

Winnebago County Forest Preserve District Natural Areas

The Original Land Survey that described Winnebago County in the early 1840s depicted the area as approximately 30 percent forested and 70 percent prairie. Today, much of the forest has been timbered, and most of the prairie has been converted to agricultural and urban uses. Currently, about six percent of the county remains forested and about .01 percent or 300 acres, of the original prairie remain. These remnant natural areas are important to educate us about our County's natural heritage, and to provide critical habitats for a wide array of unique flora and fauna.

The district actively manages its natural areas. Prescribed fires and brush removal are conducted periodically at these and other locations. Control and removal of invasive, exotic (foreign) species is also done to preserve these areas for our native species. Many native species are being planted to restore some of these areas to include all the appropriate plants that are known to have occurred in that particular habitat. These management activities are required to preserve the County's natural heritage of forests and prairies for those who follow.

❖ **Blackhawk Springs:**

5360 Mulford Road & 5800 Perryville Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

80 acres of prairie restorations. The District's largest contiguous tract of forest, home to many birds that require large tracts of forest for their survival (hooded warbler, acadian flycatcher, broad-winged hawk, and veery). Public access is provided off Perryville Road and Mulford Road.

❖ **Colored Sands:**

10602 Haas Road, Shirland, IL 61024

Woodlands, sand prairie, savanna; a Dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve (in part), home to several endangered, threatened and special concern species. Most of the sand prairie near the Banding Station was previously plowed but has recovered through restoration and management, now harboring many unique plants and insects. A trail from the Bird Observatory provides easy public access.

❖ **Deer Run:**

5691 River Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

A 593 acre preserve consisting of 170 acres of restored prairies. Many diverse habitats, flood plain forests, and oxbows with skunk cabbages, iris bottle gentian, cardinal flower, and pond lilies. Spring and fall is a perfect time to view migrating birds as they forage and refuel for their long migration. 9.5 miles of trails will challenge any hikers endurance.

❖ **Fuller Memorial:**

6700 Fitzgerald Road, Rockford, IL 61102

The oak woods are designated to bird sanctuary, open to public use only by permission of the Director.

❖ **Hartley Memorial:**

14990 Campbell Road, Durand, IL 61024

Mature oak-hickory woodland; a Dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve, with an excellent wildflower display. Public parking is provided on the north side of the preserve, off Campbell Road. No trails are provided.

❖ **Kieselburg Forest Preserve:**

5801 Swanson Road, Roscoe, IL 61073

Remnant hill prairie dominated by compass plant and pale purple coneflower. Several prairie rescues have contributed to restoring Kieselburg. 50 acres of prairie restoration. Very diverse plant life. Sedge meadow, fen, and gravel prairie; home to rare plants and animals. (Four habitat-restricted butterflies, grass-of-parnassus, valerian, cotton-topped sedge, bog goldenrod...) The meadow trail circles the restoration area and a boardwalk crosses the headwaters of the sedge meadow.

❖ **Kilbuck Bluffs (Upper):**

3061 & 3020 South Bend Road, Rockford, IL 61109

Woodlands with a beautiful display of spring woodland wildflowers; many mature sycamore trees are located along the creek. Existing preserve roadways provide easy access.

❖ **Kishwaukee Gorge South:**

6915 Faust Lane, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

Woodlands of high quality with an understory of fall blooming witch hazel trees which are found only on the south side of the Kishwaukee River's gorge in Winnebago County. No public access is currently developed.

❖ **Kishwaukee River:**

6303 Mulford Road & 5757 Blackhawk Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

This 30-acre oak woods is an Illinois Natural Area Inventory site of notable natural quality. A hiking trail provides public access.

❖ **Laona Heights:**

1540 Anderson Road, Durand, IL 61024

Mature woodland; a Dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve. Harbors a mature forest of oak, hickory, walnut and white ash. The preserve contains a good display of wildflowers and can be accessed by existing roadways. No trails are provided.

❖ **Oak Ridge:**

8322 Blomberg Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

160 acres of prairie restorations, 100 acres of sedge meadow, and hundreds of acres of flood plain forest. 653 acre preserve with 5 miles of hiking trails. One of the best spring wild flower displays in the county. Virginia blue bells cover the forest floor in late April (along river/flood plain forest). Trilliums, Dutchman britches, spring beauties, dog tooth violets and a host of other spring wild flowers litter the upland slopes leading to sedge meadows where the skunk cabbage and marsh marigolds thrive.

