

Hunting on TNC Lands in Michigan

A comprehensive guide to hunting on TNC preserves and reserves in Michigan.

Overview

Hunting is a part of Michigan's history and culture, and it can also play an important role in conservation. This document outlines The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) hunting guidelines and allowable hunting activities on our lands in Michigan.

WHY WE ALLOW HUNTING

At some of our nature preserves, in both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas, white-tailed deer populations have grown well beyond the ability of plant communities to withstand their browsing. We use hunting as a tool to control deer populations and reduce the damage they are causing, allowing plant communities to recover their full vigor and diversity.

In addition, some of our lands are enrolled in the Commercial Forest Program, which require they remain open to public foot traffic for hunting, trapping and fishing. On these lands, we allow all legal hunting with access on foot only. While motorized access is not allowed, public roads run through or near our forest reserve properties.

Where We Allow Hunting

Preserves

Lower Peninsula

- Grand River Fen Preserve
- Grass Bay Preserve
- Ives Road Fen Preserve
- Nan Weston Preserve at Sharon Hollow
- Paw Paw Prairie Fen Preserve
- Ross Coastal Plain Marsh Preserve
- Thunder Bay Preserve

Upper Peninsula

- Carl A. Gerstacker Preserve at Dudley Bay
- Haunted Forest Preserve
- Helmut and Candice Stern Preserve at Mt. Baldy
- Laughing Whitefish Lake Preserve
- Mary Macdonald Preserve at Horseshoe Harbor
- Maxton Plains Preserve
- McMahon Lake Preserve
- Swamp Lake Preserve

PRESERVE PERMIT GUIDELINES

To obtain a Permit to hunt on TNC preserves you must agree to the following rules and statements:

- Deer hunting is not permitted on all preserves.
- All hunters must carry a Conservancy-issued Permit while hunting on a preserve.
- Only white-tailed deer may be hunted; no other species may be hunted or trapped; no collection of plants and animals other than deer. The hunter must report how many deer were taken (and gender of deer) upon expiration of the Permit.
- Permits are personal to the hunter and may not be used by or assigned to any other individual.
- All persons, including minors, accompanying the hunter must have a TNC-issued permit. Hunters may request a Permit to allow one minor child to accompany the hunter on the Property. The child must be at least 10 years of age and less than 17 years of age, have all license or permits required to hunt under Michigan law, and must have completed a course in hunting safety approved by the MDNR.
- All hunting must be done within designated areas.
- To prevent unintended harm to other preserve users, no long-range shooting is allowed across open fields, marshes, or roads. Unnecessary shooting or shooting at targets is prohibited.
- No hunting is allowed within a 200-yard radius of any inhabited dwelling.
- No trapping or snaring is allowed.
- Alcohol is not allowed on TNC preserves or in preserve parking lots.

- No fires, smoking, camping, littering (including the use of plastic flagging), or dumping of ashes, trash, garbage, chemical waste or other unsightly or offensive material on TNC property.
- No cutting, breaking or clearing of vegetation. Planting of food plots or other vegetation is not allowed.
- Only two (2) temporary, non-damaging deer stands are permitted. No tree spikes, steps, or any implement that will damage trees are allowed. All stands must be removed prior to expiration of this permit. The hunter shall place his/her name and contact information on the stand. Any stands not removed by this date shall become the property of TNC.
- One (1) temporary trail camera is permitted. All cameras must be removed prior to expiration of this permit. The hunter shall place his/her name and contact information on the camera. Any cameras not removed by his date shall become the property of TNC.
- Parking of vehicles is only allowed in designated parking areas. Access to the property must be from the designated parking areas or along the existing road. No off-road vehicle use.
- In addition to the above rules, hunters must comply with all local, state, and federal laws and ordinances governing hunting activities, including obtaining all required government licenses or permits.
- TNC is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

The Nature Conservancy reserves the right to full use of the Property and surrounding Preserve. Activities of TNC and its guests take precedence over the hunter's rights under this Permit.

OBTAINING A PRESERVE PERMIT

Please refer to [nature.org/mihunting](https://www.nature.org/mihunting) for a breakdown of which sites have permits available. The deadline for applying for a Hunting Permit is approximately June 15. If you are interested in hunting white-tailed deer on Conservancy preserves, please call 517-316-0300 ext. 8 or email michiganhunting@tnc.org.

