



Lakeshore Nature Preserve

University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Quick Facts about the Lakeshore Nature Preserve

Acreage: The 300-acre Lakeshore Nature Preserve represents about 1/3 of the total acreage of the main UW-Madison campus.

Miles of Shoreline: From the Limnology Lab to Wally Bauman Woods via Picnic Point along the full length of the famed Temin Lakeshore Path, the Preserve includes 4.3 miles of Lake Mendota shoreline, roughly 1/5 of the lake's total circumference.

Management, Governance and Support: The Preserve is staffed by employees of the UW-Madison's Division of Facilities Planning & Management, including a part-time Director, Program Manager, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, and Field Projects Coordinator. The UW-Madison shared governance Lakeshore Nature Preserve Committee makes policy recommendations for the Preserve. Support for land stewardship and capital projects is provided through gifts made to the UW Foundation Lakeshore Nature Preserve Stewardship Fund and generous partners, including the Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, a private organization that support the Preserve in a variety of ways.

Mission: The University of Wisconsin-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve permanently protects the undeveloped lands along the shore of Lake Mendota where members of the campus community have long experienced the intellectual and aesthetic benefits of interacting with the natural world. The Preserve shelters biologically significant plant and animal communities for teaching, research, outreach, and environmentally sensitive use, and safeguards beloved cultural landscapes. The Preserve is as essential to the university as its lecture halls, laboratories, and playing fields. It contributes to a powerful sense of place and fosters an ethic of stewardship to promote mutually beneficial relationships between humans and the rest of nature.

Website: The UW-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve official website is at lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu. The website was publicly launched on November 19, 2006 and was funded by a donation by Drs. Eleanor and Peter Blitzer, long-time supporters of the Preserve.

Generations of Advocacy: Only Muir Woods at the eastern end of the Preserve was originally part of the university campus. Lands farther to the west were acquired over many decades, sometimes on purpose, sometimes by generous gifts of university alumni and other benefactors. Until the early 1940s, even Picnic Point was private property, and only in the 1990s (with an extraordinarily far-sighted and generous gift of the last remaining parcel of non-UW shoreline property by the Frautschi family) did the university come to own the continuous 4.3-mile corridor of green. In 2004, these separate parcels were renamed the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, and the university is now committed to their permanent protection. After decades of being threatened with development, the Preserve has entered a new century with greater protection than it has ever had before. Those who visit the Preserve today are the beneficiaries of generations of land conservation advocates who have gone before us and are encouraged to make their own contributions to the challenge of passing this special place on to future generations.



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Campus Icon: The beauty of the UW-Madison campus is renowned world-wide. Much of what makes the university so distinctive is its relationship to Lake Mendota, which means that the Lakeshore Nature Preserve is responsible for preserving some of the most celebrated features of the campus. It is the physical connecting link from the campus to the lake.

Famous Views: There are a few world-famous views that arguably define the UW-Madison campus, and are no less important to the City of Madison. Almost all of these are at least partly framed by the Lakeshore Nature Preserve: the view from Observatory Hill, the view from Muir Knoll, the view back to the university and city skyline from the tip of Picnic Point, the views along the Temin Lakeshore Path, even the views from Bascom Hill and the Memorial Union Terrace. In the nineteenth century, the view from Eagle Heights Woods was equally celebrated among Madisonians, though it is now largely blocked by the growth of the surrounding forest.

Student Life: The Preserve has served as an outdoor classroom and place of retreat and recreation for generations of students, faculty, staff and Madison residents. Both through formal classroom activities and through leisure activities ranging from walking to biking to canoeing to sailing, the Preserve has played a central role in student life for most UW-Madison students. Picnics and campfires on Picnic Point contribute to all that makes UW-Madison such a special place to go to school, and Madison such a special place to live.

Romance: The Lakeshore Path and Picnic Point have long been celebrated as among the most romantic places anywhere. Many people have “courted” each other here, and more than a few informal weddings have been held here as well.

Highest Point: The highest point on the south side of Lake Mendota—the bluff in Eagle Heights Woods—is located within the boundaries of the Preserve. Views north to the lake are an amazing site, mostly now only in winter months but more so as work land management efforts continue in Eagle Heights Woods.

Wildlife Corridor: Migrating birds make landfall at Frautschi Point as they cross Lake Mendota on their way south, and follow the Preserve’s long ribbons of green through the woods and along the shore to make their journeys in relative safety even as they pass through the capital city of Wisconsin. The Lakeshore Nature Preserve, along with our neighbors to the west in Shorewood Hills, are classified as an “Important Bird Area”, administered by the National Audubon Society. Many monthly birding tours are hosted throughout the year in the Preserve.

Wild Shoreline: The Preserve possesses by far the longest continuous stretch of wild shoreline anywhere on Lake Mendota. As a matter of policy, trees that fall into the lake are left to provide natural habitat for fish and other organisms.

Studying and Conserving Lake Mendota: The science of limnology—which studies the ecology and physical dynamics of freshwater lakes—was partly conceived by Edward A. Birge on the UW-Madison campus in the late nineteenth century. Lake Mendota is now unquestionably among the most studied lakes anywhere on earth. As one of the few terrestrial ecosystems on the lake where natural processes are encouraged to operate in ways that try to minimize human impacts, the Preserve plays an essential role in protecting Madison’s most famous lake.

Science: Some of the greatest scientists and scholars who have contributed to the making of an American land ethic drew inspiration from this place we call the Lakeshore Nature Preserve. The writer John Muir lived next to it in North Hall. The ecologist John Curtis studied and defended it. The soil scientist Francis D. Hole introduced students to explore the world beneath their feet in it. The naturalists Jim and Libby Zimmerman practiced ecological restoration in it. And the conservationist Aldo Leopold taught classes in it. The environmental tradition at UW-Madison is as strong and deep as at any other university in the world, and the Lakeshore Nature Preserve has been central to that tradition from the beginning.



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