

Trails & Nature Preserves Les Cheneaux Region



Nature Preserves and Trails

1 Hiawatha National Forest/ Search Bay Nature Preserve

Hiawatha National Forest's Search Bay features a beach at the road end that is great for launching paddlecraft. Depending on water level, there is a small boat launch on the west side of the bay. Nearly surrounded by the national forest is Search Bay Nature Preserve. **There are more trails off of the road for exploring. Take a compass or GPS.**

From the blinking light in Hessel, travel 4.5 miles west on M-134, take a left on Road #3436 (please note this road is not plowed in the winter). Several trails branch off the main gravel road. To reach Lake Huron, follow the main gravel road.

2 Birge/Mertaugh/Nye Nature Preserve Complex

This 889-acre complex features beautiful wildflowers, excellent migratory bird habitat and nearly three miles of Lake Huron shoreline between all the preserves on either side of Point Brulee Rd. There are several trail and parking options.

From Hessel, take M-134 west 2.4 miles. Turn left on Point Brulee Rd and head south. The first parking area, with a 2-mile long hiking trail, will be 0.7 miles from M-134 on the right. Shoreline access to Mismar and Hessel Bays is 0.4 miles further on the left. The short Loon Lake overlook trail is in between these on the right (west); park along the side of the road. The Mertaugh/Search Bay trail is 0.5 miles further south from the shoreline access parking area. You will be turning right off Point Brulee Rd and signs will direct you to parking and the trailhead.

3 Trefry Trail Hiawatha National Forest

This is an easy, two-track, gravel road that heads north into maple woods and mixed conifer swamps. Various trails sprout off into the woods from the main road. **There are more trails off of the road for exploring. Take a compass or GPS.**

Travel about 3 miles west of Hessel and turn right onto Road #3433. Head north for about 1 mile for multiple trail spurs to explore. Small pullouts for parking are located periodically along the road.

4 CLARK TOWNSHIP'S Hessel Beach

This township park offers free parking, a place to carry kayaks and canoes to the water, a sandy swimming beach, picnic tables, benches, and public restrooms. An excellent access point for paddlers who are headed out to the islands.

From the corner of M-134 and 3 Mile Rd, go south into downtown Hessel. About two blocks down, the street ends at the public marina. Turn right onto Lake St for about 600 feet. The township beach has street parking on the left.

5 Peek-A-Boo Trails Hiking & Biking Trails (2025)

Peek-A-Boo Trails offers more than four miles of trails for mountain bikers and hikers. Trail will feature a 1.3 mile Black Diamond segment with jumps, rolls, and boulders. An intermediate trail leading on and off boardwalks through a forested area will double as a cross country ski trail in the winter.

From the blinking light in Hessel, travel east 1.3 miles. Take a slight left turn onto W State Rd and follow for 0.9 mile. The parking area will be on your left at the old school track.

6 Bay City Lake Trail

A complex network of trails laces the woods throughout this section of the Lake Superior State Forest. Bay City Lake recreation area also offers rustic campsites.

At the blinking light in Hessel on M-134, head north on 3 Mile Rd for 2.2 miles. Just past the airstrip, turn left onto Bay City Lake Rd. Follow the gravel road, taking either a left then a right or a right then a left. Campsites and parking are along the southern shore. Roads are rough.

7 Hessel Airport Trail/ Cedarville Wastewater

A multi-use two-track trail runs through the woods between Hessel and Cedarville with more than 700 acres of state forest land to explore. Starting to the east, the township's wastewater ponds offer an excellent opportunity for waterfowl birding. The west side is wooded and allows access to multi-use trails. Narrow trails, sand, hills, wet areas, and ruts make this trail best-suited for hiking, mountain or fat tire bikes, dirt bikes, or ATVS. Sections may be impassable for some vehicles.

To Hessel Airport: At the blinking light in Hessel on M-134, head north on 3 Mile Rd for 2.2 miles. Just past the airstrip, turn right. To park, take the right fork to parking near the ball field.

To Wastewater Ponds: From the blinking light on M-134 in Hessel, head east for 2.7 miles. Turn left onto Blindline Rd and travel north for 1.4 miles to a dirt road on the left located on the north side of the ponds.

8 CLARK TOWNSHIP'S Snows Heritage Park

This park is situated adjacent to Clark Township Hall in Cedarville. It includes a picnic pavilion, ball diamonds, horseshoe pits, pickleball /tennis courts, public restrooms, and a natural area. A storybook trail and short nature trail are found at the north end of the park by the horseshoe pits.

From M-134 at the blinking light in Hessel, travel 2.7 miles to Blindline Rd. Turn left on Blindline Rd for 0.1 mile. The entrance and parking area will be on your left, south of Township Hall.

9 William B. Derby Nature Preserve

This 200-acre preserve includes a three-mile figure eight trail loop available through all seasons. The trail meanders through rock gardens, forest, and along the rugged Lake Huron shore.

From M-134, head south on S 4-Mile Block Rd. Take a right on Club Rd and travel 0.5 miles. Look for signs on right; parking area is a little further up on the left (no parking on S 4-Mile Block Rd).



Nature Preserves and Trails

10 Catherine Seiberling Stewart Nature Preserve

Located on Marquette Island, this 192-acre preserve includes 4,200 feet of Lake Huron shore. A half-mile trail goes from Marquette Bay to the south side of the preserve and the island.

