

WILDERNESS LAKES RESERVE

Resilient and Connected

The Nature
Conservancy 
Michigan



LOCATION:

Western Upper
Peninsula



SIZE: 11,025 acres



TRAIL LENGTH: 4.5 miles out-and-back (on the North Country Trail)



DIFFICULTY: Moderate



BECOME A COMMUNITY SCIENTIST:

Identify, record and share the species you encounter with a community of scientists and naturalists. Learn more at [nature.org/miexplore](https://www.nature.org/miexplore).



© Jason Whalen

Wilderness Lakes Reserve sits amid some of the largest remaining unbroken swaths of hardwood forest in North America.

It's where the moose and gray wolf roam freely.

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) Wilderness Lakes Reserve is part of a growing network of connected protected lands in Michigan's remote Michigamme Highlands. In addition to preserving spectacular forests, lush wetlands and glacial lakes, this provides wildlife with a vast area where they can move and thrive in a changing climate.

After establishing the reserve in 2018, TNC nearly doubled its size in 2021, bringing the total protected acreage to 11,025 acres (and more than 19,000 connected acres when combined with the adjacent Craig Lake State Park). TNC manages Wilderness Lakes as a Forest Reserve, implementing sustainable forestry practices that build forest health and resilience to improve biodiversity.

This rich and varied landscape is important for its freshwater, including dozens of lakes. The largest of these, Loon Lake, is one mile long and offers stunning vistas on a summer's day. Also protected here are the headwaters of the Peshekee and Sturgeon Rivers, which flow into Lake Michigan and Lake Superior respectively.

The reserve's cedar swamp wetlands harbor a remarkable diversity of plant species, including blueberries, native honeysuckles, ferns and orchids. In the spring and fall, listen for the songs of migratory warblers that stop here to rest and find food on their annual journeys.



© Dietrich Ludwig

*TNC is deeply grateful to everyone who made the protection of the Wilderness Lakes Reserve possible, including **Judy & John L. Weidt, the J.A. Woollam Foundation, the Carls Foundation, John Leonard & Rita Jain, Carol & Peter Walters** and many others.*

YOU SHOULD VISIT IF...

You love Michigan at its most wild! Wilderness Lakes Reserve's location means visitors are unlikely to encounter many others on the trail—other people, that is. Rare and threatened animal species, including northern goshawk, eastern gray wolf, moose, bobcat and loon, all find refuge in these highlands.

Other plants and wildlife to look for include:

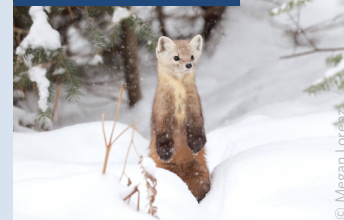
- Evening grosbeak
- Northern parula
- American marten
- Painted turtle
- Shining firmoss
- Cinnamon fern
- Northern bush honeysuckle
- Yellow birch