❖ **Pecatonica River:**

7260 Judd Road, Pecatonica, IL 61063

Woodlands and oxbow swamps; a Dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve, displays an example of outstanding Pecatonica bottomland spring wildflowers with carpets of Virginia bluebells, wild geraniums, and many other wildflowers. Contains unique birds such as the swamp-loving Prothonotary warbler. A self-guided interpretive trail and an observation deck overlooking the oxbow provide easy access through this area.

❖ **Pecatonica Wetlands:**

17810 Blair Road, Pecatonica, IL 61063

283 acres of prairie restorations, 56 acres of reforestation, and 113 acres of wetlands. Floodplain forest, oxbow ponds, marshes and upland forest; the site has outstanding flora, birdlife and concentration of wetlands. Portion south of the river is only accessible from Pecatonica Prairie Path.

- ❖ **Rockford Rotary:**
5390 Rotary Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016
Woodlands; an Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site and home to the widest diversity of trees and shrubs in the District. Parking is provided off Rotary Road and hiking and equestrian trails lead through the preserve.
- ❖ **Severson Dells:**
8502 Montague Road, Rockford, IL 61102
80 acres of prairie restorations and 15 acres of reforestation. Woodland and dolomite cliffs; a Dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve which harbors many unique species commonly found north of here. A self-guided interpretive trail provides access through this unique area.
- ❖ **Seward Bluffs:**
16999 Comly Road, Seward, IL 61077
Currently 177 acres of prairie restoration (when completed 309 acres of prairie restorations). Woodland and dolomite cliffs; home to many northern relic species as well as a good spring wildflower display. Existing roadways and equestrian trails provide easy access to this area.
- ❖ **Sugar River:**
10127 Forest Preserve Road, Durand, IL 61024
Woodlands, sand prairie, wetlands; an Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Notable Area, contains an incredible diversity of habitats, plants and animals. Easy access is provided by existing roadways and an excellent trail system. Birders regularly visit to observe yellow-throated warblers in spring and summer.
- ❖ **Sugar River Alder:**
10129 Haas Road, Durand, IL 61024
Floodplain forest, sedge meadow, upland forests, savanna and dry dolomite prairie; a Dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve. Home to many state threatened and endangered species. Local naturalists have observed the state breeding season for Sand Hill Crane. Access to the site is a short distance away from the Bird Observatory on Haas Rd. A self-guided interpretive trail provides access through this unique area.

Note: *In addition to the above locations there are many other areas of outstanding natural beauty found throughout the District's Forest Preserves.*

General Information For Your **P**ersonal Safety And The **P**reserve's Protection

No matter what activities you intend to enjoy, proper planning and footwear will make a big difference in your personal comfort. During the summer season, insect and tick repellents are another must.

Observe Rules Posted In Nature Preserves

PROTECT THE FLORA AND FAUNA: The very name "Preserve" implies protection and freedom from harm. It is therefore unlawful to hunt, collect or injure any tree, shrub, flower, or wildlife. Fish, the only exception, may be taken in accordance with posted regulations.

PERMITS: Research requires a permit from the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District and, when conducted in Nature Preserves, from the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

STEWARDSHIP: Help keep your forest preserves clean by using the trash receptacles provided.

FIREWOOD: Cutting down or collecting firewood from District land is prohibited. Decaying wood is part of our natural habitat.

PETS: Your pets are welcome in the preserves, but for their safety as well as other visitors and native plants and animals, they must be kept on a leash at all times. Pets are not allowed in the Severson Dells Forest Preserve or Klehm Arboretum.

WATER SAFETY: Life preserves are required for boating on the rivers. Swimming is prohibited.

All visitors are subject to provisions of the Forest Preserve District "General Use Regulations". A violation of any of these regulations may result in the revocation of privileges of the responsible individual(s). A copy of the regulations is available upon request. The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District is committed to providing facilities and programs which meet the needs of both individuals with and without disabilities visiting the preserves. For more information on these or any other services, contact the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District Office at 815-877-6100 or 5500 Northrock Drive Rockford, IL 61103.



NATURAL AREAS



WINNEBAGO COUNTY
FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT

**5500 Northrock Drive
Rockford, IL 61103
(815) 877-6100**

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Our Mission

To assure the public access to permanent natural lands and areas for safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation and education.