Increasing public knowledge of native plants through 'wildflower walk' guide

Project Final Report (#13-010W)

Submitted to IDNR by Chris Benda, INPS Southern Chapter President

March 31, 2014

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Illinois Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Preservation Fund –Project Final Report

Project Title
Increasing public knowledge of native plants through 'wildflower walk' guide

Grant Agreement Number
#13-010W

Grantee
Illinois Native Plant Society – Southern Chapter
P.O. Box 271
Carbondale, IL 62903
217-417-4145

Project Time Frame
September 25, 2012 – December 31, 2013

Grantee Representative
Chris Benda, southernillinoisplants@gmail.com or 217-417-4145

Funding Summary
WPF Funds awarded - $1,500.00
WPF funds expended - $1,500.00
Total funds expended - $2,342.14

Project Objectives (as stated in Grant Proposal)
1. Develop and print Spring Wildflower Walk guide

2. Disseminate guide at INPS meetings and events, at local nature centers, and online

3. Increase public's knowledge of native species and natural resources through making it easier for them to find and utilize prime locations for wildflower viewing.

Project Description
The first step to increasing the public's involvement in conservation is increasing their knowledge and interest in native species and communities. Many people have a desire to learn more about these but do not know where to start or where to go to view these. Spring wildflower viewing is of particular interest to many people. The Illinois Native Plant Society – Southern Chapter (INPS) is developed and printed a short 'guide book' on places to view spring wildflowers in southern Illinois. This guide is a 20 page 5.5" x 8.5" full color booklet giving information on 7 locations in southern Illinois to go to view spring wildflowers. All locations are on public lands and will be easily accessible. The guide gives details

about the trails in the areas, maps of how to get there, and which native species can be viewed. In addition, this guide gives a brief picture-guide to 15 common spring wildflower species.

Approximately 3,500 copies of this guide were printed and are being made available for free at INPS events and meetings, local nature centers, extension offices, and other locations. A pdf version will be created and shared online.
Previously this information was not readily available, limiting people's ability to locate and utilize these valuable recreation opportunities. By providing this guide for free, we will enhance the educational and recreational opportunities for viewing spring wildflowers in southern Illinois, increasing public interest in natural resources and native species. Having printed copies of this resource is important to allow us to easily disseminate the information at meetings and to allow people to take the guide with them to the viewing areas.

Summary of Project Activities

Introduction
Increasing the public's knowledge and appreciation of native species can greatly benefit native plant and wildlife species in Illinois. Access to places to hike and enjoy native species is critical to enhancing one's knowledge and appreciation. However, many Illinois citizens do not know where the best places to go to view natural areas and native species. Having a guide that informs readers about the best places to view spring wildflowers can serve as an important tool to allow people to better experience nature and learn about native species.

Materials and Methods

The SINPS chose seven trails to highlight in this guide:

1. Rim Rock Trail, Pounds Hollow Natural Area, Shawnee National Forest
2. Rocky Bluff Trail, Devil's Kitchen Dam Research Natural Area, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
3. Round Bluff Trail, Round Bluff Nature Preserve, Ferne Clyffe State Park
4. Trillium Trail, Ferne Rocks Nature Preserve, Giant City State Park
5. Little Grand Canyon Trail, Shawnee National Forest
6. Snake Road Trail, LaRue Pine Hills Ecological Area/ Research Natural Area, Shawnee National Forest
7. Heron Pond Trail, Heron Pond/Little Black Slough Nature Preserve, Cache River State Natural Area

Each trail was visited in the spring of 2013, with photos taken and species list developed. The guide was drafted using Scribus Publishing Software and refined through comments and edits by the entire SINPS board and other experts. This guide included an introduction, that talks about the ecology and importance of spring wildflowers, give information on how to use the guide, thanks the WPF program, and gives a note on invasive plants.

Each trail includes a map, GPS coordinates for the trail head, difficulty rating, total mileage, a list of notable wildflower species, driving directions, and a written description of the trail. Pictures of the trail and notable species were included for each trail. The last two pages of the guide highlighted fifteen common spring wildflowers in a picture-guide to help familiar users with the species they are most likely to encounter. Species included in the picture guide were:

- Spring Beauty, Claytonia virginica
- Yellow corydalis, Corydalis flavula
- Dwarf larkspur, Delphinium tricorne
- Cutleaf toothwort, Dentaria laciniata
- Dutchman's breeches, Dicentra cucullaria
- Yellow trout lily, Erythronium americanum
- False rue anemone, Enemion biternatum
- Harbinger of spring, Erigenia bulbosa
- Virginia bluebells, Mertensia virginiana
- False garlic, Nothoscordum bivalve
- Fernleaf phacelia, Phacelia bipinnatifida
- Woodland phlox, Phlox divaricata
- Bloodroot, Sanguinaria Canadensis
- Celandine poppy, Stylophorum diphyllum
- Purple trillium Trillium recurvatum

The final version of the guide was uploaded to and printed by PsPrint, an online printing company. Proofs were sent and accepted and the order was printed and shipped.

