

Michigan Nature Association

Julius C. and Marie Moran Peter Memorial Nature Sanctuary



Sanctuary at a Glance:

Location: Alpena County

Size: 95 acres

History: 79 acres purchased in August 1968, 16 acres purchased in December 1969

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: Dave Wendling

Originally named the Grass Lake Nature Sanctuary, this sanctuary was dedicated to Julius C. and Marie Moran Peter on June 3, 1979. The Peters were financial advisors, boosters and enthusiastic volunteers of the Macomb Nature Association, which later became MNA. Julius and Marie spread the word about the Association to their friends and their community and were instrumental in gaining contributions resulting in the purchases of hundreds of acres of land that became sanctuaries.

The Peter Memorial Nature Sanctuary is wild and remote. Those who walk on the old path to Grass Lake encounter many interesting plants, such as purple flowering raspberry, buffalo berry, columbine, and spurred gentians. In early June, the dwarf lake iris grows four to six inches tall, while the bird's eye primrose flowers bloom beautifully. Both prefer this sanctuary's alkaline soil.

The Grass Lake edge fluctuates from year to year and is home to sedges, pitcher plant, false asphodel, arrow grass, and sweet gale. The open sections are ideal for bird watching, as the lakeshore is home to ducks, shorebirds, hawks and warblers.

Hamilton Road, the first Michigan Natural Beauty Road, travels below the southern border of Peter Memorial. A bumpy ride, Hamilton crosses exposed dolomite near the sanctuary entrance. By searching carefully along the roadside, sheets of dolomite containing fossils can sometimes be found.

The black-throated green warbler

The black-throated green warbler (*Setophaga virens*) is identified by its yellow and olive face and extensive black throat and breast. It's associated with conifers across most of its breeding range, nesting in spruce, pine, fir, cedar, or cypress stands. It also occurs in mixed and broadleaf forests in the southern parts of its breeding range. Insects are the main component in this warbler's diet, although berries are sometimes included. Their population seems to be increasing in the south but decreasing in the north; this is most likely due to the loss of mature forests.



Photo: Dan Pancamo

The first Natural Beauty Road

Hamilton Road was declared the first Michigan Natural Beauty Road in 1971; MNA proposed this legislation in 1970 and was instrumental in getting it passed. The goals of the Natural Beauty Roads program are to identify and preserve specific country-local roads having unusual or outstanding naturally-occurring beauty in an undisturbed condition for the use and enjoyment of local residents and the public in general.



Photo: Katherine Hollins

Planning Your Visit:

The best time to visit Peter Memorial Nature Sanctuary is in the summer, when the rare dwarf lake iris is in bloom. The dwarf lake iris is only found on the northern shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron and was declared the Michigan state wildflower in 1998.

How To Get There

The sanctuary is located in Alpena County, off Hamilton Road near Alpena. Take US-23 to Bloom Road. Turn right onto Bloom Road, turn right onto North Point Road, and then turn right onto Hamilton Road. Drive 0.5 miles on Hamilton Road to reach the access easement.

Please call 866-223-2231 for more information.



Sanctuary Map