

## New Land Acquisition

St. Joseph County Parks Department is excited to announce that with the help of several organizations including Indiana Heritage Trust, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the South Bend/Elkhart Audubon Society, and numerous private donors, an additional 75 acres adjacent to Spicer Lake Nature Preserve was purchased in 2004. The new property offers 35 acres of woodland, a buttonbush swamp, a sedge meadow and a portion of Lancaster Lake basin. Lancaster Lake is a kettle-hole lake and once development is complete, trails through this area will border the basin and the buttonbush swamp.

Expansion of the Spicer Lake's Visitor Center and the construction of an observation platform are planned for the near future as part of the overall enhancement of Spicer Lake Nature Preserve.

St. Joseph County Parks Department appreciates the foresight of our predecessors and plans to continue the preservation of unique, heritage-rich, natural areas such as Spicer Lake Nature Preserve for the education and enjoyment of future generations.



### *How did Spicer Lake get it's name?*

In 1881, Josiah Waldron of Berrien County, Michigan sold nearly 40 acres of the property to James Spicer, also of Berrien County. Apparently, James Spicer chose to name the lake on his newly acquired property after himself.



**Continuing the Legacy of Greatness!**



**[sjcparks.org](http://sjcparks.org)**

*Please check our website or email us for driving directions to Spicer Lake Nature Preserve. Call 574-654-0361 or 574-654-3155 for additional information on public and/or school programs.*

**St. Joseph County Parks Department**

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## Spicer Lake Nature Preserve



Spicer Lake Nature Preserve  
50840 County Line Road  
New Carlisle, IN 46552  
Visitor Center: 574-654-0361

## Spicer Lake Nature Preserve: A Brief History

Nestled in the northwest corner of St. Joseph County is a 319 acre park known as Spicer Lake Nature Preserve. It is considered the gem of St. Joseph County, Indiana.

In the 1880s, the land was the site of modest farming operations and livestock grazing. During this time an effort was made to create a ditch to drain Spicer Lake. Evidence of the unsuccessful ditch can be seen along portions of the wetland trail. Other evidence of past farming operations have been discovered as well.



Although the natural history of this unique area dates back more than 12,000 years; Spicer Lake Nature Preserve was not opened to the public as a park until 1978.

Under the leadership of then Park Board President Robert Fischgrund, and with the support of the The Nature Conservancy, the South Bend Audubon Society, and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the original 40-acre site was purchased and dedicated as a "nature preserve."

Nature preserve status is reserved for land that possesses unique qualities and in most cases protects habitat and endangered species. The IDNR also helped to fund the construction of the boardwalk which allows visitors to experience the wetland habitat year round.



Spicer Lake was expanded in 1988 and a donation of \$ 100,000 from the Schurz Foundation helped fund the original construction of the visitor center and restrooms.



## Natural Features

Since the land is a dedicated nature preserve, Spicer Lake is protected under a series of state laws that restrict development and prohibit the addition, removal, or damage to any plant or animal life.



Healthy populations of woodland flowers grow here, including spring ephemerals such as trillium, Dutchman's breeches and trout lily. The 200+ acres of wetland support populations of blue flag, turtlehead and cardinal flower.



Spicer Lake Nature Preserve's kettle lake basin is one of the few in the state of Indiana that has not been mined for peat, used as a dump, filled in for development or otherwise disturbed; It is well respected within the environmental community for its unique condition and educational value.

Spicer Lake is also well know within the bird-watching community. Particularly in spring and fall, large flocks of migratory songbirds feast on the abundant insects of the wetlands ecosystem..

A visitor strolling down the boardwalk and trails of Spicer Lake will pass through four eco-zones. The tree zone with red maples, elms and sassafras; the brush zone with thick growths of winterberry, spicebush, and dogwood; the emergence zone with pond lilies and native loosestrife; and the lake itself: the aquatic zone, made up of decayed material on lake beds.



Essentially there is no oxygen in Spicer Lake because it is consumed by the decomposition of organic material. The only fish that can live in such low levels of oxygen are tiny mud minnows. Lancaster Lake, in contrast, has a higher oxygen level and supports a small fish population.

## Interpreting Nature:

### Public and School Programs at Spicer Lake.

Today, Spicer Lake Nature Preserve is the site of many public and school environmental programs. Local colleges and universities also receive permission to conduct research on



the preserve.

Families and individuals participate in dozens of interpretive programs offered by



park staff that highlight the unique qualities of this gem in the north-western-most corner of St. Joseph County.



St. Joseph County  
Parks Department



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