Michigan Nature Association

Schafer Family Nature Sanctuary at Roach Point



Sanctuary at a Glance:

Location: Chippewa County

Size: 762.95 acres

History: Parcels donated/bought 1978-2010, mostly from the Schafer family

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.

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Photo: Jeff Ganley

Formerly known as Roach Point Nature Sanctuary, several generous donations from brothers Mason and Melvin Schafer have made this MNA's largest sanctuary. The sanctuary is a result of nine different acquisitions that began in 1978, with the final 259-acre donation coming from Melvin in 2010 after Mason passed away. The sanctuary was renamed the Schafer Family Nature Sanctuary at Roach Point in 2011. The MNA Board of Trustees also created the Mason and Melvin Schafer Distinguished Excellence Award in 2011 in honor of the two to recognize exceptional volunteers to MNA, who have served at least 10 years.

The forest at the Schafer Family Nature Sanctuary contains both northern mesic forest and northern boreal forest. The boreal forest consists of black and white spruce, tamarack, and balsam fir. Deciduous stands are composed of white birch, maple, and poplar. The central highest peak of Roach Point contains a sugar maple-hemlock forest.

Spring is the wettest season at the sanctuary and boasts a large amount of wildflowers and visiting waterfowl to Munuscong Lake. Visitors experience incredible foliage in the fall, while winter brings opportunities to explore with snowshoes. There are no marked trails in the sanctuary, so proper footwear is encouraged. To access Roach Point, which juts into Munuscong Lake, visitors must hike along the sanctuary's west edge.

The black tern at Roach Point

The black tern (*Chlidonias niger*) breeds in freshwater marshes across most of Canada and the northern United States. The American population has seen a recent decline due to habitat loss. They typically nest on floating material near the water's edge, laying 2-4 eggs. Black terns can be identified by the dark plumage that covers the majority of their bodies. They tend to migrate to the coasts of northern South America after breeding season.



Photo: Éric Bégin

Great Lakes coastal marsh community

The sanctuary contains a Great Lakes coastal marsh community that provides a protected home for aquatic invertebrates and many species of minnows, frogs, turtles, and snakes. Munuscong Lake and the nearby St. Mary's River Channel contribute to the coastal wetland ecosystem. This land is also designated by the state of Michigan as being an environmental area requiring the preservation and maintenance of fish and wildlife under the Great Lakes Shorelands Protection Act.



Photo: MNA Archives

Planning Your Visit:

Spring at Schafer Family Nature Sanctuary boasts a large amount of wildflowers and visiting waterfowl to Munuscong Lake. Visitors experience incredible foliage in the fall, while winter brings opportunities to explore with snowshoes.

How To Get There

The sanctuary is located in Chippewa County near Pickford. Follow Gogomain Rd 9 miles east out of Pickford until the sanctuary sign appears on the north side of the road.

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



Sanctuary Map