

Sleeping Bear Dunes

NATIONAL LAKESHORE • MICHIGAN

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

Because of the diversity of habitats in this lakeshore park, the naturalist has a wonderful story to tell. As the park staff grows and facilities are provided, an active and diversified interpretive program will be developed.

A LARGE ESTATE FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

When all authorized lands have been acquired, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore will contain some 60,000 acres. Of this, the Manitou Islands comprise about one-third. The park will include 30 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline. However, at present very little land has been acquired by the Federal Government and most of the area is individually owned.

SCENIC PARKWAY

A special 30-mile scenic parkway running north and south from Little Traverse Lake to Honor will tie the national lakeshore together. This limited-access, slow-speed road will offer spectacular views from the high glacial ridges of a countryside scattered with powder-blue lakes. The road will be separated, as much as possible, from local and residential traffic. The National Park Service recognizes the important recreational value of existing private resorts and cottages. This value, largely dependent on the natural charm of the region, will be enhanced by the existence of the national lakeshore.

WHAT TO DO NOW

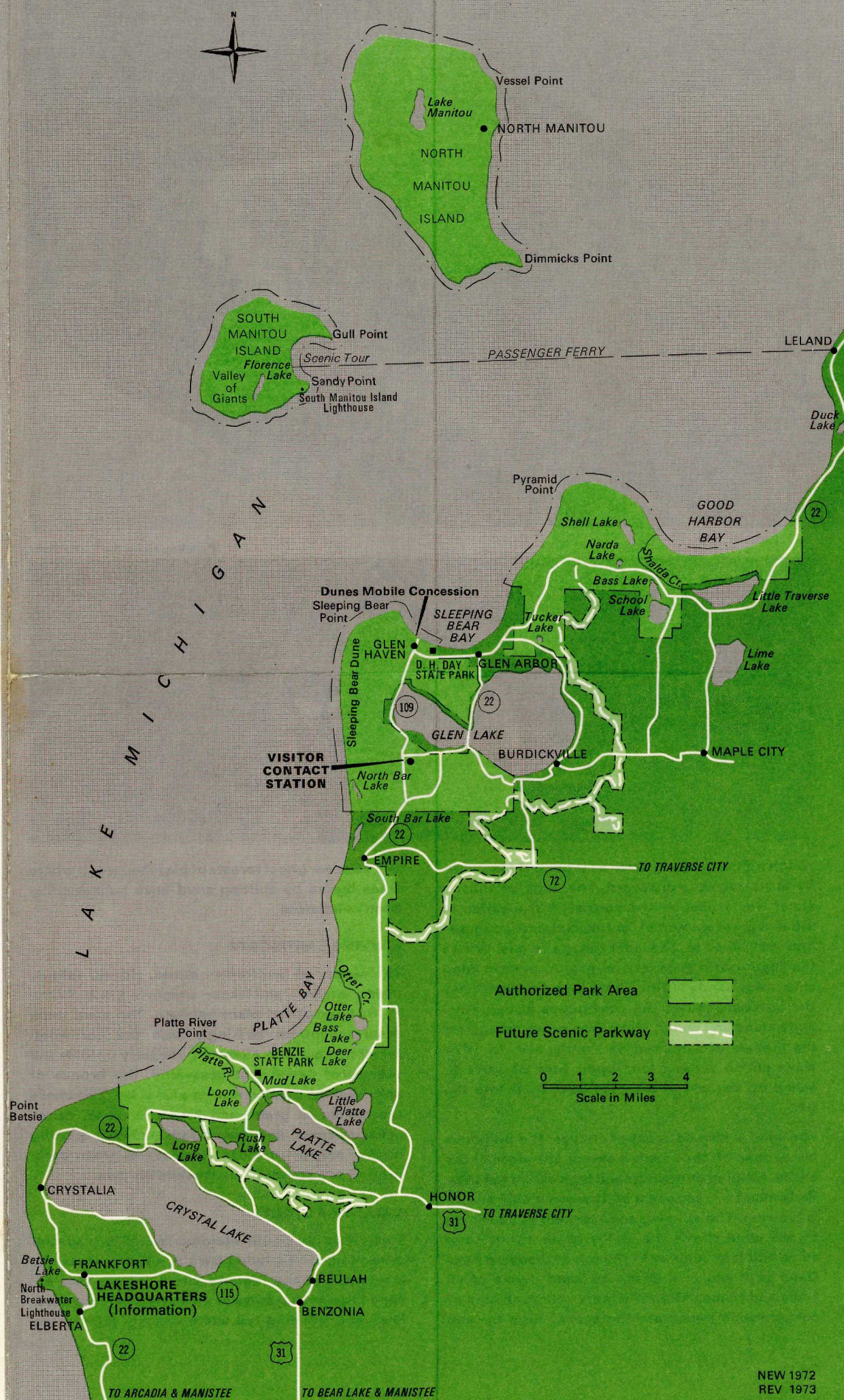
Completion of these plans lies in the future. Meantime, you can find many interesting things to do. Stop at the Visitor Contact Station for information and exhibits telling the fascinating geologic and maritime story of the region. You can ride on top and across rolling dunes in a commercially operated dune buggy, or you can drive your own car over a privately owned toll road on a portion of the dunes. At D. H. Day State Park you can climb the dune without charge.

