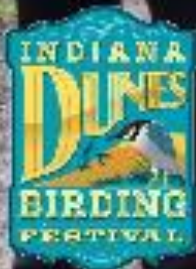
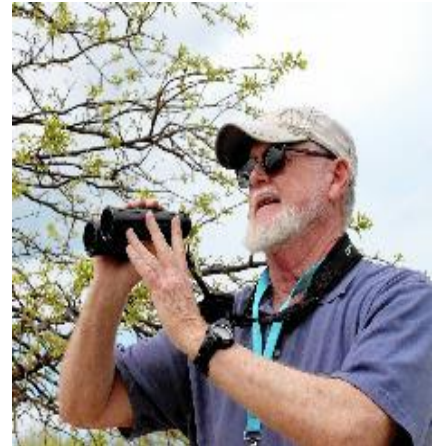


# Self-Guided Birding at the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival



# Self-Guided Birding at the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival

The Indiana Dunes is a birder's paradise. With over 370 species of birds found along the beaches, wetlands, prairies, and forests that encompass over 40 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, there is literally a birding experience for everyone. Each guided tour strives to provide a quality birding experience with as small of a birding group as possible. While we invite as many of you as possible to explore the dunes during spring migration, it's simply not possible to provide a custom birding tour and a guide for the 750+ people that join us each May. Therefore, we offer this self-guided birding guide that features some of the top birding destinations during the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival and tips on the how to make the most out of each birding location.



## Beverly Shores and the Great Marsh Trail

**Beverly Shores** is a Dunes community located along Lake Michigan between Mount Baldy and the Indiana Dunes State Park. Although somewhat lesser known than other northwest Indiana birding sites, Beverly Shores is practically unparalleled in both habitat diversity and ease of access, making it a "must stop" site for any Dunes Area larger day birding tours. The site is comprised of two distinct, spatially separated habitats that will be discussed in turn: **Beverly Drive** and **Lake Shore Drive**.



**Beverly Drive** is a two-lane road that runs along the southern boundary of the Beverly Shores community, transecting a large tract of interdunal marsh. The interdunal marsh is a wetland habitat that occurs between the old dune crests (before the last recession of Lake Michigan) and the current dune crests. This unique habitat fosters the nationally renowned diversity of plants and animals found within the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (IDNL). Beverly Drive courses in an east-west orientation for about 3.5 miles between Kemil Road and US 12. The road has major speed restrictions and is heavily patrolled by the Beverly Shores Police.

Beverly Drive can be birded by a couple of methods depending on time constraints and the birds of interest. The best way to sample the greatest number of birds is to drive slowly down the road with all the car windows rolled down. Be advised that although this technique produces great numbers and diversity of species, most tallied birds are by sound only and not sight. Therefore, it helps to have at least one "song-savvy" member in your birding party!

Because there are few pull-offs along Beverly Drive, there are not many opportunities to get out and bird on foot.



The other birding strategy along Beverly Drive specifically concerns marsh birds found near the Great Marsh Trail found at 500 S. Broadway, Beverly Shores, IN 46301. This is the newest trail in the national lakeshore, just a short stroll to an accessible observation platform provides a great view of this recently restored wetland. Wading birds like herons and egrets and song birds such as warblers and red-winged black birds are again abundant. Bring binoculars or a spotting scope for the best views. Rails and bitterns are best heard in the cattail marsh along the trail and overlook. Dawn and the immediate pre-dawn hours are the best times to see and hear rails, bitterns, and owls in this area.

In May and June, be sure to drive slowly along the tree-shrouded portion of Kemil Road between US 12 and Beverly Drive to listen for calling Acadian Flycatchers, Cerulean Warblers, and Louisiana Waterthrush. Birders that travel farther north towards Kemil Beach will find Summer Tanagers and Prairie Warblers to be somewhat reliable.



Typical Time to bird Beverly Drive: 60-90 minutes.

**Lake Shore Drive** runs along the Lake Michigan shoreline and defines the northern boundary of Beverly Shores. Although the lake can be viewed along the entire length of the road, parking is fairly restrictive in this residential area. The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's Lakeview Overlook facility located on the north side of the Lake Shore Drive provides parking and a platform from which to scan the lake. Additional National Lakeshore parking can be found at the north ends of Kemil Road and Central Avenue, both of which require some walking to access the beach.

Migrating loons, grebes, waterfowl, and interesting gulls can be found seasonally along this stretch of shoreline. In May, Common Loons and Red-breasted Mergansers are the most abundant species seen. Longshore flights may observe Blue Jays and Cedar Waxwings flying along the beach in the early morning hours.



Typical Time to bird Lake Shore Drive: 30-60 minutes, although half-day or all-day vigils are sometimes held during major flights.

**Ownership:**

**Beverly Drive:** Town of Beverly Shores, Indiana

**Lake Shore Drive:** National Park Service / U.S Department of the Interior

**Hours:** None.

**Fees:** None.

**Restrooms:** Restrooms are available at the IDNL Kemil Beach Parking Lot on Kemil Rd

**Special Considerations:**

**Traffic:** The Town of Beverly Shores has its own police force that closely patrols the streets. When birding by car on Beverly Drive, be sure not to stop in the road when traffic is approaching from behind. Cars will pass without much problem if you drive slowly with your flashers on.

**Parking:** Pull-offs are limited on both Beverly Drive and Lake Shore Drive. For lakefront parking, National Lakeshore parking lots are located at the Lakeview Overlook facility and the north ends of Kemil Road and Central Avenue. The beach can be accessed on foot after parking in one of these lots.

