



**A GUIDE TO THE**  
*Washington Island*  
*Nature Preserves*  
of the  
**Door County Land Trust**



*Preserving the Island's  
Finest Open Spaces & Wild Places*

# *We Invite You to Visit Our Preserves!*



The Door County Land Trust is a local, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving Door County's finest open spaces and wild places. From small nature sanctuaries hidden within our villages to miles of wild shoreline and biologically diverse wetlands, the lands protected by the Land Trust represent Door County's irreplaceable treasures. The inspiration behind the Land Trust is the knowledge that the lands we save today will have a profound effect on what Door County will look like far into the future.

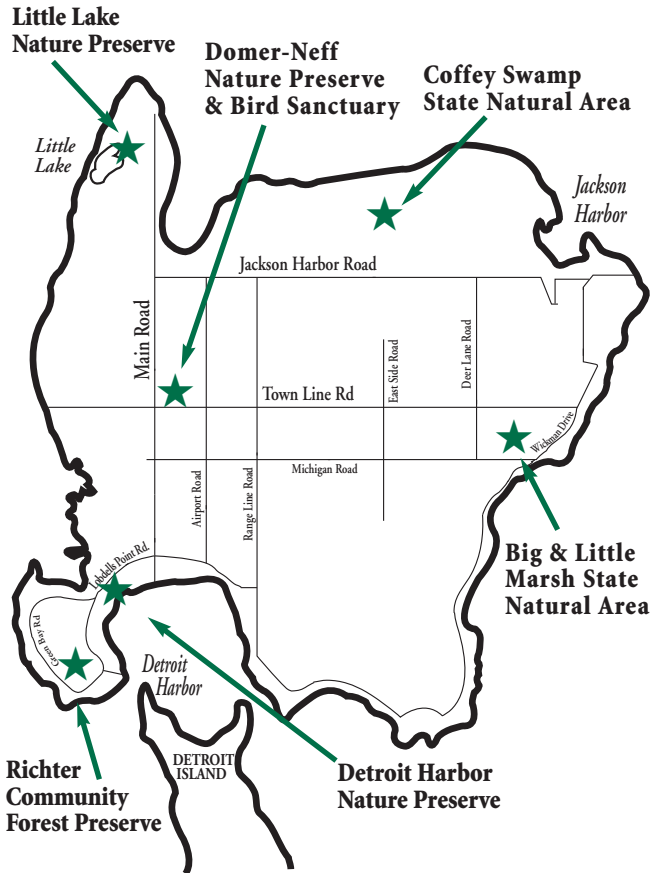
Since 1986, the Door County Land Trust has permanently protected over 5,200 acres throughout Door County from the northernmost tip of Washington Island to the county line in Southern Door. The Land Trust has protected over 700 acres on Washington and Detroit Islands alone. The Door County Land Trust accomplishes its mission through the support of over 2,200 contributing friends and neighbors.

Lands owned and managed by the Door County Land Trust are open to the public for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, birding, photography, nature study, fishing, some types of hunting and other low-impact recreational uses.

To download maps and directions to Land Trust preserves throughout Door County, please visit our website, [www.doorcountylandtrust.org](http://www.doorcountylandtrust.org). If you enjoy Door County's wild places, please make an on-line donation of support and help us preserve more special places like these found here on Washington Island.

**Cover photos, top to bottom:** Little Lake Nature Preserve; an aerial view of the Richter Community Forest; hikers at the Domer-Neff Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary.

# The Door County Land Trust's WASHINGTON ISLAND *Nature Preserves*



*Island school children enjoy an outing at the Richter Community Forest with Door County Land Trust staff.*

The Door County Land Trust's

# Richter Community Forest Preserve

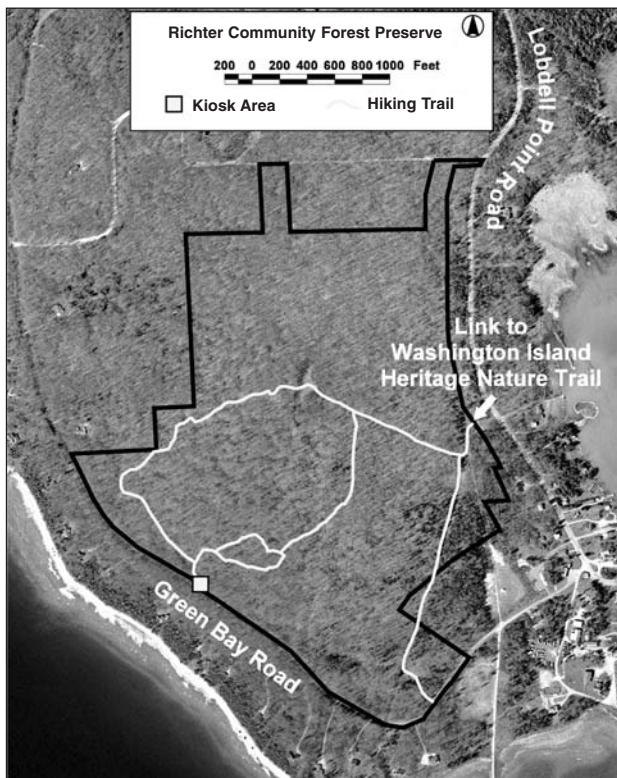


One of the largest tracts of undeveloped land on Washington Island, the **Richter Community Forest Preserve** contains a wonderful mix of northern hardwoods. The many large “tip up” mounds found throughout the preserve show that this area has always been tree covered and was never tilled for agricultural use. Hikers will note, however, that portions of the forest vary greatly in composition reflecting the different types of forest management activities and selective logging that have taken place over the past 100 years. Prior to European settlement, the original old growth forest contained 300-year-old white pines, hemlocks, sugar maple, American beech, red oak and basswood. Today, sustainable forestry practices are in place to restore this forest back to its old growth condition.

The Richter Community Forest provides habitat for a plethora of spring wildflowers and a large number of resident and neotropical migrating songbirds.

The Richter Community Forest Preserve was a gift to the Washington Island and Door County communities from lifelong islander, Arni Richter. Richter donated 158 acres on the southwestern tip of Washington Island to the Door County Land Trust in 2002 envisioning that this

## Richter Community Forest Preserve, *continued*



property would remain an education resource and place of beauty for islanders, visitors and school children alike.

An educational kiosk at the trailhead provides a map and preserve information. The hiking trail on this preserve connects to the Town of Washington Island Heritage Nature Trail.

**Points of Interest:** Thousands of years ago, this preserve was underwater! Postglacial Lake Nipissing (now Lake Michigan) water levels were much higher than they are today. As you hike, notice the small outcrops of bedrock ridges and beach stone along the forest floor that were formed as lake levels dropped over the past 3000-5000 years.

**Directions:** From the ferry dock, take Lobdell Point Road (County W) 1/10 mile to Green Bay Road. Turn left (west) and continue 7/10 mile on Green Bay Road. Park along the road. A sign for the Richter Community Forest Preserve trailhead is located across from fire number 301 on the east side of Green Bay Road.

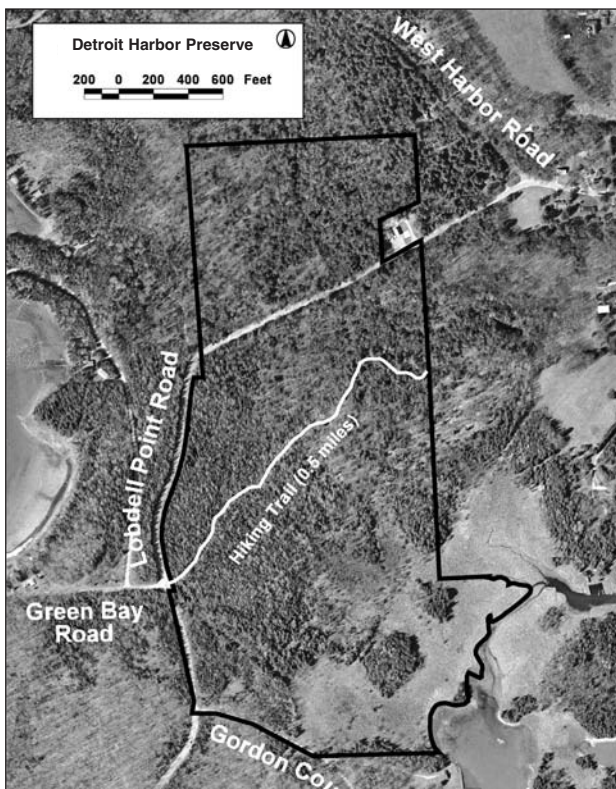
# Detroit Harbor Nature Preserve



The Door County Land Trust's **Detroit Harbor Nature Preserve** encompasses lands on both Washington and Detroit Islands. The harbor connecting these two islands is the site of one of the most productive spawning grounds for smallmouth bass in northern Lake Michigan. The Detroit Harbor Nature Preserve provides habitat for the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly and the federally threatened dwarf lake iris.

A marked trail on the Washington Island portion of this preserve leads through an impressive ridge/swale habitat dominated by old growth hemlock, yellow birch, sugar maple and northern white cedar. Canada yew, a declining species sensitive to deer browse, is found in the understory. This area is an important migratory stopover site and breeding habitat for numerous rare bird species including Caspian tern, redhead duck, American white pelican, bald eagle, and red-breasted merganser. The Detroit Harbor Nature Preserve was designated a Wisconsin State Natural Area in 2005. (Please note that the Detroit Harbor trail is maintained in summer, fall & winter. The trail may be wet and inaccessible in spring and after heavy rains.)

## Detroit Harbor Nature Preserve, *continued*



**Points of Interest:** The hiking trail at this preserve is a rustic old logging trail that leads through a beautiful “garden” of ostrich and sensitive ferns. The trail then enters into the heart of the old growth forest where some of Door County’s largest yellow birch can be found. As you walk, note the unique ridge/swale topography formed by ancient shorelines.

**Directions:** From the ferry dock, take Lobdell Point Road (County W) east 1 mile to the intersection of Green Bay Road and Lobdell Point Road. Park along Green Bay Road. The trailhead sign is located on the south side of this intersection on Lobdell Point Road. Follow the trail markings.



*Dwarf Lake Iris*

# Domer-Neff Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary



The **Domer-Neff Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary** hosts a trail that winds through bucolic old field and low shrubs where visitors may encounter some of the 218 recorded species of birds found on Washington Island. This preserve abuts another island landmark, the Stavkirk chapel. While in the neighborhood, plan to visit the meditation trail that winds its way through the grounds of this beautiful Scandinavian chapel.

The Domer-Neff Nature Preserve and Birding Sanctuary was established in 1997 when Mary Neff sought protection of 48 acres of inland old field near and dear to her heart. Her donation to the Land Trust marked the beginning of Land Trust involvement on Washington Island. Longtime islander, Marilyn Domer, also loved this special place and worked tirelessly to see that this property and other places on the island provided ideal habitat for Washington Island's feathered friends.



## Domer-Neff Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary, *continued*



**Points of Interest:** In 2004, Washington Island school children planted over 500 native trees and shrubs to enhance the wildlife and birding habitat of this preserve. Aviary visitors include Eastern Kingbirds, Field Sparrows, Meadowlarks and Bluebirds. Kestrels, Harriers and other birds of prey may be seen hunting in these open meadows.

**Directions:** From the ferry dock, take Lobdell Point Road (County W) to Main Road. Turn left (north.) At the intersection of Main Road and Townline Road, turn right and travel east approximately 3/10 mile. Park along the

road. A sign marks the beginning of the Land Trust trail on the north (left) side of the road. Follow the trail markings.



*Eastern Meadowlark*

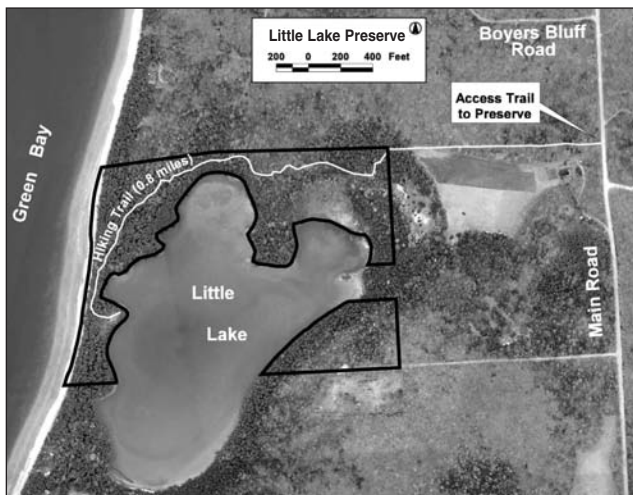
## Little Lake Nature Preserve



The centerpiece of the **Little Lake Nature Preserve** is Little Lake itself, Washington Island's only inland lake. Located within 250 feet of Lake Michigan, this land-locked lake was created thousands of years ago when waves washed gravel and cobblestones across a shallow bay of glacial Lake Nippising (now Lake Michigan.) As the glacial waters receded, a narrow ridge was formed to create Little Lake. Little Lake is fed primarily by underwater springs and surface runoff. The present lake level is just three feet above Lake Michigan.

The Door County Land Trust has preserved 33 acres of land surrounding the entire northern half of Little Lake, including over 5,000 feet of shoreline. Older stands of white cedar, hemlock and a floating bog mat provide habitat for calcareous-loving plants such as buckbean, marsh bellflower and marsh cinquefoil. The preserve provides habitat for nesting and foraging resident waterfowl and migratory songbirds including bald eagles, white pelicans, osprey, herons and black-throated blue warblers. The lake is also a major breeding site of a host of amphibians including the blue spotted salamander.

## Little Lake Nature Preserve, *continued*



**Points of Interest:** The Little Lake area was once home to a large village of Native Americans. Numerous artifacts have been found here and some may be viewed at the nearby Jacobsen Museum. The Little Lake Nature Preserve was also once home to one of the United State's most famous economists, Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929.) Veblen wrote "The Theory of the Leisure Class" and coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption." He purchased property on the west side of Little Lake in 1915 for use as a summer retreat and was known to row across Little Lake with his daughters each morning in a homemade skiff to purchase milk and butter from a nearby Icelandic farm. Exposed rock marks the spot where Veblen's study cabin stood until it was recently moved to the grounds of the Jacobsen Museum by the Island Heritage Conservancy.

The Little Lake Nature Preserve was dedicated a Wisconsin State Natural Area in 2007.

**Directions:** From the ferry dock, take Lobdell Point Road (County W) to Main Road. Turn left (north) and continue on Main Road. Access to the Little Lake Nature Preserve is across the street from 2288 Main Road between Gundmundsen Drive and Boyers Bluff Road. (It is about 1.2 miles past the intersection of Main Road and Jackson Harbor Road.) Park along the side of the road. A small sign on the west side of the road marks the access to the rustic trail. Follow the trail markings.

## Working in Partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

### The Coffey Swamp State Natural Area and the Big & Little Marsh State Natural Areas

The Door County Land Trust has done substantial land protection work in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI-DNR) at two of Washington Island's most ecologically valuable wetland areas. **Coffey Swamp** is located on the north side of the island and **Big and Little Marsh** on the east side. The Land Trust has purchased property within these two areas and transferred ownership and stewardship to the WI-DNR. WI-DNR lands are open to the public. The Door County Land Trust does not maintain trails at these sites. These sites are managed by the WI-DNR. Maps to these lands and more information about public use may be found at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/alpha.htm>

**Directions to Coffey Swamp State Natural Area:** From the ferry dock, take Lobdell Point Road (County W) north and east 5.8 miles. Park along the road and walk north into the natural area.

**Directions to Big and Little Marsh State Natural Area:** From the ferry dock, take Lobdell Point Road (County W) to Main Road. Turn left (north) and follow Main Road to Michigan Road. Turn right (east). Cross Eastside Road. A trail through Fernwood Gardens is located on the left (north) side of Michigan Road 1/2 mile east of Eastside Road. Park by wooden sign in small parking area off road.

## Other Land Trust-Protected Property on Washington Island

In addition to the nature preserves described in this brochure, the Door County Land Trust also owns and manages other properties on the Island. Due to their small size, hiking and other outdoor recreational opportunities are limited. Although small, these lands none-the-less provide critical wildlife habitat and beautiful scenery.

### Conservation Easements: Another Land Protection Tool

The Door County Land Trust works with private landowners to protect their property through the use of **conservation easement agreements**. Conservation easements are legal agreements that permanently restrict the type and amount of future development on a property in order to protect its scenic and conservation value. *Lands protected through conservation easements remain in private ownership and are typically **not open to the public** without the landowner's consent.*

## How Preserved Land Affects a Community's Tax Revenue

Many people wonder what effect protected lands have on a community's tax revenue.

- For lands owned and protected by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the state of Wisconsin pays local municipalities the full amount in lieu of taxes that it would have received if the land were under private ownership.
- Lands owned and protected by the Door County Land Trust are often eligible for tax exemption under state law if they protect native plants and animals and are available to the public. The Land Trust chooses, however, to voluntarily keep some properties, such as the Richter Community Forest Preserve, on the tax rolls.
- Lands protected by conservation easement agreements remain in private ownership and therefore remain on the tax rolls.

"Cost of Community Services" studies done around the country show that development can increase the need for costly community services. Lands protected from development, however, require very little in community services. In some cases, these lands may contribute more in tax revenue than it costs a community to service them.

