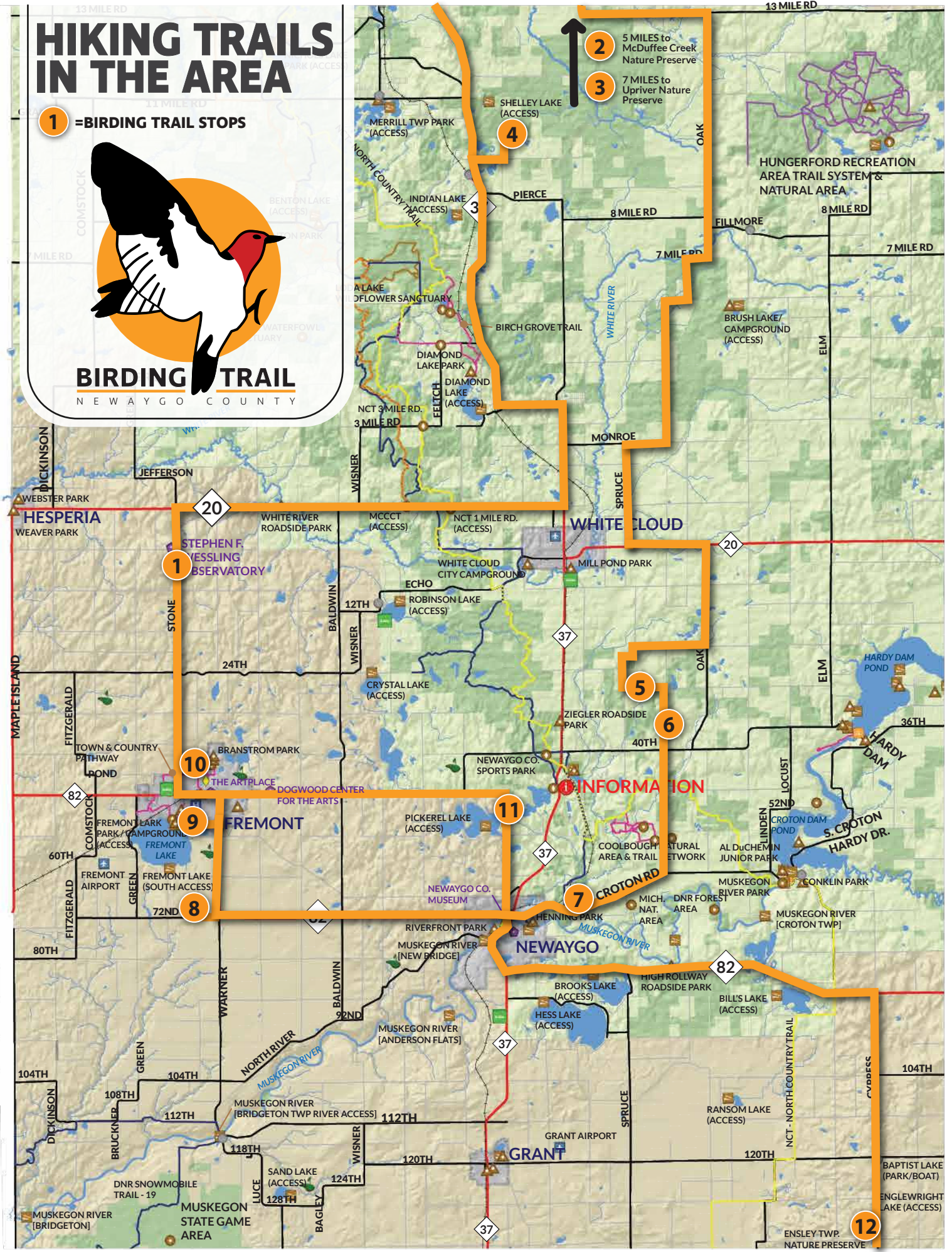


# HIKING TRAILS IN THE AREA

1 = BIRDING TRAIL STOPS



**BIRDING TRAIL**  
NEWAYGO COUNTY



- 2 5 MILES to McDuffee Creek Nature Preserve
- 3 7 MILES to Upriver Nature Preserve

FOR MORE INFORMATION

12



# Newaygo Co. Birding Trail

## HIKING TRAILS



### ABOUT THE ROUTE

Sites with hikeable trails or not so good for those with mobility issues. These sites require a longer/more strenuous hike or require walking over uneven ground. Trails are generally two miles or less.