## Indiana Dunes State Park

Indiana Dunes State Park occupies 2,182 acres in Northwest Indiana. It was established in 1925, as Indiana's 5th state park. The rare collection of habitats and associated plants and animals has long been recognized as one of the most biologically rich areas in the country. Within the boundaries of Indiana Dunes State Park, one can find lake, beach, foredunes, dune forests, dune swamps, prairie, and savanna habitat. This mixture helps support a vast variety of bird species and supports many migrating birds as they funnel along the lakeshore during migration.



While any trail can find a good variety of birds, trails 2 and 10 are by far the most popular with birders. Trail 2 circles the Great Marsh and traverses it on a mile-long boardwalk, however construction may make completing the full circle difficult. Trail 2 is a good spot for nesting woodland birds such as Hooded Warbler, Veery, and Red-shouldered Hawk. Kirtland's Warbler has also been found here. Trail 10 follows behind the high dunes and comes back along the beach. A variety of forestland and savanna habitat is passed on this hike. Birding opportunities



exist at the east end of the park where Trail 10 passes through the Pinery and Paradise Valley. Trails 7 and 8 crisscross the high dunes where migrant passerines can be found when the winds are calmer. Whippoorwills are also common on summer evenings in the high dunes. To access these trails, it is recommended that you start at the park's **Wilson Shelter**. The area near the shelter can be very good for birding, without having to go too far.

Trail 3 is a short unique trail that starts at the bird observation area (old green tower) and passes through open high dunes, savanna, and finally prairie habitat on the west end of the

park. Trail 9 is also a good trail to visit the park's high dunes and blowout features. Summer Tanager and Prairie Warbler have been seen in recent years in the blowouts.

Along the lakeshore, the **bird observation tower** (old green tower) located on a dune west of the West Beach Parking Lot offers birders a good vantage point for migrating waterfowl, passerines, and hawks. The former tower has been replaced with an accessible birding platform now. Both Dunes area and state record high counts for individual birds have been recorded from the old green tower. Some species counts include: Eastern Kingbird (418; state record), Cliff Swallow (120; Dunes area record), Cape May Warbler (21; Dunes area record), and Scarlet Tanager (61; state record). Record counts have also been tallied for Northern Flicker (1200; state record) and counts around 100 have been made of Baltimore Oriole.



Visitors should not pass up an opportunity to visit the park's **Nature Center**. Information on the park itself, and recent bird sightings can be found there. The bird feeder area often hosts unusual birds and gives good glimpses at some of the more common species.

Typical Time to bird the state park: 2-8 hours, though all-day vigils are conducted from the bird observation tower.

**Ownership:**

**Indiana Department of Natural Resources**, Division of State Parks and Reservoirs.  
1600 N 25 E, Chesterton, IN 46304

**Hours:** Park open 7am to 11pm daily.

**Fees:** Entrance fees collected daily through early November. \$5.00 in-state vehicles, \$10.00 out of state vehicles. Free entry with IDBF festival pass.

**Restrooms:** Modern restrooms throughout property.

**Special Considerations:** During major weekends the park is full of visitors. Don't expect migrating birds on the beach when the weather is warm. Hiking the trails in the early morning is the best bet to avoid human traffic. Hikers who walk in at least one mile are often rewarded with the best solitude.



**SIGN UP FOR RARE BIRD TEXT ALERTS  
DURING THE INDIANA DUNES BIRDING  
FESTIVAL BY VISITING  
[WWW.BIT.DO/DUNESBIRDALERT](http://WWW.BIT.DO/DUNESBIRDALERT)**

## Dunes Heron Rookery and Reynold's Creek

The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's Heron Rookery unit and nearby Reynold's Creek Gamebird Habitat Area are two distinct birding experiences within a few minutes' drive of one another.

The **Heron Rookery** was the site of a former heron rookery that is no longer active, as the birds now nest elsewhere. Regardless of the lack of herons, the subsequent trail along the Little Calumet River is outstanding for spring migrant warblers, vireos, and thrushes. The deep woods habitat along the river provides for many riparian species such as Barred Owl and Pileated Woodpecker, and more regional rare species such as Yellow-throated Warbler. Finding a dozen or more warbler species in May is very doable at this location. The trail is an out and back, with no loop, but parking lots on both ends. Most birders have the best success birding from the west parking lot and birding about 1 mile before turning around. By late May bugs can be an issue, so repellent is a must. Additionally, seasonal rains and floods can make the trails muddy at times, so one should have good hiking shoes. The west parking lot can be found at 1301 North 450 East, Chesterton, IN 46304.



In spring, before and as trees are leafing out, the woodlands along this trail are blanketed with the most extensive display of spring wildflowers in the national lakeshore. Trillium, spring beauties and Dutchman's breeches are just a few of the flowers you'll see along this trail. Typical time to bird the Heron Rookery is 30-90 minutes.

**Reynold's Creek** lies a few miles north and south of the east parking lot of the Heron Rookery. Formerly, a state prison farm, the land is now owned by the Indiana DNR, Division of Fish and Wildlife and features a diverse prairie and open meadowlands habitat that has become a great location for typical prairie species such as Dickcissel, Bobolinks, and Henslow's Sparrows. In recent year, the fields just south of the Heron Rookery have been best for these species.



Possession of the land which comprises Reynolds Creek Game Bird Area began in 2011 with the transfer of 1,250 acres. Reynolds Creek Game Bird Area is comprised mostly of agricultural fields, two small woodlots, and several restorable wetlands. Future plans are to decrease the farmland and convert to native prairies and restore the wetlands. If you drive north from the Heron Rookery east parking lot, you'll encounter more prairie habitat at 1500N, and an additional wetland unit that often holds shorebirds and dabbler ducks. This unit is along the county line road as it crosses over I-94. The parking lot is just before the bridge on the south

side of the highway. The physical address for the main parking lot, south of the Heron Rookery is 1303 600 E, Michigan City, IN 46360. Typical time to bird Reynold's Creek is 30-60 minutes.