You can drift down the Platte River in a canoe, rented locally. As you slip along on the smooth current past several miles of undeveloped riverbank, you get a taste of the natural wilderness, now mostly gone. The trip takes 2 to 3 hours.

A voyage to South Manitou Island on the mail boat from Leland is an adventure in itself. Besides seeing the unspoiled "Valley of Giants," you can visit a lovely lighthouse which was built in 1871. Now deserted, it will be restored as a marine museum by the National Park Service. You can explore this part of Michigan's "Little Finger" in your own car. Roam along the backroads which amble over grassy knolls, and dip into deep, green ravines.

Or you can explore the world within your arms reach. Crush some hemlock needles and smell their north woods fragrance. Let the crystalline sand grains sift through your fingers. Dangle your feet in cool flowing streams. Peer down through 10 feet of clear, sunlit water at the rippled pattern of the sandy bottom below. Breathe deeply of the clean air.

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE



Please respect private property. As the park is enlarged, "No Trespass" signs will begin to dwindle and recreational opportunities will increase.

The National Park Service will develop tour roads, overlooks, trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor centers, and beach facilities. Provision will be made for hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, snowmobiling, canoeing, sailing, and motorboating. Wilderness camping can be enjoyed on the Manitou Islands.

ADMINISTRATION

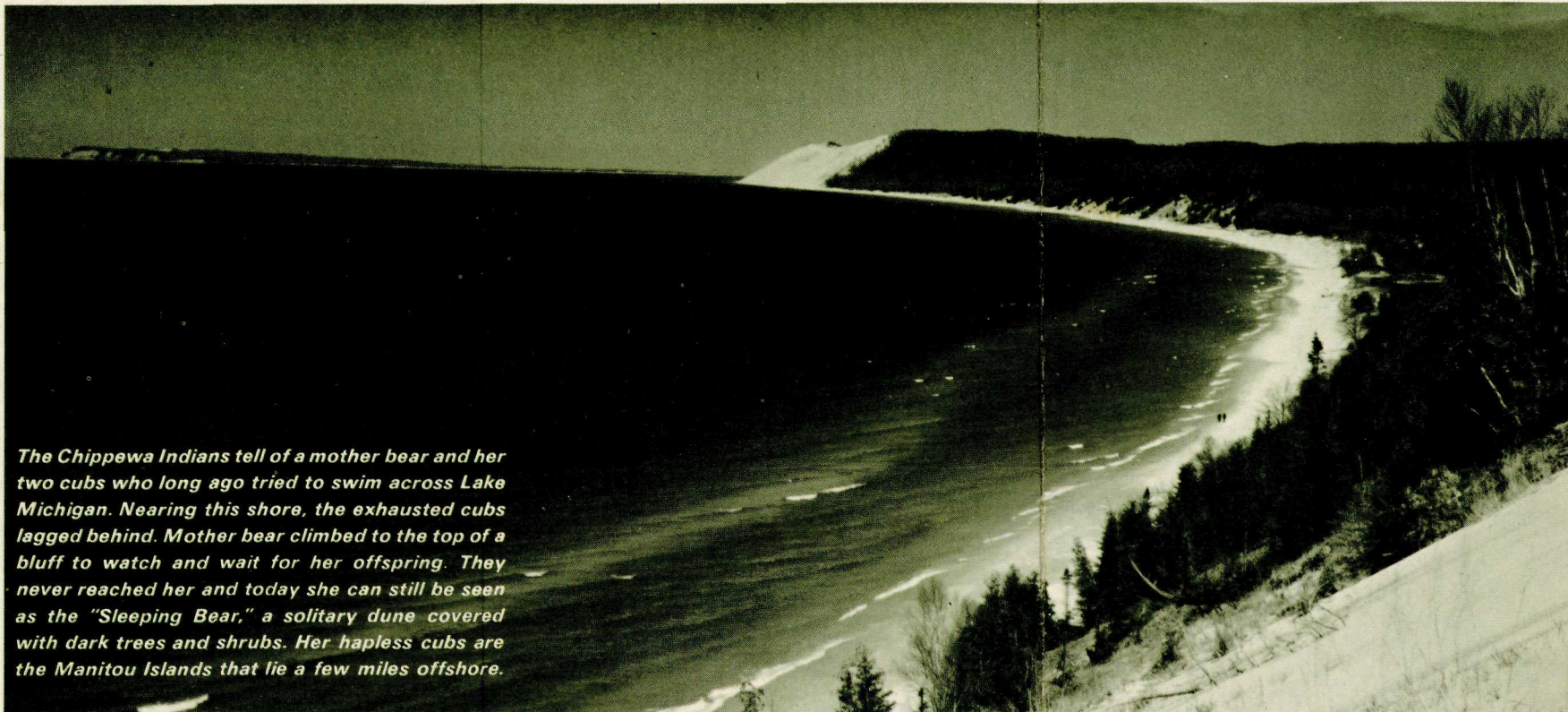
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, authorized on October 21, 1970 is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 400 Main Street, Frankfort, MI 49635, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

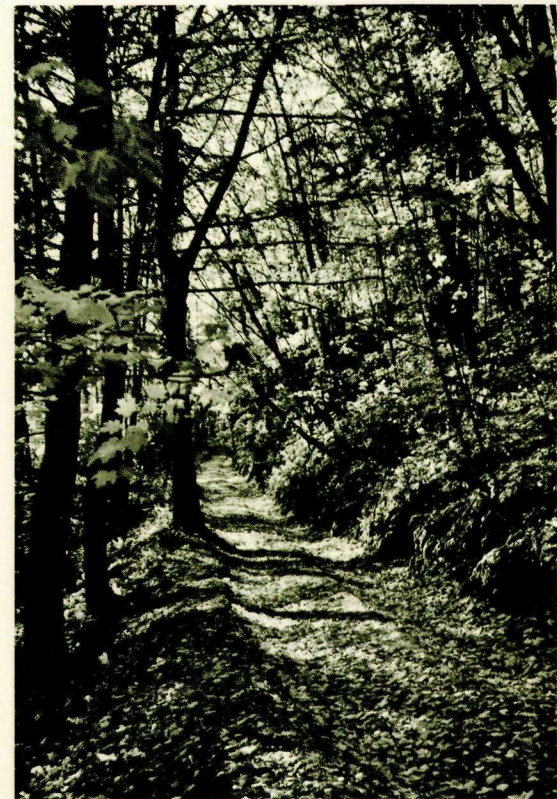
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The Chippewa Indians tell of a mother bear and her two cubs who long ago tried to swim across Lake Michigan. Nearing this shore, the exhausted cubs lagged behind. Mother bear climbed to the top of a bluff to watch and wait for her offspring. They never reached her and today she can still be seen as the "Sleeping Bear," a solitary dune covered with dark trees and shrubs. Her hapless cubs are the Manitou Islands that lie a few miles offshore.



FOOTPRINTS OF THE GLACIERS

What the scientific explanation for the origin of these dunes lacks in legendary charm, it more than makes up in awesome drama. Four times continental glaciers assaulted this area, conquered and burdened it with millions of tons of ice, in vast sheets perhaps a mile thick. They made and unmade three huge lakes—first Lake Algonquin, then Lake Nipissing, and finally Lake Algoma. These are the ancestors of our Great Lakes. Upon this Michigan lakeshore, the glaciers left their footprints, now seen in the varying levels of those ancient lakes, clearly identified by the wave erosion on rock ledges along the lake. All this happened between 20,000 and 11,000 years ago—only yesterday in the earth's history.