Reserves

The Nature Conservancy also has five Upper Peninsula properties enrolled as [Commercial Forest Lands](#) in the State of Michigan. On these properties, TNC employs a conservation strategy that includes sustainable timber harvesting to demonstrate managing forests in a way that promotes ecological values and reaps direct economic benefits. The Commercial Forest Act provides public access for hunting and fishing, but does not allow motor vehicle access, camping, tree cutting, structures or other related activities.

The following TNC reserves are enrolled in the Commercial Forest Program (CFP):

- Keweenaw Heartlands
- Lon Matthews Reserve at Mulligan Creek Highlands
- Raptor's Roost Reserve
- Two Hearted River Forest Reserve
- Wilderness Lakes Reserve
- Slate River Forest Reserve (only 10% of the property is currently enrolled in the CFP, please reference the DNR's Mi-HUNT map if planning to hunt at Slate River).

TNC RESERVE GUIDELINES

To hunt on TNC reserves, you must agree to the following rules and statements. Leaseholders should refer to their TNC documentation for guidelines.

- Hunters must adhere to all [MI Department of Natural Resources rules and regulations](#), and must comply with all relevant local, state, and federal laws and ordinances governing hunting activities such as seasons and harvest limits, and must obtain all required government licenses or permits.
- To prevent unintended harm to other preserve users, no long-range shooting is allowed across open fields, marshes, or roads. Unnecessary shooting or shooting at targets is prohibited.
- No hunting is allowed within a 200-yard radius of any inhabited dwelling.
- Alcohol is not allowed on TNC reserves.
- No fires, smoking, camping, littering (including the use of plastic flagging), or dumping of ashes, trash, garbage, chemical waste or other unsightly or offensive material on TNC property.
- No cutting, breaking or clearing of vegetation. Planting of food plots or other vegetation is not allowed.
- Permanent blinds and stands are not permitted. Any blinds or stands not removed by the hunter shall become the property of TNC.
- Off-road vehicles only permitted on [DNR-designated routes](#).
- The Nature Conservancy is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

[State of Michigan Commercial Forestry Program](#)

[Interactive map of CF lands in Michigan](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does TNC allow hunting of white-tailed deer on nature preserves?

At some of our preserves white-tailed deer populations have grown well beyond the ability of plant communities to withstand their browsing. We use hunting as a tool to control deer populations and reduce the damage they are causing, allowing plant communities to recover their full vigor and diversity.

Can TNC close nature preserves where hunting is allowed during hunting season?

TNC's nature preserves offer an opportunity for people to connect with nature in various ways, in all seasons. Throughout the year, we post notice that hunting is allowed at the entry points to our preserves so that non-hunters are aware that hunting could be taking place. We recommend that visitors wear blaze orange or neon pink for visibility and safety on the preserve during these hunting seasons.

What species can be hunted on TNC preserves?

We allow hunting, by permit only, of white-tailed deer. At this time, other species do not cause the ecological damage that deer do, so management of them by hunting is not necessary. In addition, some of our lands are enrolled in the Commercial Forest Program, which requires that they remain open to public foot traffic for hunting, trapping and fishing. On these lands, we allow all legal hunting with access on foot only. Permanent blinds and motorized access are not allowed.

Can TNC plant corn or food plots on preserves to entice deer?

We use hunting as a tool to control deer populations and reduce the damage they are causing. Planting corn or food plots, especially any non-native species can be detrimental to the natural ecosystem we are protecting and restoring at any given site and the purpose of the hunting program is to control deer populations on the preserves at non-damaging levels. Attracting additional deer is counter to our management objective.

Do these hunting guidelines apply to leased lands?

Some properties owned by TNC contain recreational hunting leases. Leaseholders and their guests have exclusive rights to hunt within their lease and leases are considered private property. Leaseholders must follow all state and federal regulations that pertain to hunting, fishing, and trapping. Members of the public hunting on adjacent Commercial Forest lands that TNC owns must respect the private property rights of leaseholders.

How do I find Commercial Forest Land open to hunting?

As previously mentioned, all TNC's forest reserve properties are at least partially enrolled in the Commercial Forest Act. To find out if an area in or adjacent to a TNC property is in the Commercial Forest Act, please [refer to the MIDNR's Mi-HUNT Map](#).