**Ownership:**

**Heron Rookery:** National Park Service / U.S Department of the Interior

**Reynold's Creek:** Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife

**Hours:** Open dawn to 10pm daily.

**Fees:** No fees

**Restrooms:** No restrooms located on either property.

**Special Considerations:** During spring floods, the Heron Rookery trail can be very wet. Hunting takes place on Reynold's Creek, but no seasons should be open during the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival.

### **Dunes National Lakeshore Cowles Bog**

Embark on a miniature odyssey involving multiple habitats on the 4.5 miles of interconnected trails at **Cowles Bog**. The Cowles Bog Trail highlights an area of such outstanding plant diversity that it was designated as a National Natural Landmark in 1965. This location, where Dr. Henry Cowles conducted much of his early work in plant ecology and succession in the early 1900s, remains an important focus for scientific study today. You can choose a short, moderate hike through wetlands, a longer hike into the forested dunes, or a challenging excursion all the way down to the shoreline. Cowles Bog is known not only for its plant diversity, but the great birding.



For birder's visiting for the first time, you'll want to park at the main parking lot on Mineral Springs Road, just before the Dune Acres entrance guard shack, located at 1618 N. Mineral Springs Rd., Porter, IN 46304. You'll trek back across the street to start the trail. A 2.5-mile loop circles the main wetland, while additional trails traverse across more moderate dune savanna forests, eventually leading to the lake. However, most birders stick to the main wetland loop trail. The spring wooded wetlands can host any number of wet woodland species in May, including Northern Waterthrush, Canada Warbler, as well your typical common marsh birds, such as Yellow Warbler and Marsh Wren. Sandhill Cranes also breed here each year.



Hikers that complete the entire loop will also find a retention pond on the south end of the trail. This deeper water pond can host late migrating waterfowl, including both Horned and Pied-billed Grebe, in addition to more common nesting ducks. The open areas have hosted Brown Thrashers, Northern Mockingbirds, and kingbirds in recent years.

Both rails and woodcocks can be found along the main entrance road during the day and during evening excursions. In previous years, several heron and egret species have been found wading in the wetlands, including both Snowy and Cattle Egret. A Kirtland's Warbler was found feeding in the pines on the loops west in a couple years ago. Typical time to bird Cowles Bog is 1-2 hours, though longer time will be needed if you head towards the lake.



**Ownership:**

**Cowles Bog:** National Park Service / U.S Department of the Interior

**Hours:** Open dawn to 10pm daily.

**Fees:** No fees

**Restrooms:** Primitive restrooms located in main parking lot as well as the south parking lot.

**Special Considerations:** Cowles Bog can be heavily birded during the birding festival. Stay on marked trails to preserve this unique habitat located within the Indiana Dunes. Trail surface is mixture of loose sand and packed dirt.

## **Dunes National Lakeshore Miller Woods**

The **Miller Woods** trail winds through several habitats including wetlands, globally rare oak savanna, open dunes and beach. Birders that take the entire trail north, will have excellent views of the lake and the dunes are incredible. The oak savanna's native grasses and wildflowers, including lupine, thrive in the sunlight and open forest floor. The wild lupine, the only food for the caterpillar of the endangered Karner blue butterfly, grows close to the trail.



The Miller Woods trail is also a festival program location, as the Paul Douglas Center for Environmental Education is located at the trail head. Parking can be found at 100 North Lake Street, Gary, IN 46403. From there, traverse an overhead pedestrian bridge to access the building and hiking trails. The trails immediately circle two large wetlands that can host a diversity of migrating and breeding wetland species, particularly when the weather is cooler. The nearby oak savanna woodlands have numerous towhees and the sounds of Red-eyed Vireos and Scarlet Tanagers can be heard. The open oak woodlands can also be good for



finding the sometimes regionally uncommon Red-headed Woodpeckers that do well in this habitat.

As the trail continues through undulating dune woodlands, the habitat opens as it approaches the lake. Birders will want to stay in single file on the narrow trail to protect yourself from the abundant poison ivy along the trail edges as well as the fragile lupine habitat. At the beach, breeding Blue Grosbeaks have been found in recent years. In total, nearly 200 species of birds have been logged here.

Typical time to bird Miller Woods about 45-90 minutes.



### **Ownership:**

**Miller Woods:** National Park Service / U.S Department of the Interior

**Hours:** Open dawn to 10pm daily.

**Fees:** No fees

**Restrooms:** Restrooms located inside the Paul Douglas Center.

**Special Considerations:** There is a short paved trail off the back of the Paul Douglas Center that is wheelchair accessible, otherwise the trail is a combination of packed and loose sand. The nearby Lake St Beach (Miller Beach) is globally important for its migratory bird watches done in the fall season.

## **Michigan City Harbor**

**Michigan City Harbor** is a well-known lakefront birding site located in northwest Indiana just miles from the Michigan state line. The harbor, with its beaches, piers, yacht basin, and breakwaters is almost certainly the best site on the lakefront for viewing Lake Michigan birds. A full 40% of the rare and accidental species on the Indiana state checklist were documented at Michigan City Harbor, arguably making it the state's premiere lakefront watching site.



