



Updated June 16, 2009

What had been called “The Orphan Woods” has been rescued from McMansions and can now be nurtured as part of an urban-bound pocket of Old Minnesota. The informal district includes the Birch Island and the southern Glen Lake areas with their historic sites, wilderness-like scenery, lakes, a small farm, golf course, nature trails, a kid’s camp, a conference center and a stretch of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail.

The Birch Island Woods Conservation Area was created as a result of a grass roots campaign that engaged the community, government agencies, landowners and voters to protect and care for 36 acres of a 41-acre sanctuary of trees and wetlands. 32 acres were acquired from Hennepin County in December 2001 and an additional 4 acres of an old farm were added in March 2007.

Friends of Birch Island Woods

FBIW began in 1998 as a handful of Eden Prairie and Minnetonka residents who wanted to keep the woods a natural sanctuary. Along the way, we saw the need to actively care for the area and began sponsoring tours and partnering with the City of Eden Prairie on litter pickups, buckthorn and garlic mustard pulls and habitat restoration projects. FBIW also prompted the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District initiative to restore the levels of Birch Island Lake.

Volunteer

As the smallest of Eden Prairie’s 26 conservation areas, Birch Island Woods is vulnerable to misuse. FBIW invites you and your organization to join the scout, school, church and neighborhood groups who help the EP Parks Department care for the sanctuary. Volunteers are needed to remove buckthorn and garlic mustard, help restore native woodland plants, pick-up litter and staff the FBIW exhibit at events and annual plant sale.

Call Jeff Strate at 952-949-8980 and visit our website to get started.

Friends of Birch Island Woods is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, organization that relies on grants, donations and fundraising events such as the Birch Island Woods Plant Sale to fund its projects.



Walking Tour

1. The 106-year old Picha Heritage Farm produces vegetables for the Minneapolis Farmers Market and flowers for garden centers. Eden Prairie's only surviving raspberry farm hosts the Birch Island Woods Plant Sale in May.

2. A 1919, stucco farm house recently stood on the new, 4-acre addition to the conservation area.

3. A 1905, prairie-style farm house recently stood at Picha Place and Birch Island Road.

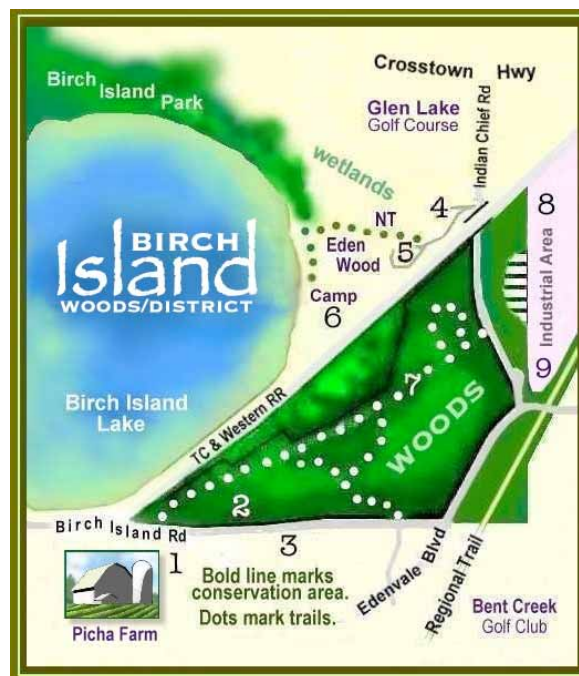
4. Holasek House, was built by a Czech farm family around 1882 on the Baker Road site of Lifetime Fitness. Artega Landscaping officed in the Chaska Brick structure before moving it to Minnetonka in 1986 and Eden Wood in 1987. It is now a staff residence.

5. Eden Wood is a camp for kids with special needs and a retreat/conference center for the general public. Eden Wood includes Holasek House, Glen Lake Children's Camp, cabins, nature trails (NT), a beach & a canoe launch. Eden Wood is run by Friendship Ventures which leases the facility from the City.

6. Glen Lake Children's Camp is all that remains of the Glen Lake Sanitarium, one of the nation's top three tuberculosis treatment and research hospitals. Built in 1925 for kids exposed to tuberculosis, the camp is on the National Register of Historic Places and is being modernized with respect to its historic status. The San opened in 1916 and from 1962 to 1976 operated in-tandem with the Oak Terrace Nursing Home. The complex had served 17,000 patients by the time it was closed in 1991 to make way for the Glen Lake Golf Center.

7. The Birch Island Woods Trail follows the 1881 roadbed of the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul RR. The wood chip trails were constructed by local Boy Scouts. Volunteers are clearing buckthorn & garlic mustard in select areas.

8. Midwest Asphalt recycles pavement into new paving materials. 9. MN River Bluffs Regional Trail kiosk.



LEASH LAW ENFORCED

Natural History of the woods, park & lake

Trees & Plants: Aspen, Basswood, Boxelder, Cottonwood, Elm, Ironwood, Maple, Oak (several species), Red Pine, Scotch Pine, Tamarack, Paper Birch and Willow. **Spring ephemerals:** Bloodroot, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Wood Anemone, Dutchman's Breeches, Solomon's Seal, Bracken, Lady & Maiden Hair Ferns. **Harmful invasives:** Buckthorn, Garlic Mustard, Asian Honeysuckle, Purple Loosestrife.

Mammals: Including Badger, Deer, Red Fox, Beaver, Coyote, Mink, Woodchuck, Rabbit, Raccoon.

Birds: 65+ species have been identified including Yellow-headed Blackbird, Swamp Sparrow, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Blue Bird, Redstart, Barn Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Blue-headed Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Canvasback Duck, Cedar Waxwing, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Coot, Dark-eyed Junco, Double-crested Cormorant, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Egret, Gray Catbird, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Great Blue Heron, Great Crested Flycatcher, Great Egret, Great Horned Owl, Green Heron, Hairy Woodpecker, Loon, Magnolia Warbler, Marsh Wren, Nashville Warbler, Northern Flicker, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Rail, Raven, Red-Tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Scarlet Tanager, Spotted Sandpiper, Teal, Tennessee Warbler, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wild Turkey, Wood Duck.