Michigan’s southwestern-most county, Berrien is a well known destination for sandy Lake Michigan beaches, winery tours, birding trails, and summer festivals and more. It is also an excellent destination for quality birding experiences!

Berrien County features a diversity of inland forests, wetlands and agricultural areas bordered on the west by Lake Michigan and spectacular wooded dunes, beaches, and sand dunes and hulhults, providing the southern end of Lake Michigan and an active birding community has resulted in an exceptional Michigan county list – 353 species have been recorded here through 2011 – and it has made Berrien County a popular destination for birders from throughout Michigan and the Midwest for many years.

This brochure is by no means a comprehensive guide to birding in Berrien County, but rather a summary of some of the most popular and productive destinations. Those intent on exploring Berrien County may also want to contact any of the three nature centers listed for additional birding information or visit the Berrien Birding Club’s web page at: berriencounty.org/parks and click the "birding" link for additional information and a list of upcoming birding events. Good birding!

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1. The New Buffalo Public Beach at the mouth of the Galien River is one of several excellent shoreline access locations in Berrien County to watch for loons, geese, pintail ducks, gulls, and terns during the spring and fall migration periods. The rocky jetty regularly hosts the rare Purple Sandpiper in late fall and in winter. It is possible to find a Snowy Owl perched here. While this is a popular summer tourist destination, early mornings can still be worth a visit to scan the beach area and the sandy areas on both sides of the inner harbor for resting shearwaters, terns and uncommon gull species. The beach entrance is located at the north east end of Waverley Street in New Buffalo. A park entry fee is charged from spring through fall.

2. Galien River County Park is a new park with initial improvements scheduled for 2012. It should provide excellent birding opportunities as Phase 1 developments will include boardwalk trails in the marsh adjacent to the Galien River. Upland trails along a wooded bluff that can be productive during migration for warblers and other songbirds, and an exciting "skiyak" trail that will lead from the wooded bluff through the trees to an observation platform overlooking the marsh and the river. Along the way this elevated trail will provide eye-level views of songbirds in the forest canopy. Entrance to the park will be located on Red Arrow Highway, north of the junction with US-12 (1.5 miles) and across from the New Buffalo Township Hall and Fire Department. For updates on access, visit: www.berriencounty.org/parks.

3. Located along the lakeshore north of New Buffalo, the Union Pier Overlook offers opportunities to scan Lake Michigan for resting loons, geese, ducks, and gulls, as well as gulls on the deck at the top of the bluff or walk down the stairs to the beach area. The overlook and beach access is at the west end of Tivolleen Road in Union Pier. Birding is best from late fall through spring and the location is best avoided during the summer “beach season” when parking is limited.

4. The Lakeshore Overlook at the end of Pier Road in Lakeside offers another good location to scan Lake Michigan for loons, geese, and ducks from an elevated location with good visibility. Like the Union Pier Overlook, an observation deck with seats to the south of the overlook is also best from late fall through spring, when more birds are present offshore and parking is not usually an issue.

5. The Forest Lawn Road Floodplain and Keelung Nature Preserve along the Galien River are excellent locations to see a variety of wetland species and spring migrants. The large swampy area near the river floodplain here provide some of the best locations in Michigan to see Yellow-throated Warblers. Other species to expect in the forests here during spring and summer include: Great Crested Grebe, Least Waterfowl and Red-winged Blackbird. The entrance to the Keelung Preserve is on the north side of Forest Lawn Road, east of the intersection with Lakeside Road (0.4 miles). There is a pull off here with room for a vehicle or two. The best birding on Forest Lawn Road is to the east of the Keelung entrance and Lakeside Road to the west. Bird along the roadside here – always being alert for passing traffic – and explore trails within the Keelung Preserve. When

6. The Three Oaks Water Treatment Ponds have a large area of open water with very interesting birds and should be visited at any time of the year. Look for pelicans, waterfowl, gulls, eiders, and shorebirds along the marshes and reeds. A walking path in the middle of the ponds has been newly constructed. The secluded ponds will be easily reached from the north side of Main Street in Three Oaks. Take Main Street north follow the road signs on the east side of the ponds and north to the parking lot. The ponds are located near the state highway.}

