

NATURE RESERVES

St. Joseph Island Nature Reserve

Ontario Nature's most northerly reserve is of special significance to the local naturalist community. The 40-hectare property located southwest of Sault Ste. Marie consists mostly of cedar swamp and fen and is home to a number of species of orchids.

The property is not easily accessible. In spring, it is virtually underwater and throughout the year the old logging roads that are used as trails are soggy at best. Aside from the cedar swamp, there are also swamp thickets of alder and dogwood, a treed knoll, abandoned field, and a treed fen. The entire property was logged before its purchase, but good stands of cedar have grown back on the property's western end. The Sault Field Naturalists purchased the property in 1968 at a tax sale.

A number of northern orchid species can be found on the property, including Dragon's Mouth, Heartleaf Twayblade and Green Adder's-mouth. Rattlesnake Plantain can be found on the drier ground of the wooded knoll. Typical northern bird species, such as black-throated green warbler, can be seen on the reserve. Beavers, muskrats, and mink, seem to be abundant.

How to get there

It is best to contact the Sault Field Naturalists before heading to the reserve as the property is not marked and there are no formal trails. To reach the reserve, turn right off of Hwy. 548 just south of Hilton Beach, which is just north of the highway's easternmost point. The reserve is on the right side of the highway at the bottom of a hill. A pond marks the western boundary.