**Trail Creek**, the aquatic thoroughfare into and out of the harbor, divides Michigan City Harbor into two main components: **Washington Park** on the east, and **NIPSCO** on the west. At 90 acres, the Washington Park side of the harbor is by far the larger of the two areas and has many features of interest to birders. The southern boundary is defined by a large area of mature trees and well-manicured lawns typical of an urban park. Immediately north of this wooded segment lies the parking lot, which extends northward to the beach and westward to the yacht basin. To the east of the parking lot stretches a long expanse of sandy beach that can be scanned easily from the lot's northeast corner. During periods of low human disturbance (e.g. the early morning), this area of beach serves as a popular resting area for gulls and terns, often amassing



hundreds of easily scannable gulls. Also, to the east of the lot but well-back from the water are the few remnants of dunes remaining at Michigan City Harbor, occupied largely by a fragmented stand of marram grass. While these dunal remnants are subtle and amount to just high spots on the beach, they are prime locations from which to monitor the harbor during times of heavy bird movement along the lake. Farther east, you can drive towards what is known as “Federer’s Alley,” where an additional parking lot and small wooded area behind the dunes often harbors migrating songbirds.

Looking west one sees the most prominent feature of Michigan City Harbor: the US Coast Guard jetty (also known as East Pier) which terminates in the well-known lighthouse. The tip of this jetty (on the north side of the lighthouse) serves as another prime location from which to scan the lake, especially for birds that tend to migrate farther out over open water. Immediately west of the jetty lay the effluent waters of Trail Creek, followed by NIPSCO Beach on the far western edge. Just northwest of the lighthouse is a single offshore break-wall situated some 300 feet from the tip of the jetty. This break-wall, often covered with scores of gulls and shorebirds, has also served as an observational post for birds of prey, including Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Snowy Owls (in the winter). The yacht basin lies adjacent to Trail Creek on the Washington Park side of the harbor. It can be scanned from two locations: the northern edge is most easily viewed from the beachside sidewalk that runs between the parking lot and the jetty, and the southern section can be observed from a pull off along the harbor’s one-way exit road. This southern yacht basin section includes a small area of open water that in the past has hosted overwintering dabbling and bay ducks as well as several rarities.



Typical Time to bird Washington Park: 45-60 minutes.

**Ownership:**

**Michigan City Harbor:** City of Michigan City, Indiana; Michigan City Port Authority,

**Hours:** Open dawn to 10pm daily.

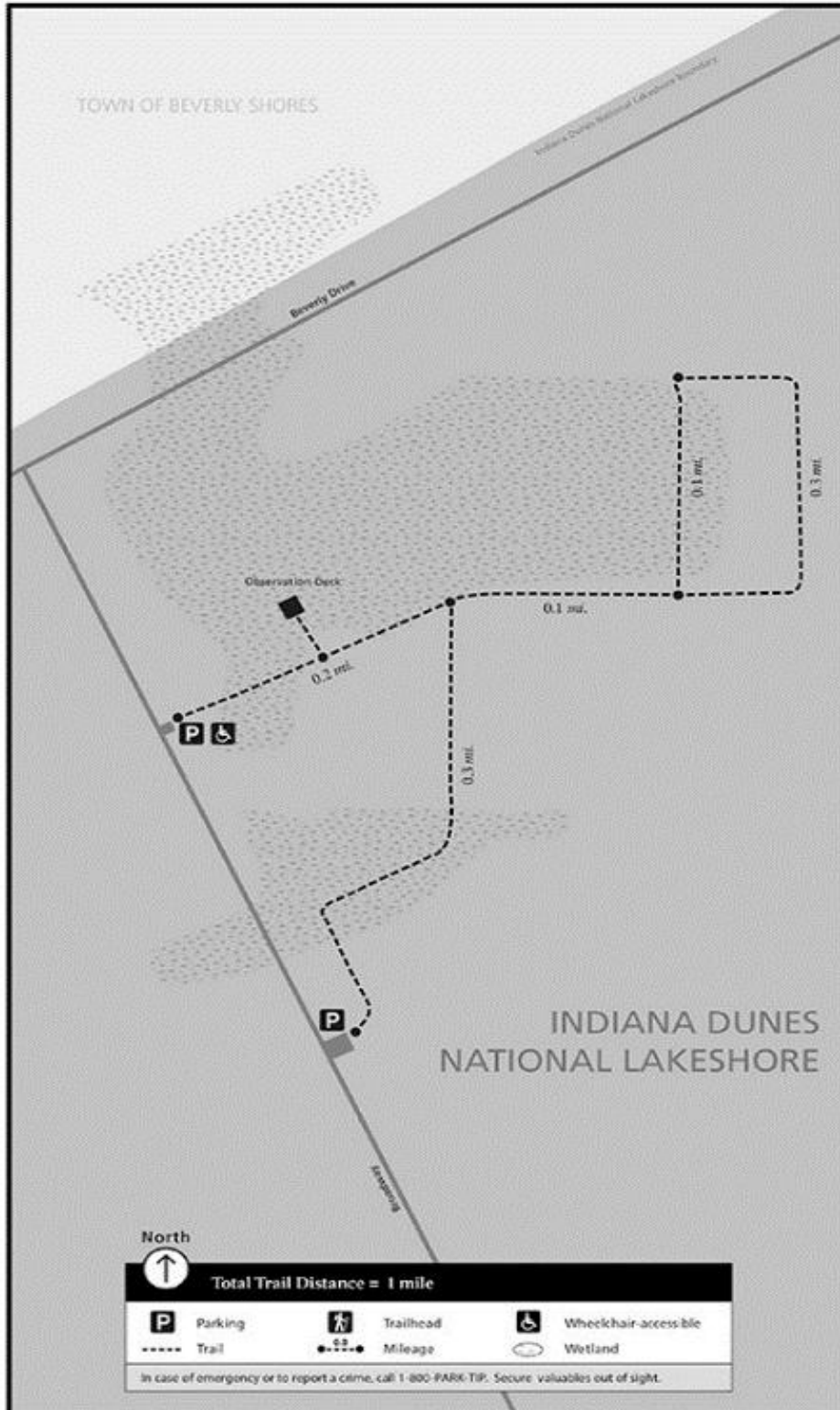
**Fees:** No fees until Memorial Day

**Restrooms:** Restrooms located at the beach.

**Special Considerations:** Officially, access to the Michigan City Harbor jetty and lighthouse is restricted. Pedestrians MUST proceed out to the lighthouse AT THEIR OWN RISK. On windy days the waves can be very unpredictable, washing up and over the concrete jetty with considerable force. In the winter this water can quickly freeze and make navigation on the jetty quite treacherous. Extreme caution should be employed under all circumstances.

# Select Maps for Birding the Indiana Dunes

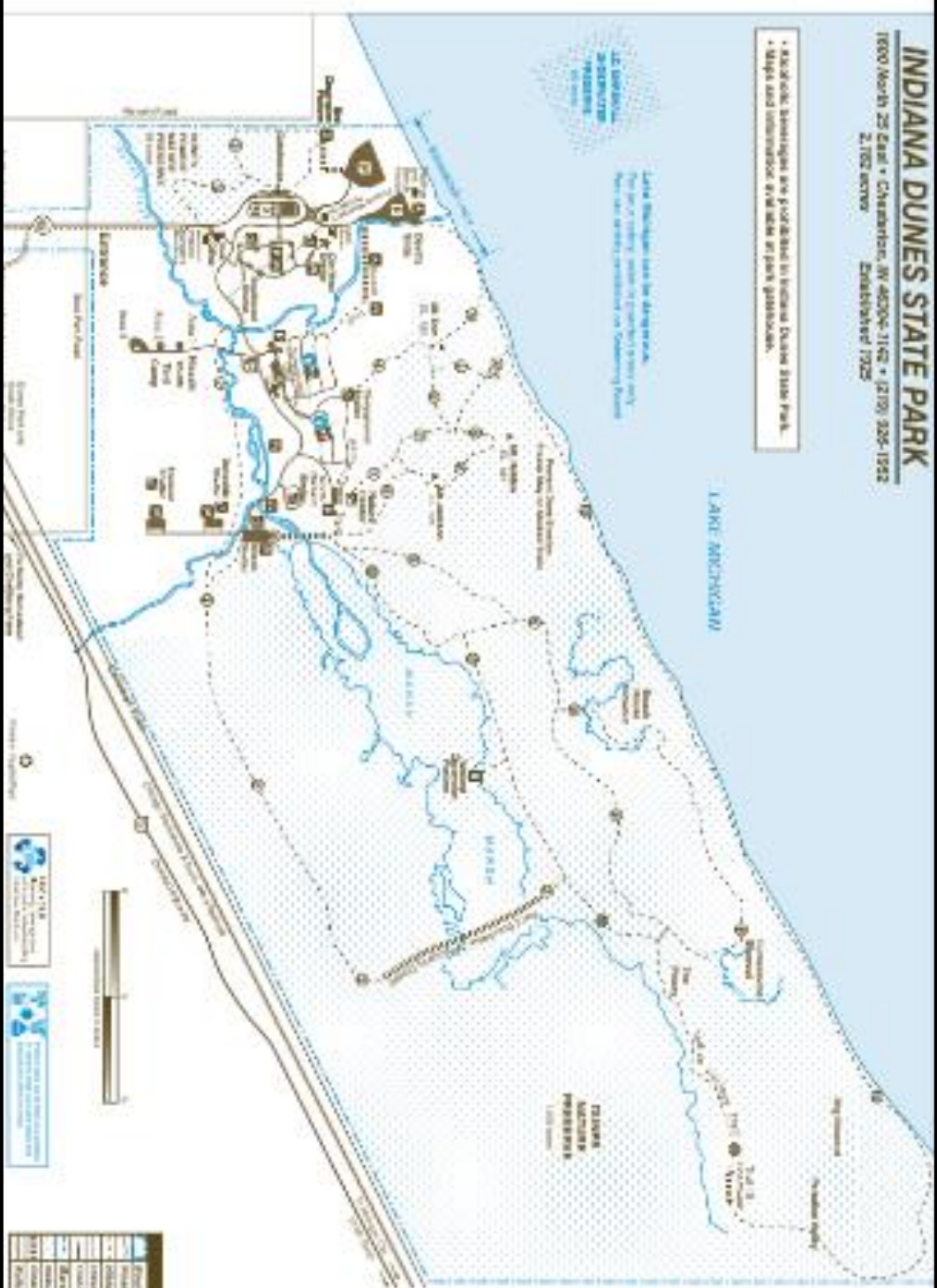
## Great Marsh Trail



# INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK

1800 North 25 East • Chesterton, IN 46304-3142 • (219) 326-1592  
2,102 acres      Established 1922

- All vehicle, bicycles are prohibited in Indiana Dunes State Park.
- Maps and information are available at park glasshouses.



**2.5 MILE TRAIL**  
**1.5 MILE TRAIL**  
 The park is a natural area of 2,102 acres only. You can enjoy a beautiful view of Lake Michigan from the park.

Large glasshouses are for information. The park is a natural area of 2,102 acres only. You can enjoy a beautiful view of Lake Michigan from the park.

