



Sanctuary at a Glance:

Location: Macomb County

Size: 44 acres

History: Donated in 1975 by Harold Warnes and David Wilcox.

About MNA:

The Michigan Nature Association is a nonprofit conservation organization working to protect Michigan’s rare, threatened and endangered species by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Established in 1952, MNA’s members, donors, and volunteers have built a remarkable network of more than 170 nature sanctuaries across the state – the largest network of natural areas established and maintained by a nonprofit conservation organization in Michigan.



Michigan Nature Association

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Photo: Jeremy Emmi

Anna Wilcox and Harold Warnes Memorial Nature Sanctuary was originally part of a 160-acre land-grant awarded to David Wilcox by President Andrew Jackson in 1833. Used primarily for farming corn and wheat by Wilcox, he later passed it down to his granddaughter Anna, who became the joint tenant with Harold Warnes, who had worked on the Wilcox farm since 1912. Refusing several offers from land speculators throughout their ownership, Wilcox and Warnes decided to donate the 44-acre property to the MNA in 1975, which was originally named the Wilcox Sanctuary. Following the death of Warnes in 1976, MNA renamed it Wilcox Warnes Memorial Nature Sanctuary.

One mile of trail takes visitors through a forest that supports an array of trees and wildflowers. Massive tulip trees, round-leaved orchids, and bottle gentian highlight the diversity of vegetative species present within the sanctuary. For instance, the large, round-leaved orchid, commonly known as the “dinner-plate” because of its large size, is a native species that is usually found much further north.

The clear stream that runs through the southern part of the forest is home to inhabitants of the sanctuary. The monkeyflower, which requires moist soil or even shallow water, also thrive in the marsh habitat.

Many wild turkeys and the occasional great horned owl are seen throughout the sanctuary. Visitors with a keen eye may be able to spot warblers, finches, and the bluebird boxes that harbor eastern bluebirds.

The abundance of large tulip trees highlights the incredible habitat and wildlife diversity of Wilcox Warnes.

Wilcox Warnes Nature Sanctuary | Michigan Nature Association

Habitat at Wilcox Warnes

The habitat found at Wilcox Warnes is distinctly divided into two sections with very different backgrounds. The southern 27 acres of the sanctuary are mature forest, while the northern 18 acres were last plowed in 1957, resulting in different age classes of mesic-southern forest. The mature forest of the south side is home to large hardwood specimens more than 100 years old and various wildflowers. The northern part of the sanctuary is an example of succession - shrubs and trees at earlier stages of successional growth can be found.

Tulip Trees

One tree species that can be found throughout Wilcox-Warnes is the tulip, poplar, or whitewood tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). Several hundred tulip trees remain in the sanctuary today and range from fully mature trees to young saplings. These rapidly growing trees can exceed 150 feet tall and ten feet in diameter when fully mature. The trees can be identified by the unique tulip shape exhibited by the leaves, which turn bright yellow in the fall. Its flowers are also shaped like a tulip, but may not bloom until it is more than 15 years old.



Photo: Jeff Ganley



Photo: Jeff Ganley

Planning Your Visit:

Autumn is the best time to see the beautiful colors of the tulip trees, but spring and summer seasons bring a show of wildflowers at Wilcox Warnes.

How to Get There:

The sanctuary is in Shelby Township in Macomb County, on Schoenherr Rd, just south of 26 Mile Road.



Trail Map