

Wisconsin Preserve Use Guidelines



Hike at Spring Green Prairie © TNC

Our visitation guidelines will help you make the most of your visit to a TNC preserve.

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From the towering pines and wild lakes of the Northwoods to the sun-kissed prairies of southern Wisconsin, TNC and its members have protected some of the most beautiful places in Wisconsin, places that literally jump, fly, swim and hop with an amazing diversity of life.

Most of the places we have protected in Wisconsin are open to the public for visitation and many types of outdoor recreation including hiking, canoeing, hunting, wildlife watching and nature photography.

Preparation: The Key to a Safe, Enjoyable Visit

We have walking trails at most, though not all, preserves, but few other visitor facilities. So please prepare for your visit and take proper precautions while on site.

- Wear comfortable footwear suitable for hiking, but please do not wear heavy, cleated boots — these damage the trails.
- To protect yourself from ticks, poison ivy or poison sumac, wear long pants — and tuck them into your socks.
- No matter which season of the year it is, each person in your party should bring a full water bottle. Dehydration is a serious risk at any time of the year.
- PLEASE NOTE: From September to January, gun and bow hunting for deer is allowed on many TNC preserves during [DNR posted seasons](#). For safety and visibility, we recommend wearing blaze orange or neon pink clothing if you will be visiting one of the preserves where we allow hunting during this time period. Hunting is an important management tool that we use to keep the plants, animals and habitats at our preserves healthy and diverse. You can find more information on our web site at nature.org/wisconsin-hunt.

Preparation: What to Bring

To get the most from your visit, and to protect yourself from the elements, you may want to include the following items in your backpack:

- Binoculars
- Camera
- Compass
- Field guides (to wildflowers, birds, butterflies and other natural features)
- Insect repellent
- Rain gear
- Snack (fruit or trail mix)
- Sunscreen

Preparation: ADA Accessibility

In accordance with the Department of Justice's amended regulation implementing Title III of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding "Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices," TNC completed an assessment of our nature preserves in Wisconsin. You can find more information on our web site at nature.org/wipreserveaccess.

Hours

TNC preserves listed on our website are open year-round, from dawn to dusk.

What You Can Do

The following activities are permitted on TNC preserves:

- Birdwatching
- Cross-country skiing
- Fishing - Fishing is allowed at most sites that can be publicly accessed. At the TNC's [Catherine Wolter Wilderness Area](#) and Bass Lake preserves, catch-and-release fishing with artificial lures is allowed on all waters. At TNC's [Guido Rahr, Sr. Tenderfoot Forest Reserve](#), catch-and-release fishing with artificial lures is encouraged to protect Mirror and Roach lakes from introduction of invasive species.
- Hiking
- Hunting – We allow hunting at many TNC preserves. You can find more information on hunting opportunities at nature.org/wisconsin-hunt.
- Nature study
- Photography
- Snowshoeing
- Videotaping for personal use (if for commercial use, you must obtain permission from the Wisconsin Chapter office in Madison-see below for contact information)
- EarthCaching and geocaching are allowed on our preserves in Wisconsin. Caches should be placed at parking lots and entry ways or along trails. Objects placed for geocache sites should be no larger than the size of a coin, film canister or a tube of lip balm. See geocaching.com for additional guidelines and recommendations. Please contact the TNC office near you prior to placing a cache.

What You Cannot Do

The following activities are not permitted on TNC preserves:

- Biking and mountain biking
- Camping
- Caving

- Driving an ATV or off-road vehicle
- Cooking or camp fires
- Horseback riding
- Ice skating
- Pets - In general, we do not allow pets (even on a leash with the exception of service dogs). There are some exceptions for dogs during hunting season; see the Wisconsin hunting program page for details (nature.org/wisconsin-hunt). We do welcome dogs at these preserves: Bass Lake, [Caroline Lake](#), [Catherine Wolter Wilderness Area](#), [Guido Rahr, Sr. Tenderfoot Forest Reserve](#), [Mink River](#) and our [Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area](#) preserves. Please visit the preserve pages for more information about our dog policy at each preserve. Information is also posted on the sign at each preserve entrance.
- Collection - Do not collect plants, flowers, berries, nuts, animals, fungi, rocks, shells, minerals, metals, fossils, archaeological artifacts, soil, downed wood, or any other natural material, living or dead.
- Rock or ice climbing
- Snowmobiling
- Hang gliding or paragliding
- Drones – aka Personal aircraft, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) — Self-propelled or other aircraft are prohibited from taking off, landing or being operated on any TNC preserve in Wisconsin except for official TNC purposes, approved research, or in an emergency landing situation. We prohibit the private use of drones on our preserves for the following reasons:
 - Privacy and enjoyment of other preserve visitors – In order to avoid capturing images of people who are not related to TNC, and from whom a necessary photo release has not been obtained.
 - Wildlife disturbance – To make sure drones will not disturb resident wildlife, especially areas with many birds or ground based nests.
 - Preserve management – Unauthorized drones operating in areas where active land management is taking place, such as prescribed burning, could lead to potentially dangerous interactions.
 - Respecting neighboring property – Preserve boundaries are not always apparent from the ground. We wish to be good neighbors and minimize the risk of drones accidentally crossing over from our preserves to non-TNC property.

Respect Our Neighbors' Property

Please do not trespass on private property adjacent to TNC preserves. Property lines are clearly marked with small yellow signs featuring TNC's logo.

Contact Us

We hope that you will enjoy a safe, interesting visit.

If you experience any vandalism or other problems, please contact our office.

For more information about The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin, contact our office, or stop by — we are located on the isthmus in downtown Madison, six blocks southwest of the Capitol.

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Office hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

During the summer our office hours on Friday are 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.