NORTHERN PARULA



© Joshua Galicki

AMERICAN MARTEN



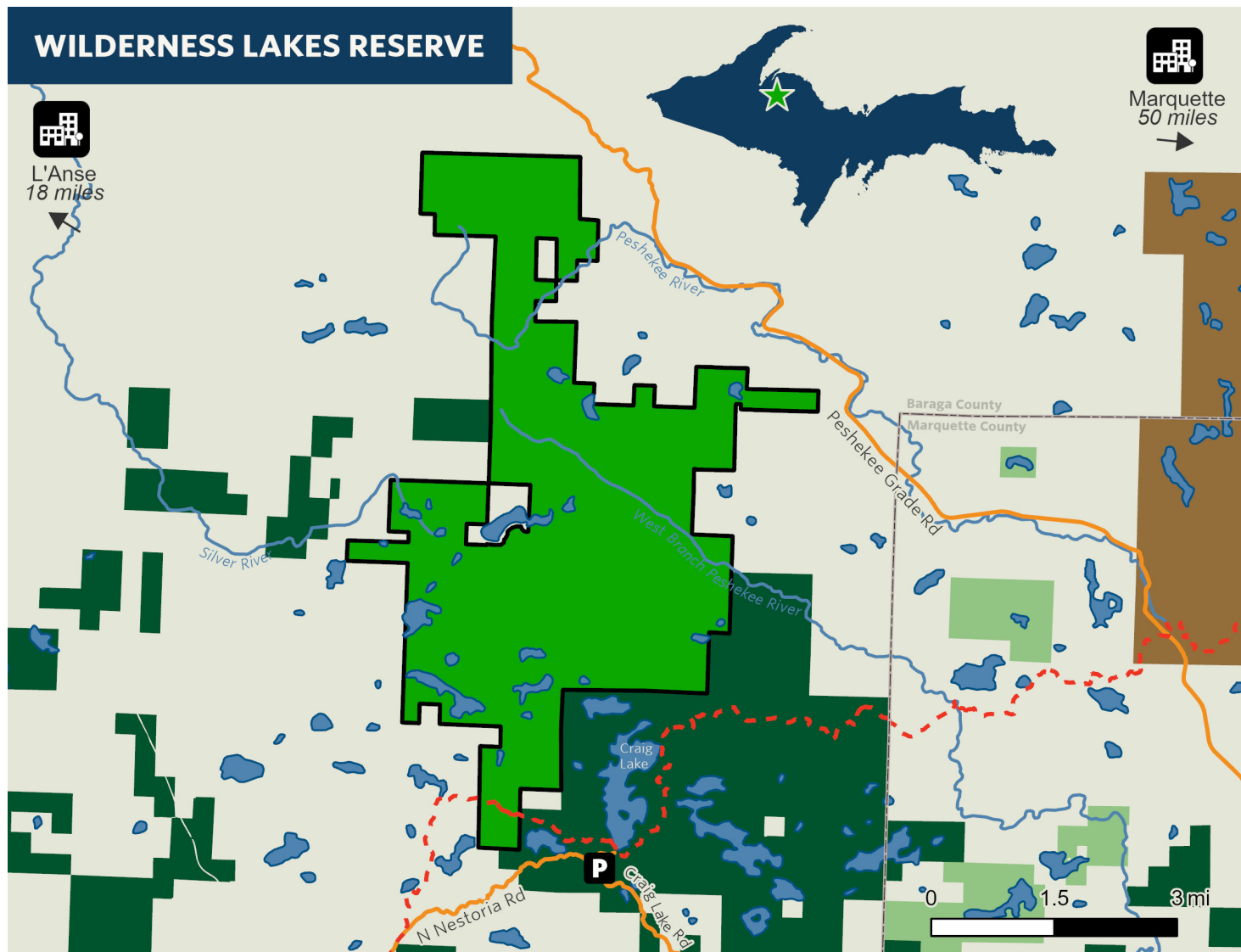
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CINNAMON FERN



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WILDERNESS LAKES RESERVE



LEGEND

- Wilderness Lakes Reserve
- McCormick Wilderness
- North Country Trail
- Protected Land: Privately Owned
- Craig Lake State Park
- Parking Area

HOW TO GET THERE

Please note that there is no official parking or access road to the Wilderness Lakes Reserve at this time. However, visitors may enter on the North Country Trail via Craig Lake State Park.

Directions from Marquette, MI: Follow US-41 north for about 44 miles. Turn north (right) onto North Nestoria Road, a dirt two-track. Continue 4.7 miles and park at the Craig Lake parking lot and trailhead (approximate coordinates: 46.599465, -88.189790). Note: Michigan Recreation Passport required to park.

From the Craig Lake trailhead, follow the trail on foot to the south end of the lake where it intersects with the North Country Trail. Take the North Country Trail west for approximately 1.7 miles, until it intersects with the reserve. The North Country Trail crosses the southernmost end of the reserve for a half mile before continuing on private land.

MAKE TODAY A NATURE DAY!

Nearby points of interest include:

- Craig Lake State Park, 0 mi: michigan.gov/dnr
- Canyon Falls, 18 mi: michigan.org
- Van Riper State Park, 19 mi: michigan.gov/dnr
- Echo Lake Nature Preserve, 59 mi: nature.org/miexplore
- Lodging, food and more: baragacounty.org

TIPS FOR A GREAT VISIT

- The roads at Craig Lake State Park have variable conditions throughout the year and may close if rain or snow makes them impassible. A high-clearance 4x4 vehicle is recommended.
- During winter, the only way to access the North Country Trail at Craig Lake is to ski or snowshoe in from the highway.
- July through October are the best times to enjoy the forest's beauty while avoiding biting insects. Be sure to bring insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants.
- The reserve is enrolled in the Commercial Forest Act, which means it is open to non-motorized public recreation, including hunting, fishing and snowshoeing. For hunting regulations, please visit nature.org/mihunting.
- Please leave pets at home.
- No camping or fires permitted on the reserve.
- Please follow the rules posted at the reserve and online at nature.org/miexplore. Thank you for protecting the land, water and wildlife of this place!