SPICER LAKE NATURE PRESERVE

Situated on the Michigan/Indiana state line in the extreme northwest corner of the County, Spicer Lake Nature Preserve offers 320 acres of natural habitats ideal for hiking and wildlife observation. The original 40 acres for the Preserve was purchased from The Nature Conservancy by the South Bend Audubon Society in 1978, who then donated the land to the County Parks. Additional acquisitions continued through 2004 with support from the Audubon Society and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Due to its state-dedicated preserve status, the natural habitats are permanently protected including two lakes, Spicer and Lancaster, and most of the surrounding expanses of swamp forest and marsh habitat. The lakes are classified as “kettle-hole lakes” formed by the melting of blocks of ice left behind when the last glacier retreated from the region.

Several state-listed rare and endangered species have been documented at the site, including northern witherod and northern cricket frog. Sandhill cranes have nested in the wetland. During migration, Spicer Lake Nature Preserve is an important stopover site for birds and is a popular location for birdwatching.

It was named as a Wetland of Distinction in 2018 by the Society of Wetland Scientists. A variety of researchers from colleges and universities in the Great Lakes region have obtained permits to use the site for research projects and class studies.

Within the Schurz Visitor Center (built in 1991 and remodeled in 2004), is a wet lab and classroom space for interpretive programs for school groups and the public. Other amenities include a quarter-mile boardwalk through the wetland, a first-come, first-serve picnic shelter and the Pfeil family Trail, a crushed limestone path leading to an elevated observation deck.