The earth's atmosphere continued to warm up, and the glacier to melt. As the ice disappeared northward during the great thaw, which is still in progress, a tremendous quantity of rock, sand, and silt was deposited by the glacier or sluiced by its melt water to create the ridges and hills, the lowlands and lakes of the present park landscape. Pick a pebble off the beach and you may hold a fragment plucked from the Canadian highlands, far to the north, and carried tediously south by the advancing glacier. It is a reminder that they may come back again. Other glacial marks and depositional features make this park an excellent outdoor museum.

Old shorelines of the stages of the ancestral lakes can be recognized miles inland and higher than the present beaches. Notice on the map how the present shore consists of rounded headlands, such as Platte River, Sleeping Bear, and Pyramid Points. Separating these points are long sweeping embayments, such as Platte, Sleeping Bear, and Good Harbor Bays. This sinuous shoreline traces the



Padding along the Platte River.

rough outline of the glacier as it paused temporarily in its retreat northward. The edge of the ice sheet was scalloped and consisted of a series of lobes. A great amount of rock material accumulated between lobes and became today's ridges. Where the ridges run into the lake they form points faceted with steep sandy bluffs. These high headlands are the battleground of the continuous struggle between land and water. The action of waves against the masses of sand can be spectacular. In 1971 wave action caused tons upon tons of sand to slump off the end of Sleeping Bear Dune into the lake.

The wind is also an agent of change. It continually blows sand off the beaches and up the sides of the bluffs, forming dunes perched high above the lake. Walk along the edge of a bluff when a stiff breeze is blowing. The stinging sand thrown in your face by the wind shows the ability of air to lift sand some 450 feet. A climb to the top of Sleeping Bear Dune puts you in a desert of sand dunes of all kinds and shapes. Here and there sparse clumps of cottonwoods punctuate the scene. High up you

will discover ghost forests of bleached wood where trees buried by shifting sand have subsequently been re-exposed.

A LIVING LANDSCAPE

The variety of landforms—dunes, ridges, valleys, plains, streams, and lakes—supports a rich diversity of interrelated plant habitats. The sand dune deserts contrast strikingly with the hardwood forests. In autumn a glowing tapestry unfolds the yellows of beech and basswood, the bronze of oaks, and the flaming scarlet of maples. Elsewhere are stands of green and aromatic pines, dense cedar swamps, and even a few secluded quaking bogs of sphagnum moss. Against this green background are stands of chalk-white birches.

VALLEY OF GIANTS

This valley on South Manitou Island is a special attraction, for secluded here is a forest treasure, a remnant of the region's virgin forests that escaped the smokestacks of the early lake freighters. Here you will find tall white cedars, some more

than 500 years old, common and redberry elder, mountain and sugar maple, white ash, and basswood. Here also is the native understory of shrubs and flowers typical of the once vast northern forests and much of the animal life at home in these woods.

FUR, FIN, AND FEATHER

This lakeshore park has a variety of wildlife. Where there are trees, there are apt to be porcupines, and with a little luck you may come across one eating the green inner bark of a young tree. You may also startle a deer in an aspen thicket, or catch the scent of skunk on the breeze. The bobcat seldom shows himself, but after a snowfall, you can follow his tracks where he had been stalking a snowshoe hare.

The park's diversity of habitats, in a natural and healthy condition, can support life of many different kinds in numbers suitable to their food habits: untold millions of seeds, thousands of mice that feed on them, but only a few weasels and hawks that eat the mice. More than 220 species of birds can be seen here. Loons, so suggestive of the north woods, still nest in the small marshy ponds near Platte River where ducks, wild geese, and long-legged blue herons also find their preferred surroundings. Atop the wind-swept and sandy plateaus is the domain of the vesper sparrow, horned lark, and goldfinch.

Fishing is good. Even the beginning fisherman is soon rewarded with a rock bass or bluegill. Pike can be taken in nearly all lakes. However, the true fervor of fishing is displayed in autumn during the coho salmon run. This is an exotic and aggressive fish introduced from salt waters. His competition could affect native lake trout and whitefish.