

Rain room reveals early Michigan plant life

Visitors to Michigan's garden and nature centers can see how this state evolved and glimpse wildlife such as one of the world's rarest songbirds, according to Automobile Club of Michigan.

A selection of 20 popular parks, gardens and wildlife areas by Auto Club dramatizes the diversity of such attractions in Michigan.

A two-story domed rain room featuring tropical and sub-tropical plants found in the state before the ice age is part of the Kalamazoo Nature Center's 50-acre preserve at 700 N. Westnedge. Erratic boulders swept into Michigan during the glacial age also are displayed. For more information, call 616-381-1574.

Battle Creek's Leila Arboretum (616-965-5117) traces man's history from the ice age to the 20th century. The arboretum is at West Michigan and

Travel

20th streets.
THE ENDANGERED Kirtland warbler nests each summer in northeast Lower Michigan and only 200 of the songbirds are left in the world. Nesting areas in the jackpine forests around Osceola County are open for free guided tours 9 a.m.-1 p.m. through July 23 daily except Wednesday from the ranger station four miles south of Mio (517-823717) and daily from the Michigan DNR field office at Grayling (517-348-8371).

A picturesque, visual link between Saginaw and its sister city in Japan can be seen at the Tokushima-Saginaw Friendship Garden at Rust Drive and

Washington Street (517-776-1480). The garden was designed by a Tokushima plants expert and is a replica of a typical Japanese garden.

Nature trails for the blind are part of the Fenner Arboretum in Lansing and Hartwick Pines State Park seven miles northeast of Grayling (517-948-7058). Hartwick Pines also has a reproduction of an early logging camp. Fenner Arboretum, which has an Indian garden, is at 2020 E. Mount Hope (517-487-1425).

Swimmers can enjoy the Straits of Mackinac beach in the shadow of Fort Michilimackinac, a fully restored fort originally built by the French in 1715 and occupied by British forces 45 years later. At Michilimackinac State Park near Mackinaw City, Call 616-456-5565 for added information.

Motorists will find the 17-mile Black River Drive from Ironwood to Lake Superior a scenic delight and hikers

can get a close-up look at eight nearby waterfalls up to 40 feet high.

HIKERS ALSO will find the Seney National Wildlife Refuge (406-588-9651) a paradise for watching more than 200 species of birds plus otter, mink, black bear, beaver and muskrat. Self-guided auto and hiking tours are available from refuge headquarters on M-77 near Germans.

Tahquamenon Falls near Newberry can be viewed via the Toonerville Trolley and boat ride (906-876-2311) to the rapids above the 40-foot falls. The six and one half hour trip leaves from nearby Soo Junction at 10 a.m. and noon Monday through Friday and at 10:30 a.m. weekends through Aug. 31.

Outdoor enthusiasts will find four campgrounds plus hiking trails, canoeing and horseback riding at the Allegan State Game Area near Allegan (616-673-1330).

The Sand Lakes Quiet Area on M-72 near Kalkaska (616-258-9471) offers 2,800 acres of outdoor recreation where motorized vehicles are banned. Tipon's Hidden Lake Gardens has flowering plants from around the world. Mathaei Botanical Gardens on Duboro Road near Ann Arbor (313-764-1158) has exotic plants blooming all year in its changing seasonal displays.

SPECIAL GUIDED tours are available at the Dow Gardens, 1018 Main, in Midland (517-531-2677). There is a new greenhouse of flowering plants.

A covered 1,400-foot path leads visitors through Lund's Scenic Garden (616-226-8224) past painted scenes from the life of Christ. The garden is on Little Traverse Bay near Maple City.

Wild ducks, geese, swans, pheasants and peacocks can be seen in their natural habitat at the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary near Augusta (616-671-3721).

The Sarret Nature Center (616-927-4832) offers courses on flower, tree and shrub identification as part of its summer program with photography field trips also scheduled. The center, 220 Benton Center Rd. Benton Harbor, is a wildlife sanctuary and education center of the Michigan Audubon Society.

The Marjorie Ward Strong Woodland Sanctuary on Apple Island in Orchard Lake is unique because of its great variety of vegetation and soil conditions. The 35-acre island is on the south shore of Orchard Lake and can be reached by boat. Visitors must obtain a pass from the West Bloomfield Public Schools' business office at 3250 Commerce Rd. (313-681-9605).

Oakwoods Metropark Nature Center (313-782-1255) features exhibits, games and animal displays relating to Northeast Michigan. The center is on Willow Road near Flat Rock.

Movies, lunch event offered

A combination theater and luncheon ticket, which includes all taxes and tips, is being offered by the Merrie Melodie Theatre and the Oceania Inn restaurant in the Meadowbrook Village Mall, Avon Township.

The Merrie Melodie Theatre presents family-type movies in an old-fashioned atmosphere along with John Anderson at the theater organ before the movie.

"Meet Me in St. Louis" starring Judy Garland and Margaret O'Brien, runs through Tuesday. "Gaslight," starring Charles Boyer, Ingrid Bergman and Joseph Cotten, opens Wednesday and continues through July 25.

The series runs Monday through Friday to Aug. 15. Showtime is 2:30 p.m. For show and movie information call 375-0011.

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