Cottonwood *(Populus deltoides)*

The cottonwood tree is also a rapidly growing tree, sometimes up to 100 feet tall. The cottonwood is easily recognized by its triangular leaves with flattened leafstalks. The cottony seeds that fall from the mature fruits in the spring are abundant and very distinguishable. The cottonwood is a soft wood used primarily for pulpwood and fuel.

BLACK WILLOW *(Salix nigra)*

The black willow can be a medium to large tree growing up to 90 feet tall. The black willow is best distinguished by its narrow blade-like leaves, which are green on the lower surface and have many fine teeth along the edges. Black willow wood is used to make flooring, boxes, crates, and for fuel.

RIVER BIRCH *(Betula nigra)*

The river birch can grow up to 75 feet tall. The shaggy, peeling reddish-brown bark readily distinguishes this tree from any other in Illinois, as does its doubly-toothed leaves with hairy undersides. River birch wood is used for furniture and is sometimes planted as an ornamental.

NON-NATIVE AND INVASIVE PLANTS

Giant city state park is a participant in the statewide effort to rid our parks of non-native and invasive plants. Over the last one hundred years or so, many plants that are not native or are exotic to the United States have been planted for seemingly good reasons like erosion prevention, wildlife food, or pleasing aesthetics. Years later botanists found some of these plants can take over our natural areas or become invasive, forcing out our native flora. Control methods differ for each non-native, invasive plant. Most times these methods include some combination of prescribed burning and very specific uses of herbicides. Unfortunately, the beautiful Indian Creek Trail may be our hardest hit area. The trailing, whitish vine seen strangling even the tallest of forest trees is round-leaved bittersweet *(Celastrus orbiculatus)*, coveted by many for its red-orange berries and used in crafts. This Asian vine loosely wraps around trees, and as they grow, the vine becomes tighter and ends up girdling healthy forest trees. Another non-native commonly found on this trail is Japanese Honeysuckle *(Lonicera japonica)*. This vine is observed more as a ground cover, remaining dark green through out the winter. Although these and other non-native invasive plants can overwhelm land managers, active control methods are working to slow the progression and, hopefully, someday stop their spread altogether.

Please carry out what you carry in.

Cigarette Butts are litter!
Plastic bottles and cans are litter!!

Thank you for visiting Giant City State Park.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and those funded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer IDNR, 524 S. Second, Springfield, IL 62701-1787; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

Indian Creek Nature Trail

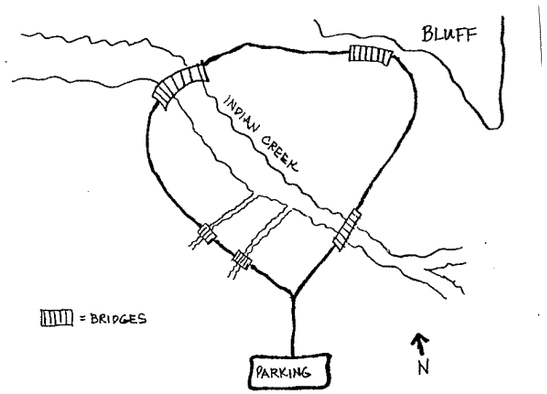
Photo compliments of Janet Sundberg

Length: 3/4 mile
Difficulty: Moderate
Walking Time: 45 minutes

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Giant City State Park
235 Giant City Road
Makanda, IL 62958
618-457-4836
http://www.dnr.state.il.us

Indian Creek Nature Trail



Indian Creek Nature Trail

Be careful-steep cliffs are dangerous and sandstone can be slippery.
Please stay on designated trails.
Poison ivy exists on this trail.
Copperhead snakes (venomous) hibernate in the sandstone bluffs.

INDIAN CREEK NATURE TRAIL

As you enter this enchanting creek bottomland and walk along Indian Creek Trail, you will see many different species of plants and evidence of animals that inhabit this area. The forest comes alive as you walk deeper into an area that the Late Woodland Native Americans (400-900 A.D.) called home many moons ago. An abundance of food and shelter allowed the Native Americans to live well. Try to find the many trees, shrubs, nuts, berries, and animals that these early peoples would eat and use to build.

INDIAN CREEK

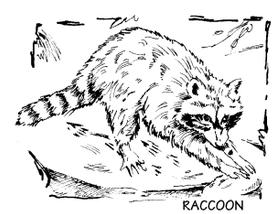
This meandering creek is an example of an "intermittent stream," that only flows after a large rainfall or after the snow melts. This peaceful stream may swell to over 100 feet wide during rainfall, but it can quickly return to a trickle a few hours later. Indian Creek travels north and west to Drury Creek. Deeper pools of water that are found throughout the stream help to support stream fish and macroinvertebrates and provide watering and foraging areas for deer, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, opossums, skunks, weasels, birds, reptiles and amphibians. DO NOT DRINK THE WATER EVEN IF IT APPEARS TO BE CLEAN. Agricultural runoff and possible contamination from old outdoor privies make most of the streams in southern Illinois unsuitable for drinking without special treatment.

SHELTER CAVE

This shelter bluff may be unimpressive in size, but the shape, dimensions, and orientation are important. By facing south or southwest the "cave" area gets early morning sunlight from the east yet the bluff protects the area from the north and west winds of winter. The Late Woodland Native Americans who utilized these shelters found these low caves to be dry and suitable for cooking, sleeping, and working. At the drip-line of the bluff (where water drips off and erodes the soil) 'you may see small flakes of gray, brown, red, or white chert exposed. Those are the waste flakes from making tools and weapons. There is no natural chert deposit in the park, so they had to travel miles by foot to collect raw materials for tool making.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife is more abundant in the stream valley than on the ridge tops nearby. Pileated woodpeckers, which are the largest woodpeckers in North America, feed on insects in dead and decaying trees. Many species of animals come to drink in the stream pools. Keep an eye out for a glimpse of wild turkeys scratching the forest floor for acorns and berries. Once extirpated (gone) from Illinois, these large birds were reintroduced several years ago on nearby Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. They have have increased in such numbers that several flocks now live at Giant City. Bears and mountain lions, once native to this area, are no longer found anywhere in the state of Illinois in the wild.



COPPERHEAD SNAKE

The copperhead snake is the only venomous snake known to breed at Giant City State Park. They are stout-bodied snakes that can reach up to 135 cm in length. The snakes back is yellowish-brown or rusty-brown in color with 10 to 20 reddish brown hourglass shaped dark margined cross bands that are narrow across the back and wider on the sides. The belly is yellow to brown with brown blotches near the edges. The top of their head is red-brown. A thick dark line extends from the eye to an angle of the jaw. The sulfur yellow tip of the tail disappears as the newborn matures. The copperhead snake can be found in a wooded area, a rocky hillside, a forest edge, or even in meadows and fields during the summer. **Copperheads are seen on this trail**.

TREES COMMONLY FOUND AROUND INDIAN CREEK

The Indian Creek Trail is a premiere place in the park to find moisture-loving tree species like the tulip tree, sycamore, cottonwood, river birch, and black willow. All of these trees grow best in the rich moist soil of stream and river valleys, often referred to as bottomlands.

TULIP TREE *(Liriodendron tulipfera)*

These beautiful, straight, and fast growing giant trees are also referred to as tulip poplar or yellow poplar trees. They can reach upwards of 100 feet! The wood of this tree is a soft, but durable quality. The tulip tree is used for lumber, veneer, and canoes. The Native Americans used to call the tulip tree "canoe wood," because of its straight trunk and lightweight wood. This tree can be identified by its yellow-orange flowers in spring and upright "flower-like" seed pods in fall and winter. The leaf is similar to the shape of a tulip lying on its side and is usually between four to six inches long . The duckbill-shaped bud is another give away to identify this tree in winter. The tulip tree is found in abundance on this trail.

SYCAMORE *(Platanus occidentalis)*

The sycamore tree is found throughout the state. The sycamore is best distinguished by its peeling bark. When this tree grows past the juvenile stage its bark breaks into thin flat scales and large sections fall off the tree exposing white inner bark. Look to the sky for white trees and you've found a sycamore. Sycamores are also used for furniture. Sometimes sycamores are planted as ornamental trees because they grow rapidly and have unique bark.