LAKE MICHIGAN

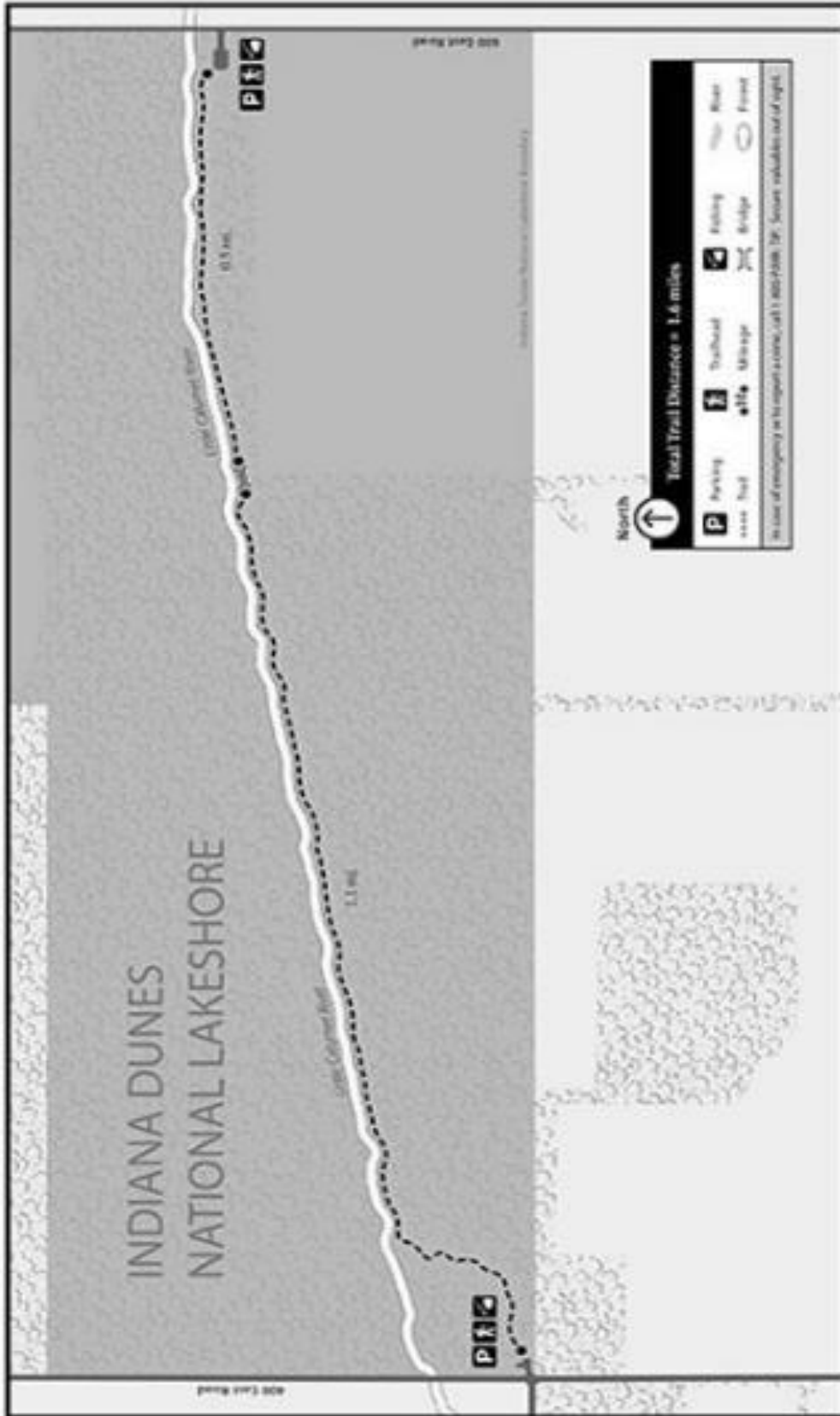


**INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK**  
 is one of the most beautiful in the world. The purpose of the park is to preserve the natural beauty of the dunes and provide for the enjoyment of all. The park is a natural area of 2,102 acres only. You can enjoy a beautiful view of Lake Michigan from the park.

TRAIL MAP	
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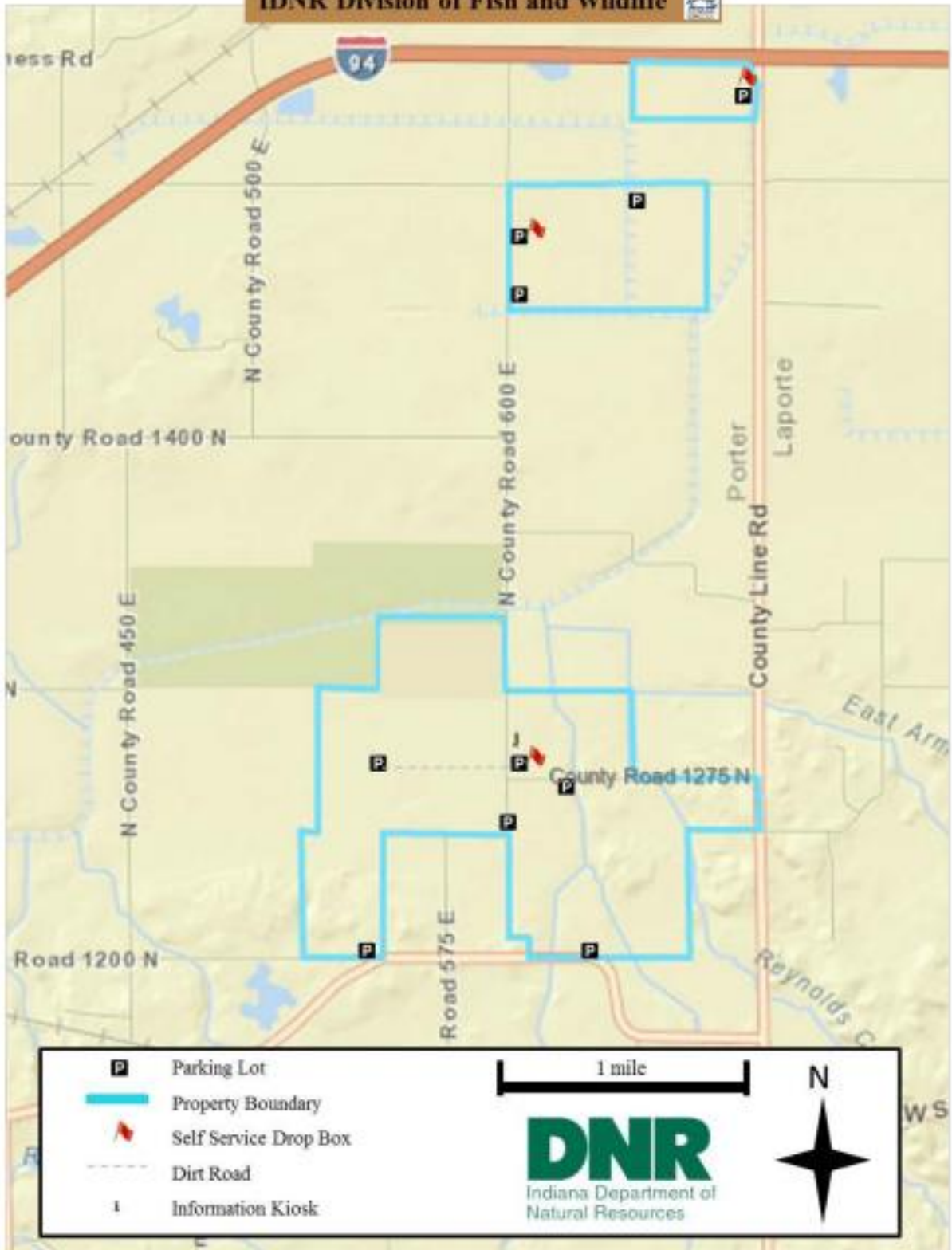


# Heron Rookery Trail

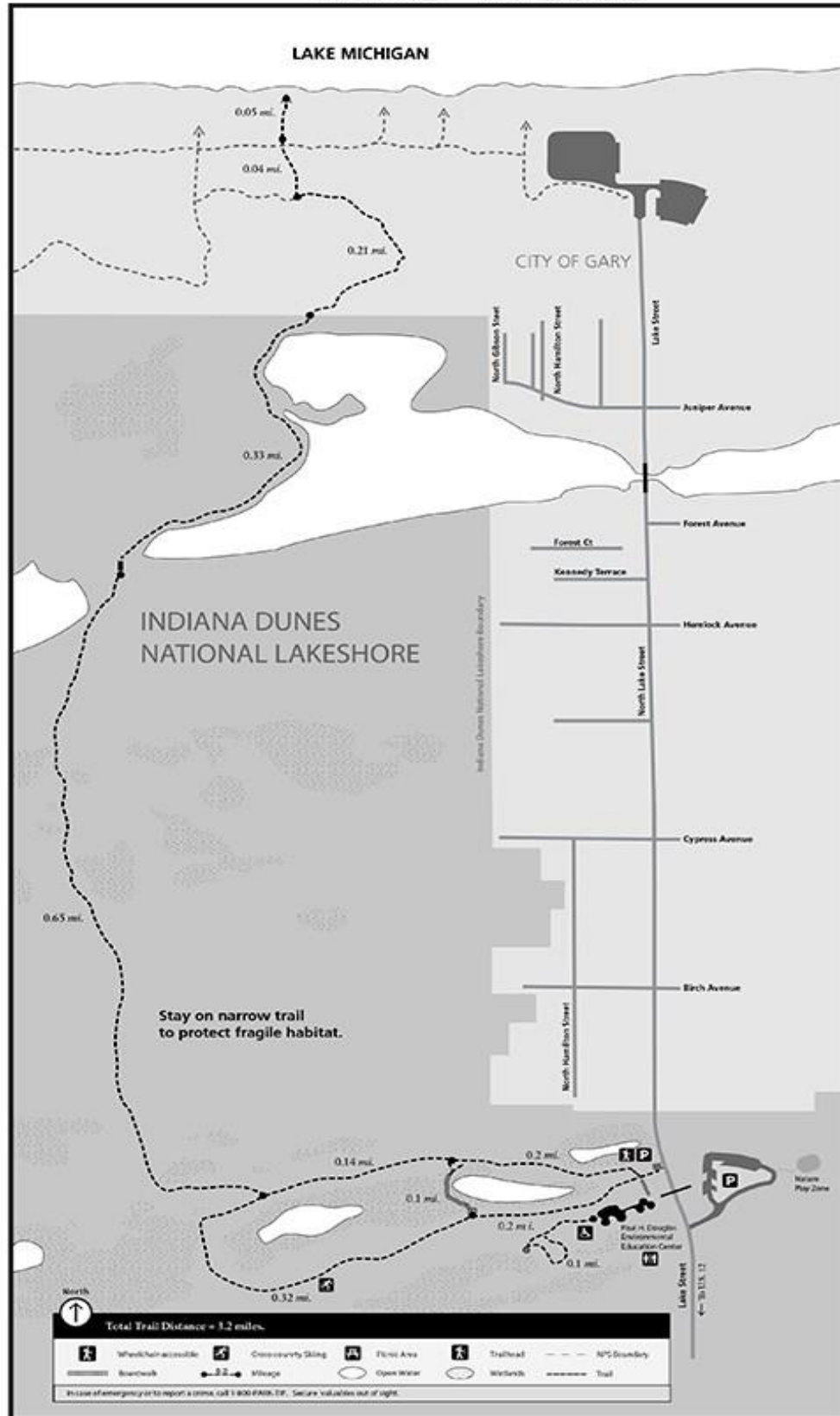


# Reynolds Creek Game Bird Habitat Area

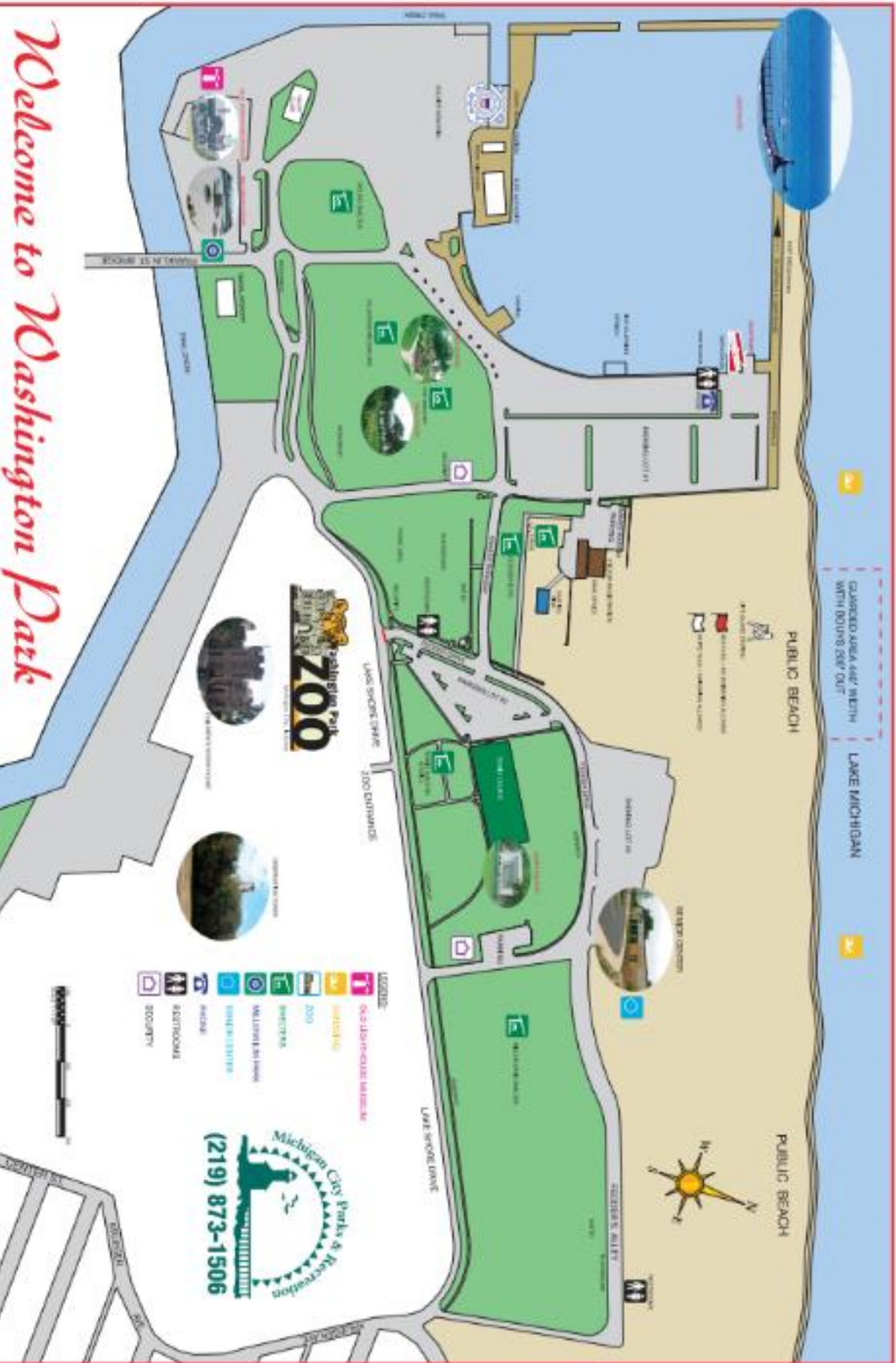
IDNR Division of Fish and Wildlife



# Miller Woods







*Welcome to Washington Park*

Michigan City Parks & Recreation
   
 (219) 873-1506

- LEGEND**
- One-on-one service
  - Restrooms
  - Zoo
  - Spectator
  - Mallards/Animals
  - Bird Center
  - Archery
  - Restroom
  - Security

**Washington Park Zoo**



## Online Resources

Indiana Dunes Birding Festival  
[www.indunesbirdingfestival.com](http://www.indunesbirdingfestival.com)

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore  
[www.nps.gov/indu](http://www.nps.gov/indu)

Indiana Dunes State Park  
[www.dnr.IN.gov/stateparks](http://www.dnr.IN.gov/stateparks)

Indiana Audubon Society  
[www.indianaaudubon.org](http://www.indianaaudubon.org)

Indiana Dunes Tourism Birding  
[www.indianadunes.com/birding](http://www.indianadunes.com/birding)

Rare Bird Text Alerts  
[www.bit.do/dunebirdalerts](http://www.bit.do/dunebirdalerts)

Indiana Dunes Longshore Birding Blog  
[www.indianadunesbirding.wordpress.com](http://www.indianadunesbirding.wordpress.com)

eBird Sightings  
[www.ebird.com](http://www.ebird.com)