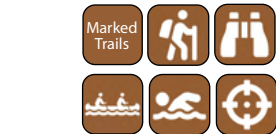
Only accessible by boat.



11 Aldo Leopold Nature Preserve

This 1,683 acre preserve on Marquette Island, the Little Traverse Conservancy's largest, includes 3.8 miles of Lake Huron shoreline. On Liberty Bay, there is a rustic trail that connects with Clark Township's Leopold Landing (see #12). Portions are seasonally wet.

Only accessible by boat.



12 Leopold Landing in Duck Bay

Leopold Landing in Duck Bay is a Clark Township property providing a dock and a pit toilet as well as access to the eastern end of the Aldo Leopold Preserve. Trail signs guide you to a 1.25 mile trail loop, or follow the more rustically maintained trail that heads to the Liberty Bay landing on the north end of the island, it is very marshy and wet in areas.

Only accessible by boat.



13 John Arthur Woollam Nature Preserve

Owned by The Nature Conservancy, this 185-acre preserve features over a mile of forested trail that leads to the eastern end of the Aldo Leopold Preserve. Trail signs guide you to a 1.25 mile trail loop, or follow the more rustically maintained trail that heads to the Liberty Bay landing on the north end of the island, it is very marshy and wet in areas.

From Cedarville (intersection of M-134 and M-129) travel east on M-134 for 6.2 miles and look for the preserve sign on the right/south side of the highway. A parking lot is available at the trailhead.



14 Low/Sandy/Springer/Ziegler Trail logging roads

This network of historic logging roads provides an interesting, scenic link between M-134 to the south and M-48 to the north. The area is characterized by hardwoods, mixed conifer forest, mature aspen and maple stands along a rolling sandy landscape. The roads wind through Lake Superior State Forest and some private acreage, so please note "no trespassing" signage when visiting this area. Low, Springer, and Ziegler roads are rough dirt roads used by loggers, but shared by recreational users.

Sandy (Low) Rd is 10.4 miles east of the M-129/M-134 intersection on the north side. Heading north, it intersects with Springer Rd which goes all the way to M-48.



15 Carl A. Gerstacker Nature Preserve

Owned by The Nature Conservancy, this more than 1600-acre preserve features nearly three miles of hiking trails to Big and Little Trout Lakes, five miles of Lake Huron shoreline on Dudley Bay, and two small islands.

From Cedarville (the intersection of M-134 and M-129) travel east on M-134 for about 12 miles and look for the preserve sign on the left/north side of the highway. A parking lot is available at the trailhead.



16 Cranberry Lake Trail

This trail is roughly 10 miles west of DeTour Village or 15 miles east of Cedarville. Trailheads are along M-48 (just north of M-134 on the right side of M-48) or on the north side of M-134, (just west of the DeTour State Forest Campground Road). The trail network includes an 8-mile multi-use trail through state forest lands and along scenic Cranberry Lake.



17 James V. Foster Hartley Lake Nature Preserve

Donated to Little Traverse Conservancy in 2012, this 120-acre preserve features the 25-acre Hartley Lake. Two tracks allow for access to the preserve. A parking area allows for access to a rustic trail system that leads to the lake.

From DeTour, take S Caribou Lake Rd west for 1.4 miles. Look for preserve sign on the right.



18 DeTour Peninsula Nature Preserve

More than three miles of northern Lake Huron shoreline and 145 acres on Point DeTour. From the parking area, a two-track trail leads through the middle of the preserve with short trails to the lake. Please be respectful of private property. Experienced paddlers can access the shoreline by launching from the small launch near Malette Park.

From DeTour, head south one mile on M-134. Turn left onto Point Rd. Drive 0.6 mile to the parking area.



Thank you to Hessel School House and Woods & Waters for helping to edit and distribute this Les Cheneaux Region map.



Public Camping in the Les Cheneaux Area

shown from west to east on map

- A Search Bay (Rustic camping in the Hiawatha National Forest)**
About 4 miles west of Hessel, on Road 3436 off M-134, take the road south to the lake and turn either left or right at the end of the road to the camp sites. Almost all are on the water and have fire rings. No outhouses. Beaches and calming views of the lake and shoreline. Fairly private — chances are there will be no one else there in the fall.
- B Bay City Lake Campground (in the Superior State Forest)**
Located about 2.2 miles north of Hessel, off 3 Mile Rd, turn left just past the airport. Sandy trails and camp sites, with several sites situated around the secluded south side of Bay City Lake. Lots of trails to explore.
- C Government Island (Rustic camping; part of the Hiawatha National Forest; accessible only by boat)**
Rocky beaches, wooded pathways, breathtaking views of Lake Huron as well as six camping areas scattered along the shoreline — some with space for multiple tents, fire rings, an outhouse, and picnic table. Closest launches are either Cedarville Harbor (motorized and non-motorized) or Hill Island road end (non-motorized only).
- D DeTour State Forest Campground (Rustic camping)**
About 21 miles east of Cedarville, along M-134 and one mile east of the DeTour Roadside Park rest area. Camp sites with fire rings, outhouses, and a scenic sandy beach along Lake Huron. A 1.5 mile trail can be found starting between sites 12 & 13.

The following groups contributed to the development and printing of this publication:



Find a trail with us:



NOTE: The most updated information about Little Traverse Conservancy preserves can be found at: www.landtrust.org.