

MAXTON PLAINS PRESERVE AT DRUMMOND ISLAND

A Rare and Ancient Landscape



LOCATION:

Eastern Upper Peninsula



SIZE: 1,220 acres



TRAILS: Due to the fragile nature of this landscape, there are no trails on the preserve. You can walk along the road, view interpretive signage, or hike at nearby trails and beaches.



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.



The Maxton Plains Preserve is open year-round. Mid-June is the best time to see the pale-rose blooms of prairie smoke spread throughout the alvar. © Chris Cantway/TNC

Tread lightly, these grasslands are easily disturbed! Here on Drummond Island, visitors can find some of the world's best examples of a rare habitat type called alvar. More than 10,000 years ago, glaciers scraped the limestone bedrock bare, leaving behind a harsh terrain where only a thin, delicate layer of soil, grasses and other hardy plants developed over time. Stretches of the exposed limestone "pavement"—400 million years old—are still visible in some parts of the preserve.

In this ancient landscape, you can find plants that grow in both the arctic tundra and the Great Plains prairies, as well as eight Michigan state-rare plants. Among these are prairie smoke, a distinctive spring blossom, and Houghton's goldenrod, which blooms just as the prairie grasses turn gold in the late summer sun.

Established by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 1984, the Maxton Plains Preserve is embedded among 2,017 acres of state-protected land and encompasses approximately three miles of shoreline, including spectacular bedrock beaches at Potagannissing Bay.



Alvar can appear smooth like pavement, or pitted and bumpy. © Daniel Staudacher

YOU SHOULD VISIT IF...

You love stargazing. Drummond Island is one of the best places in Michigan to see the night sky, with some of the best stargazing and northern lights viewing in the world. The sunsets here are also not to be missed!

The island attracts as many as 160 species of birds, including some rare species. Plants and animals to look for on your visit include:

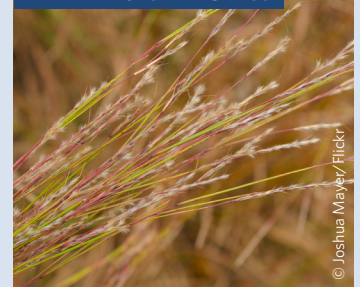
- Upland sandpiper
- Osprey
- Sharp-tailed grouse
- Quaking aspen
- White cedar
- Little bluestem grass
- Prairie dropseed grass

