted.
- Please follow the rules posted at the preserve and online at nature.org/miexplore.

Thank you for protecting the land, water and wildlife of this special place!