#### 1 Kropscott Farm Environmental Center

65234 W Baseline Rd. | Fremont  
(43.554381, -85.961359)



**Habitat:** Virgin woodland, grassland, agricultural, vernal ponds  
**Notable Species:** Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, American Pipit

**Where to explore:** The area around the buildings is good year-round for songbirds and woodpeckers. Wrapping NW around the farmhouse, a dirt trail leads through farmland where a good variety of grassland birds can be found, including Grasshopper Sparrow. At the NW corner of the fields trails wind through a mature beech-maple forest where Red-tailed Hawks nest. The trails pass vernal ponds where Ovenbird calls echo through the woods. The site also has an observatory for night-sky viewing.

#### 2 McDuffee Creek Nature Preserve

11510 N. Walnut Ave. | Bitely  
(43.761594, -85.760965)



**Habitat:** Oak savannah, alder/cedar swamp, riparian, vernal ponds, early successional forest with some mature oaks and white pine  
**Notable Species:** Ruffed Grouse, Barred Owl, Bald Eagle, American Woodcock

**Where to explore:** The 300-acre McDuffee Creek Nature Preserve is managed by The Land Conservancy of West Michigan and opened to the public in 2023. The Preserve is a mix of habitat including an oak savannah, which the Conservancy is actively managing, and is bisected by both McDuffee Creek and the Little South Branch of the Pere Marquette River. Two trails, totaling about two miles, are accessible from the west parking lot on Walnut. The trail to the north travels along the north side of the Pere Marquette and into

early successional forest before looping back to the parking lot. The second trail is to the south of the parking lot and is accessed by walking south along Walnut Ave. It winds through the oak savannah before also looping back to the parking lot. This trail will eventually connect to a new trail being developed on the east side of the preserve, which will also be accessible from 14 Mile. The trails are wide and either grass covered or dirt, but are uneven in places with some stumps, especially in parts of the savannah. Use care when while on the trails as this preserve is a work in progress.

#### 3 Upriver Nature Preserve

13113 N. Walnut Ave. | Bitely  
(43.791244, -85.761841)



**Habitat:** Successional to mature mixed woodland, riparian, floodplain, rare sand prairie  
**Notable Species:** Bald Eagle, Fox Sparrow, Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

**Where to explore:** This 146-acre West Michigan Land Conservancy property protects over 5,300 feet of the Little South Branch of the Pere Marquette River, and in fall when the salmon are spawning it can be a great place to see multiple Bald Eagles fishing. Two trails lead from the parking lot and connect, making two loops of approximately one and two miles.

The trail that leaves from south side of the parking lot winds through a mixed forest and over hills of glacial moraine, then descends into wetland as it nears the river at the northwest corner of the property. Woodland birds can be found in the hilly section but by far the best birding is along the river and its adjoining wetlands.

#### 4 Richmond Woods Nature Preserve

8000 N. Centerline Rd. | Brohman  
(43.6964969, -85.8002603)



**Habitat:** Mixed deciduous forest, wet meadow, spruce bog  
**Notable Species:** American Bittern, Red-headed Woodpecker

**Where to explore:** 114-acre reserve run by the West Michigan Land Conservancy contains land in both the White and Pere Marquette River watersheds. From the parking lot there are two trails, one to the east which leads to an emergent wetland where American Bittern have been seen. To the west, across Centerline Road, is another wide trail leading to the spruce bog. At the reserve boundary you can either turn left and pick up the trail that loops back to the parking lot or go straight to access National Forest land and a second spruce bog at Richmond Lake. The open woodland is attractive to Red-headed Woodpeckers and the wetlands attract many species of wading birds and waterfowl.

#### 5 Toft Lake

South Spruce Ave. | Newaygo  
(43.486639, -85.742252)



**Habitat:** Mature mixed woodland, marsh, open water  
**Notable Species:** Wood Duck, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting

**Where to explore:** The small Toft Lake trailhead parking lot is on the east side of Spruce Ave. Follow the trail from the parking area to where it splits, taking the fork to the left to head down to Toft Lake. The site hosts an early woodland Native American site that dates back 3,000 years and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Waterfowl nest here, including Wood Ducks, along with a good number of songbirds.

# Newaygo Co. Birding Trail

## HIKING TRAILS



### 6 Coolbough Natural Areas

E 58th Street & South Hazelwood Ave. | Newaygo  
(43.450173, -85.728346)



**Habitat:** Oak savannah, prairie, wetland, ponds, riparian  
**Notable Species:** Winter wren, Swamp Sparrow, 14 species of warblers

**Where to explore:** There are several trails looping through Coolbough. All are well marked and pass through a variety of habitats. Visitors have the chance to explore ponds and wetlands, hike through white pine and white oak forests, search for butterflies and wildflowers on prairies and barrens, and listen to the bubbling waters of Bigelow and Coolbough Creeks. This used to be a small farming village and remnants of the settlement are still visible in some places. Stay on the trails as hazards may be hidden below the grass. Managed by The Nature Conservancy and Brooks Township.