UPLAND SANDPIPER



© Chris Helzer

LITTLE BLUESTEM GRASS



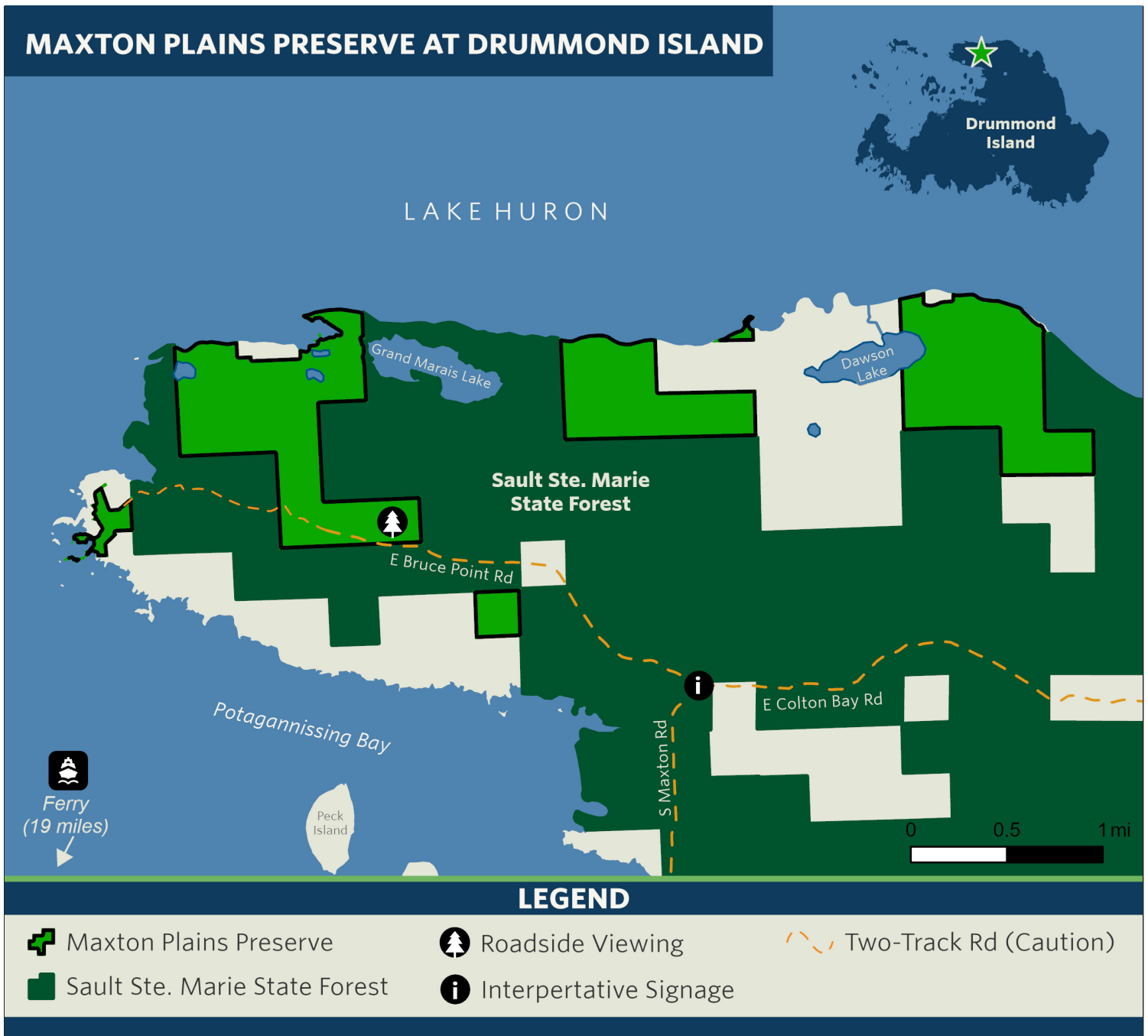
© Joshua Mayer/Flickr

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE



© Chris Helzer

MAXTON PLAINS PRESERVE AT DRUMMOND ISLAND



HOW TO GET THERE

Directions from DeTour, MI: Take the Drummond Island Ferry located at the end of M-134 in DeTour (car/passenger service) to Drummond Island. Once on the island, take M-134 east for 10 miles (it turns into East Johnswood Road), then turn north (left) on South Maxton Cross Road and follow it until it ends. Turn east (right) on South Maxton Road, and follow it for 8 miles (the road makes a sharp turn north at one point) to a fork in the road, where it intersects with E Bruce Point Rd and E Colton Bay Rd. Here, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources's Maxton Plains Natural Area has several signs posted with information about alvar. TNC's preserve is another two miles to the northwest on E Bruce Point Road. Park alongside the road near the TNC sign. The preserve lies on either side of the road.

MAKE TODAY A NATURE DAY!

Nearby points of interest include:

- Clyde and Martha Williams Nature Preserve, 9 mi: landtrust.org
- Harbor Island National Wildlife Refuge, 10 mi (to nearest boat launch): fws.gov
- Carl A. Gerstacker Nature Preserve at Dudley Bay, 32 mi (via ferry): nature.org/miexplore
- John Arthur Woollam Preserve, 38 mi (via ferry): nature.org/miexplore
- Lodging, food and more: visitdrummondisland.com or lescheneaux.net

TIPS FOR A GREAT VISIT

- There are no trails on the preserve, due to its sensitive habitats. Please enjoy the view from the road but avoid walking on exposed soil as it is easily compacted. There are many nearby beaches and hiking trails on Drummond Island.
- Insect repellent and sun protection are recommended in the summer.
- If you visit during the deer hunting season (early September – early January), wear bright colors and exercise caution. All hunters must have a TNC permit and state license.
- Please leave pets at home.
- No camping or fires permitted.
- No removal of plants, rocks or animals is allowed.
- Please follow the rules posted at the preserve and online at nature.org/miexplore. Thank you!