7. Warren Woods State Park includes mature forest including along the Galien River and an impressive stand of old growth Beach-Plage forest. It is an excellent location to search for woodland species and warblers during spring migration. Yellow-throated Warblers are usually present in the upland forest north of the river, while Yellow-throated and Chestnut-sided Warblers are also frequently present near the river. Many other species are present near or along the river. The official park entry is on the north side of First Street Road (between Lakeview Road and Schwarcz Road on the west and the Galien River on the east). Follow the access road north to the parking area and then follow the trail to the north. You will eventually come to the Galien River where a pedestrian bridge provides access to unobstructed trails on the north side of the river. Birding can be excellent from the bluff overlooking the river. From the bridge, and from the trails on the north side of the river.
Grand More State Park is an extensive undeveloped area of open and wooded dunes. To begin biking, follow the trail at the intersection of Ferndale Road and Grand River Road. The park offers a variety of habitats where you can find many side trails that lead explorers of Grand River's forests and dunes. You can bike here to see some of the rarest and most endangered species in Michigan.

Jean Kluck Park provides another area of public access along Berrien County Lake Michigan shore. The wide sandy beach here is often host to the gulls and terns – and as is the case with many of Berrien County’s beaches, it can be a great spot to see the local avifauna with large shorebird species such as Willet, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit or Whimbrel. The park entrance is on M-63, just north of the intersection of M-63 and Berrien Road.

The Brown Sanctuary is owned by Sarett Nature Center and is located downstream along the Paw Paw River. It includes floodplain forest and a large marsh. Depending on water levels the marsh may be host to waterfowl or shorebirds in season, while a variety of woodland migrants may be present along the ridge and in the floodplain forest. The floodplain forest is also host to Prehistoric Warblers in spring and early summer. The entrance is located at the junction of Wood Street and Central Avenue. Park in front of the gate. To reach the overlook platform, turn right after walking through the gate and follow the trail ahead then left along the ridge until you are once again on the platform on your right. To reach the floodplain and the lower marsh blind continue on the trail across the flat field area and descend along the old road to the river. More information about birding here can be obtained from Sarett.

Sarett Nature Center is well known for its extensive wetland, streams and prairie systems, as well as its extensive opportunities to see birds at all times of year. Spring and early summer are a great time to see Prehistoric Warblers nesting along the Paw Paw River and Redwinged Blackbirds are sometimes present near the lane. Long-nosed and Eastern Saw-whet Owls are sometimes found near the entrance. The park, located on a narrow strip of land between the river and the railroad tracks, is a haven for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Birders will enjoy the wide variety of habitats and the easy access to the river.

Love Creek County Park & Nature Center features many splendid habitats, including areas of native Beech-Maple forest, pine barrens, prairies, and the end of the Paw Paw River where the stenied sand dunes and Flat-topped Woodpeckers are often found. The forest and prairie areas are also host to a variety of shorebirds such as American Golden-Plover and Snow Bunting. The park entrance is on M-63, just north of the intersection of M-63 and Berrien Road.

Silver Beach County Park is adjacent to the South Pier at the St. Joseph River mouth. From the beach you can scan the lake and shoreline for birds. Walking out on the pier (weather and wave conditions permitting) allows a closer view of birds sitting or flying offshore. Silver Beach can be a good birding location in the early morning during spring and fall, but on summer days the beach crowds usually move the birds to less heavily used beach areas, such as Tiscornia Beach to the north. Directions to Silver Beach can be found in downtown St. Joseph. A park entrance fee is charged from spring through fall.

Fernwood Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve is located on the east bank of the St. Joseph River and features forests, gardens, an arboretum and a restored Tall Grass Prairie. The gardens and woodland edges near the visitor center are excellent areas to see for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, orioles, Scarlet Tanagers and many woodland migrants. Additional woodland species can also be found by exploring the trails that head west to the north and to the preserve area and a variety of feeder species can be seen from the nature center observation window. The nature center staff sponsor regular birding field trips and can provide information on recent sightings and trail recommendations. A daily entry fee is charged to non-members. The Fernwood entrance is on Range Line Road, north of Walton Road (1.7 miles).

The Mud Lake Bog Preserve can be a good location for a spring birding stop after traveling across southern Berrien County. Woodland meadows and wooded areas provide many spring birds and shrubs around the parking lot and along the boardwalk trails. Yellow-breasted Chats and White-eyed Vireos are present some years and Sandhill Cranes are next the bog – although they can be incredibly inconspicuous. Red-throated Loons also exist and readily await your observation. This is a more remote site and before dawn in mid-to-late spring is a good time to listen for bird songs, calls, and Barred and Eastern Towhees. The entrance is on the north side of Elm Valley Road, east of Boyle Lake Road (1.0 mile).

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For lodging, restaurant information and more contact: