

Dear Visitor,

Thank you for your interest in the Cache River State Natural Area which offers unique wildlife/nature/hiking experiences of both short and long duration. The Lower Cache River access offers canoeists/boaters a quality experience of 3-6 miles on marked trails through the backwater sloughs and river in a cypress-tupelo swamp. There are limited facilities offered at CRSNA, with no camping. Privy type toilets are available at the Heron Pond, Lower Cache River and Marshall Ridge accesses only. Boat motor limit is 10-h.p.

There are currently 26 access areas. The Henry Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center, Heron Pond, Wildcat Bluff, Marshall Ridge, Big Cypress, Section 8 Woods, and Lower Cache River accesses offer various habitat and hiking experiences along developed trails. The other 19 accesses have grass, lightly maintained trails, which may be used by the general public, though most of the time these are primarily used seasonally by hunters.

The Heron Pond Access offers a unique 1.5 mile trail, round trip. The highlight of this trail is a 400 ft. floating boardwalk into a cypress swamp. From the Heron Pond Trail loop, you can access the Linkage Trail that connects to the Little Black Slough and Marshall Ridge trails (follow signs). The state champion cherrybark oak tree can be viewed 1/4 mile west of the Heron Pond boardwalk on the Linkage Trail. To reach Heron Pond access from Vienna, IL drive five miles south on US Rt. 45, turn west on the Belknap road for 2 miles, follow the road signs to Heron Pond access for 1 mile.

From the Wildcat Bluff Access, the Little Black Slough and Lookout Point Trails offer the visitor a hike of various habitats of both long and short duration. To reach the Wildcat Bluff access, drive 1 mile east from the intersection of IL Rt.146 and IL Rt. 37, then turn south, 6 miles on Oak Grove Road, lots of curves. Or go 2.5 miles south from Vienna on US 45 and turn west on the Ballowe Church Rd. to Hawkins Rd. for 4 miles to Wildcat Bluff. Look for the Wildcat Bluff arrow signs at the numerous intersections. Please note that a rock ford on the Cache River must be crossed to hike Boss Island. This is not a problem during the dry weather, but in rainy weather the crossing may be inaccessible due to high water. During wet weather, rubber boots are recommended for these trails are not rocked.

The Lower Cache River Access offers a parking lot with privy toilets, picnic shelter, and potable water, boat launch with floating dock, Lower Cache River Swamp hiking trail, and 3-6 mile Buttonland Swamp water trail. Both trails are excellent for viewing a cypress-tupelo swamp and wildlife. To reach the Lower Cache River access, drive 4 miles south of Cypress, IL on Rt. 37, turn west, drive 1 3/4 miles on the Perks Rd., then proceed south 1 mile to the access.

The Section 8 Woods Nature Preserve offers a 250-foot boardwalk that passes through a flood plain forest and a cypress-tupelo swamp. This is an ADA accessible boardwalk that offers a view of the state champion water tupelo tree; circumference of 22.5 feet. The trailhead is located on Il. Rt. 37, 1/2 mile south of the Cache River Wetlands Center.

The Big Cypress Tree access offers the visitor an opportunity to view a +1000-year-old cypress tree on a trail only 100 feet from this access. To reach the Big Cypress Tree access drive 3 miles west of Belknap, IL, on Main/West Eden Rd.; turn south on a gravel road, Porterhouse Rd., 1-1/4 mile to access (follow signs). Coming north from St. Rt. 169, the road is Urbana Rd. When one crosses the county line the road is named Porterhouse Rd.

Camping, picnicking, and recreational activities are offered at other IL Dept. of Natural Resources and Shawnee National Forest sites within a 30-mile radius. Check out Ferne Clyffe State Park, Horseshoe Lake State F&W, Fort Massac SP, Giant City SP, Dixon Springs SP, and Lake Glendale Recreation (US Forest Service). For additional tourist information including motels, B&B's and private canoe tours contact the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau, 1-800-248-4373, or visit them on the web at www.southernmostillinois.com.

The Henry N. Barkhausen - Cache River Wetlands Center, visitor center, 8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress, IL 62923, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Call 618-657-2064 for information. The Wetlands Center has a trail to link to the Tunnel Hill State Trail, pedestrian / bicycle trail, 618-658-2168.

We hope your visit to the Cache River State Natural Area is a rewarding one.

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