A recent study found that Washington Island's protected lands add an average of \$2 to each taxable property's annual bill. This is a small amount to pay for the income generated by birding festivals, kayaking events and other eco-based tourism draws. Add hunting access, water purification, erosion control, wildlife habitat and scenic beauty to the balance and land preservation becomes a win-win scenario.

For more information on Cost of Community Services studies in general and for the effects of protected land on Washington Island's tax revenue, please visit the publications section of our website at [www.doorcountylandtrust.org](http://www.doorcountylandtrust.org) or write or call the Door County Land Trust.



# Notes

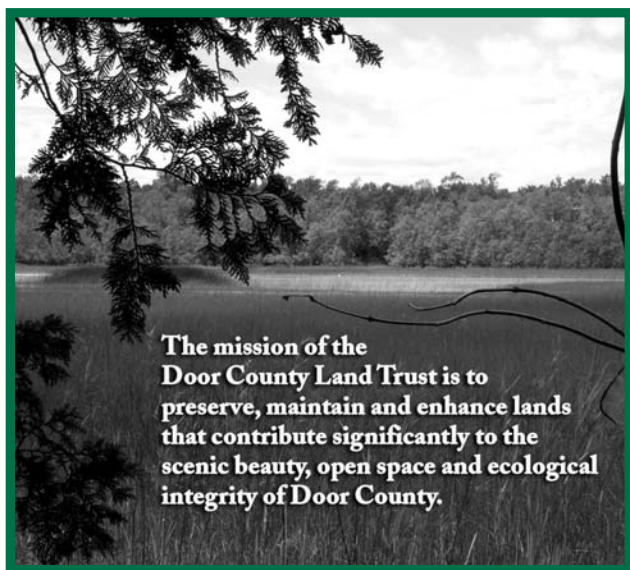
# DCLT Preserve Use Guidelines

Door County Land Trust nature preserves are managed to protect fragile ecological resources and provide habitat for native plants and wildlife. There are no staff on-site and no restrooms available. Visitors should come prepared with drinking water, snacks, and appropriate footwear and clothing for changing weather conditions. Trails are rustic in places.

For the safety and enjoyment of our visitors as well as the health of our forests, meadows and wetlands, we ask that you please observe the following rules:

1. Please stay on the trails at all times.
2. If one is provided, please use the boot brush station at preserve trail-heads to reduce the spread of invasive plant seeds.
3. Dogs are welcome on the trails, but must be kept on a leash at all times.
4. Please take out everything you bring with you, including garbage.
5. Many of our preserves allow bow and gun hunting. For information on hunting rules and opportunities, please see the Land Trust website: [www.doorcountylandtrust.org](http://www.doorcountylandtrust.org). When visiting one of our preserves during bow hunting season, please wear blaze orange or brightly colored clothing. We do not recommend hiking on Land Trust Preserves during gun hunting season. Visiting preserves during all hunting seasons is at your own risk.
6. Please stay within the preserve boundaries and do not trespass on neighboring private lands.
7. The following activities **are not permitted** on *Door County Land Trust* preserves:
  - Use of vehicles, including bicycles, ATVs, snowmobiles, & aircraft, etc.
  - Camping                      • Cooking or Camp Fires
  - Excavating of Caves or Rock Climbing                      • Horseback Riding
  - Geocaching                      • Dogs Off-Leash
  - Collection or disturbance of any natural material, alive or dead. This includes fruits, nuts, other edible plant parts, animals, fungi, rocks, minerals, fossils, archaeological artifacts, soil, downed wood, wildflowers and other plants, etc. Collection for scientific research requires permission from the *Door County Land Trust* and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
  - Use of firearms or other weapons, except where allowed for activities as described on our Hunting Program webpage.

Thank you for respecting these rules as you enjoy visiting  
Door County Land Trust Nature Preserves.  
We appreciate your help in keeping these special places safe  
and serene for visitors and wildlife alike!



The Door County Land Trust extends sincere thanks to its Washington Island Committee and to all the individuals and families who support our land preservation efforts. Without their hard work, their generosity and their love of the land, there would be no need for this preserve guide as there would be no Door County Land Trust preserves.

*Thank you!*

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The Door County Land Trust exists because of the help of over 2,200 friends and neighbors. If you enjoy Door County's open places, please use the enclosed envelope to make a contribution of support today. Or, visit our website: [www.doorcountylandtrust.org](http://www.doorcountylandtrust.org) to find out more about the Land Trust and to make an online donation of support.



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