

Michigan Nature Association Brewer Woods Nature Sanctuary



Sanctuary at a Glance:

Location: Kalamazoo County

Size: 41 acres

History: Dr. Richard Brewer donated the sanctuary to MNA in 2013.

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: Dr. Richard Brewer

Dr. Richard Brewer, an ornithologist, author and Professor Emeritus of Biology at Western Michigan University, acquired Brewer Woods in the early 1970s for ecological study and protection of the forest. Prior to his ownership, the sanctuary had been logged in the 1960s by the previous landowner who harvested interior trees greater than 12 inches in diameter. Despite the logging disturbance, the important ecosystem functions of the forest remained intact.

Brewer Woods Nature Sanctuary consists of quality southern mesic forest. It is almost entirely dominated by beech-maple forest and exhibits pit and mound topography, which results from wind-throw of canopy trees. This results from shallow tree rooting that causes the soil to consist of shallow outwash over clay-rich glacial till. The end result is numerous shallow pits and low mounds that date back over centuries.

On the west side of the sanctuary, there is a lower elevation area of forest which includes species typically found in southern and northern hardwood swamp. There is also a vernal pool, which extends from adjacent land to the west. The sanctuary is in the Portage River watershed and flows into the St. Joseph River.

Brewer Woods provides ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, ground water filtration, and it protects an example of the regional biodiversity. Brewer Woods contains a beautiful array of spring ephemeral wildflowers that blanket the forest floor and offers an impressive sight to visitors.

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Dr. Richard Brewer

Dr. Brewer chose to donate Brewer Woods to MNA in 2013 because of the organization's long history of protecting land and its dedication to defending nature sanctuaries against encroachment. Dr. Brewer and his wife Kay T. Takahashi also donated the funds necessary for the sanctuary's stewardship. Dr. Brewer plans to remain involved with the sanctuary.



Photo: Dr. Richard Brewer

Invasive Species

The primary invasive species which threatens Brewer Woods Nature Sanctuary is garlic mustard. Garlic mustard threatens native plants by dominating the space and blocks sun from low-lying plants. Volunteers help manage this invasive plant by hand pulling the plants at volunteer days. MNA's efforts to protect Brewer Woods include carefully monitoring the sanctuary, removing invasive species and maintaining the trails.



Photo: Dave Wendling

Planning Your Visit:

The best time to visit Brewer Woods is from late April to early June, when the wildflowers are in bloom and carpet the forest floor.

How to Get There:

The sanctuary offers space for parking and a loop trail. Parking is permitted along East R Ave. at the base of the driveway which is gated off to vehicles.



Sanctuary Map