### 7 DNR Fisherman's Trail

South side of Croton Drive just west of Basswood about a mile and half east of Newaygo  
(43.425811, -85.772695)



**Habitat:** Mature woodland, riparian  
**Notable Species:** Osprey, Wood Thrush, Wild Turkey, Winter Wren

**Where to explore:** The DNR Fisherman's Trail is a path through a large state-owned conservation area that is open to the public. The half-mile path is well-traveled and easy to follow though unmarked. It begins in the small parking lot next to a remnant prairie then travels south into mixed deciduous forest before descending into a low-lying area with a beech-hemlock forest. The trail ends at the confluence of Bigelow Creek and the Muskegon River. The diversity of this site brings a nice variety of species. Be aware there are some short steep sections on this trail as it descends to the river.

### 8 Fremont Waster Water Plant - Limited Access

6250 W 72nd St. | Fremont  
(43.423712, -85.955472)



**Habitat:** Sewage ponds  
**Notable Species:** American Black Duck, Lesser Scaup, Pectoral Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs

**Where to explore:** This site can be a challenge to bird as there is no public access along the dikes. But with over 100 species reported, 18 of which are waterfowl, it is well worth the effort. It is the best place in the county to see shorebirds, primarily during fall migration. A spotting scope is recommended since the settling ponds are viewed from a distance. When the entrance gate is open, view the ponds from the parking area. When the gate is closed, a second entrance is just farther west on 72nd St. This entrance leads to a sand pit from where the ponds can be viewed. In the event the secondary entrance gate is closed, you may park at the gate and walk back to the viewing area. There is no access to the pond dikes, viewing is only from the parking lot or sand pit.

### 9 Fremont High School - Limited Access

5421 S. Warner Ave. | Fremont  
(43.457016, -85.948062)



**Habitat:** Wetland to open water  
**Notable species:** Snow Goose, Canvasback, Ruddy Duck, Tundra Swan

**Where to explore:** This site is open to birders WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION. Park near the SE end of the school and follow the sidewalk around to the south side of the building overlooking the marsh. With an all-time list of over 100 species, this marsh is great for spring migrating waterfowl and hosts fall shorebird migrants. Songbirds are plentiful along the marsh as well as along the entrance road from Warner Ave. Birding is best in seasons when the water is not frozen.

### 10 Branstrom Park

North of Fremont on Darling Ave, past the main entrance, park near the north entrance  
(43.477734, -85.943184)



**Habitat:** Mature woodland, wetland  
**Notable species:** Magnolia Warbler, Carolina Wren, American Redstart

**Where to explore:** This 100-acre park is accessible from multiple points. The recommended birding area is the path from the parking lot on the east side of Darling Ave which extends west into the park past wetlands, where waterfowl and osprey are often seen (there are no facilities at this location). Ten or more species of spring warblers are possible here. The park has extensive hiking trails totaling around two miles that can be accessed more easily from the main entrance.

### 11 Camp Newaygo Wetland Trail

E 52nd St. & Centerline Rd. | Brooks  
(43.460356, -85.799754)



**Habitat:** Wetland, ponds, woodland  
**Notable Species:** Veery, seven species of woodpeckers, 14 species of warblers

**Where to explore:** The Wetland Trail is on a Sphagnum (quaking) bog and over the years over 120 species have been reported here. Upon entering the trail, the boardwalk winds through thick alder and fern habitat. The thick vegetation gives way to an open bog with many white pine skeletons where 7 species of woodpecker forage and nest. Wetland warblers such as common yellowthroat and yellow warblers are common here. On the open bog, there is an observation deck with benches. The boardwalk ends in a woodlot where the trail skirts the bog shore and forests dwellers like Baltimore orioles live. The second leg of the boardwalk winds past a small open-water site then ends back at 52nd street which leads back to the parking lot.  
**PLEASE NOTE:** The boardwalk is in various states of repair and is NOT an ADA-accessible trail.

# Newaygo Co. Birding Trail

## HIKING TRAILS



### 12 Ensley Nature Preserve

6985 136th Street | Ensley  
(43.310380, -85.629463)



**Habitat:** Mature forest and wetland  
**Notable species:** Acadian Flycatcher, Black-and-White Warbler, Ovenbird

**Where to explore:** This 40-acre park has two miles of well-marked trails that wind through the woods and along a hill above a wetland. The trails provide access to a variety of habitats and there are plentiful benches along the trails. An observation deck at the far end of the property allows for views of a small lake. This is one of the few places in Newaygo County to find Acadian Flycatcher.

#### KEY

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| PARKING       | FISHING DOCK |
| FEE           | CAMPING      |
| RESTROOM      | BEACHES      |
| BOAT DOCK     | TRAILS       |
| PICNIC TABLES | PLAYGROUND   |