



Torch Bay Nature Preserve began in 1991 as a dream by the people of Torch Lake Township and became a reality in 2000. The acquisition of these roughly 40 acres was made possible by a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, matched by the previous owners.

Money and labor to develop the nature trails, viewing platforms, interpretive shelter and signage was donated locally and matched with a Coastal Zone Management grant.

This unique Preserve includes mature forested dunes, a dune-swale complex, beach ponds, and over 700 feet of Grand Traverse Bay beach. It was conceived and is maintained through the stewardship of the people of Torch Lake Township with the guidance of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.



We welcome you to explore the varied nature trails shown on the trail map on the back of this pamphlet. Don't miss the viewing platforms at the beach pond and the south wetland. Your quest for knowledge and your curiosity will be rewarded by the informational displays in the roofed interpretive shelter at the western trailhead and parking area. Take the time to enjoy the quiet atmosphere from the benches at the top of the "ridge view" trails.

Boardwalks provide handicap accessibility to the interpretive shelter and to the north beach pond viewing platform.

The beach area offers over 700 feet of Grand Traverse Bay shoreline for activities such as beach combing for an endless variety of colorful stones polished by the action of surf and sand. The beach area offers the opportunity to view spectacular sunsets, approaching storms, seabirds and interesting surf conditions.



The geology of this area has changed considerably over the eons of time. Millions of years ago a shallow, tropical ocean covered this land. Fossil evidence of plants and animals of that era can be found here today: examples are trilobites and petoskey stones.

As the earth's climate cooled, the oceans receded and a series of ice ages left great gouges in the land. These gouges became the lakes. During the last ice age, about 10,000 years ago, northern Michigan was covered with a glacier perhaps 3000 feet thick. As the glacier melted it deposited mounds and ridges of sand, stone and boulders. During these climate changes the lake levels rose and fell many times leaving evidence of multiple shoreline and sand dune formations.

Human habitation of this area can be traced back for at least 10,000 years. Hopewell people no doubt walked these trails and traveled these waters. Modern Native American people referred to their predecessors as Anishnabeg, "those who came before us".

When Columbus landed somewhere in the Caribbean in 1492, it has been estimated there were over 20 million Indians in the Americas. It was 100 to 150 years later that the first Europeans came to the northern Michigan area.

Simon Otto, a tribal elder who is half Ottawa (Odawa) and half Chippewa (Ojibwa), said his ancestors were keenly aware of the progress of the Europeans via the "moccasin telegraph". He said the first white settlers were Jesuit priests called "black robes" and fur traders or explorers called "Chi-Mook-Mon" which translates to "Big Knife" for the long swords they carried.

The Odawa people formed villages every 8 or 10 miles along the lakeshore from Manistee to Grand Traverse Bay and around Mackinaw to Cheboygan. They lived here from spring through fall. In the winter they moved inland to more protected areas to engage in hunting and trapping. The Odawa people traded with and welcomed the Ojibwa and Potawatomi people.