



Sanctuary at a Glance:

Location: St. Clair County

Size: 118 acres

History: Donated in 1987 by the estate of James Brennan

About MNA:

The Michigan Nature Association is a nonprofit conservation organization working to protect Michigan’s rare, threatened and endangered species by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Established in 1952, MNA’s members, donors, and volunteers have built a remarkable network of more than 170 nature sanctuaries across the state – the largest network of natural areas established and maintained by a nonprofit conservation organization in Michigan.



Michigan Nature Association

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Photo: MNA Archives

After more than 100 years of family ownership, James William Brennan donated 118 acres in St. Clair County to MNA as a tribute to his wife Alice and adoptive father James. Opened to the public in 1987, this sanctuary is known for its solitude and isolation despite its proximity to heavily populated areas. The farmland buffering the sanctuary adds to the seclusion, giving visitors a feeling similar to exploring Michigan’s northern forests.

The moderate trail is nearly two miles long and takes visitors through four evergreen stands that were planted by Alice Brennan for their aesthetic value. “Inspiration Grove” is just 500 feet beyond the entrance of the sanctuary, and is the first of Alice’s plantations. The high canopy now provides habitat and shelter for many species of wildlife. The diverse flora and fauna of Brennan Memorial are contained in a multitude of different habitats, including floodplains, slopes, high banks, and the Pine River.

Along with pines, many deciduous trees, including maple, hickory, beech, and basswood, contribute to the canopy of the forest. The former National Champion speckled alder was found in Brennan Memorial in 1984, measuring 38 feet in diameter, 66 feet in height, and possessing an impressive 56 foot crown spread. Many large birds roost in the large pine trees, including barred owls, great horned owls, and hawks. Numerous species of songbirds and warblers are also found throughout Brennan Memorial.

The Pine River at Brennan Memorial

Brennan Memorial contains part of the headwater of the Pine River, which is a major feature of the sanctuary. The Pine River travels past several of MNA's sanctuaries, including Polovich Memorial Sanctuary and nearby Jasper Woods Sanctuary. Further downstream, the river empties into the St. Clair River in the city of St. Clair. The meandering river has cut deep ravines downstream that give visitors dramatic views of the floodplain.

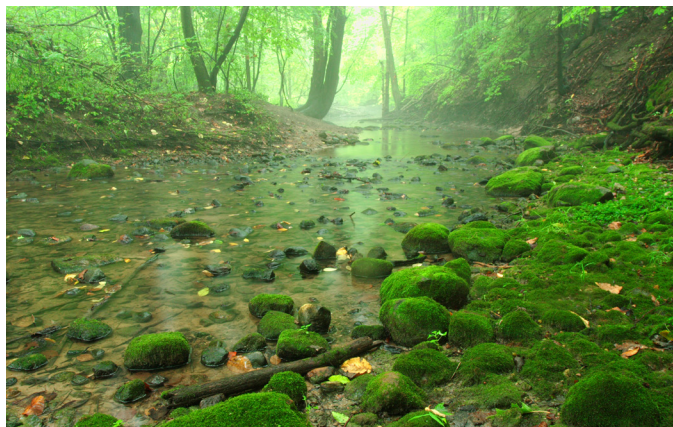


Photo: Jason Steel

Inspiration Grove

While the planting of pine trees that created "Inspiration Grove" many years ago was meant for visual pleasure, its effects span beyond that. Planting pine stands was a common wildlife management practice at the time, promoting soil conservation by restoring old farming land or clear-cut areas. The trees also provided nesting areas and habitat for owls and songbirds such as finches and warblers. The evergreens that dominate Inspiration Grove are mostly red pine and spruce.



Photo: Sherri Faust

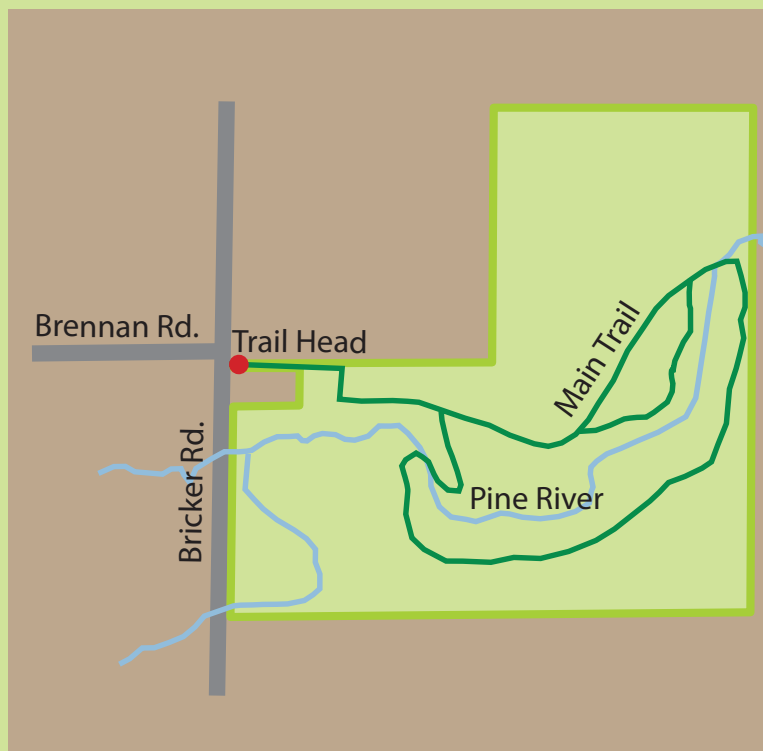
Planning Your Visit:

The sanctuary has a moderate trail that is nearly two miles long and takes visitors through four evergreen stands that were planted by Alice Brennan for their aesthetic value.

How To Get There:

The sanctuary is located in St. Clair County, off of Bricker Rd. near Emmett.

For additional information, contact the MNA office at (866) 223-2231.



Sanctuary Map