Results

Bulk printing allowed for a price break, so SINPS was able to print 3,500 copies for $1,542.14. This was slightly over the WPF budgeted amount of $1,500.00, but the SINPS contributed the funds over the budgeted amount.

Once the copies arrived, SINPS members started distributing them throughout the region. Currently, booklets have been distributed to:

IDNR Locations

- Henry Barkhausen Wetlands Center, Ullin, IL
- IDNR Region 5 Office, Benton, IL
- Giant City State Park Visitors Center, Makanda, IL
- Ferne Clyffe State Park Office, Goreville, IL

USFWS Locations

- Crab Orchard NWR Visitor's Center, Marion, IL
- Crab Orchard Administrative Offices, Marion, IL

USFS Locations

- Shawnee National Forest Supervisor's Office, Harrisburg, IL
- Hidden Springs District Office, Vienna, IL

ACOE Locations

- Rend Lake Visitor's Center, Benton, IL

University of Illinois

- Williamson County Extension Office, Marion, IL
- Jackson County Extension Office, Murphysboro, IL
- Illinois Forest Resource Center, Dixon Springs Ag Center, Simpson, IL
- Master Naturalist Training Program

Other Locations

- INPS Meeting, Carbondale, IL
- Marion Public Library, Marion, IL
- Carbondale Public Library, Carbondale, IL
- Clifftop Alliance, Maeystown, IL

In addition, SINPS, in February gave a presentation on this wildflower guide, with 70 people in attendance.

Discussion

Results and deliverables exceeded what was expected with this grant. Due to price reductions for bulk printing, we were able to include 7 hikes and print 3,500 copies of the booklet. The SINPS is very pleased with the final booklet and reviews from readers have been overwhelming positive. This guide will definitely increase public awareness and knowledge about native spring wildflowers and will contribute to an increased appreciation of southern Illinois natural areas and an increased desire by the public to preserve and protect our native species and natural areas.

Budget Details

Budget Summary/Category	Funds Expended	Grant Funds Requested	Cost Share
Personnel	$800.00		$800
Travel			
Equipment			
Materials/Supplies			
Contractual Services			
Other (printing costs)	$1542.14	$1500.00	$42.14
Subtotals		**$1500.00**	**$842.14**
Total	**$2,342.14**		

The project went slightly over budget due to the cost of printing. The SINPS made up this extra cost by increasing through a cash contributions to the project of $42.14. In addition, though we estimated $800 in in-kind contributions (40 hours time to develop the guide), in actuality the SINPS board volunteered

much more time to develop this guide. Actual WPF grant funds expended match the amount requested form WPF.

Total Project Expenditures

Printing costs -	PsPrint
*$1,542.14	1600 East Touhy Avenue
December 19, 2013	Des Plaines, IL 60018

**$1,500.00 paid for via WPF Funds, 42.14 paid by funds other than*

Project Advertisement / Press Release

This project was advertised during SINPS monthly meetings, in our monthly newsletters, through various email listservs, on the SINPS Facebook Page and through a press release sent out to area newspapers.

Summary

The Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society, through funds from the Wildlife Preservation Fund Program, created a very successful product that will help educate local citizens about native plant species and conservation. This guide resulting from this project will have long term benefits to southern Illinois. The SINPS is also planning on continuing efforts to develop additional products such as this in the future.

New guide helps hikers find spring flowers in Southern Illinois

BY KARLA GAGE, PH.D.
RIVER TO RIVER COOP, WEED MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

CARBONDALE — Springtime offers nature lovers an opportunity to view beautiful displays of wildflowers in Southern Illinois. These gems can literally carpet forest floors in color, bursting forth as the spring sun warms the soil. Through a grant from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund, the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society (INPS) has produced a guide to help people find the best locations to view these spring wildflowers. This booklet highlights the seven best wildflower viewing hikes on public lands in Southern Illinois.

The guide, co-written by INPS Southern Chapter President Chris Benda and Vice President Chris Evans, includes a written description of each trail and a list of notable spring wildflowers found at each site, along with trail distances, difficulty ratings, directions and maps. Driving directions and coordinates for the trailheads are given. To help beginners learn more about the native plants they are viewing along these trails, a picture guide of 15 of the most common spring wildflowers is also included.

On Feb. 25, the INPS hosted a presentation from the guide authors on these seven hikes, including expanded information and pictures from each site. The meeting had 70 people in attendance, each of which received a hike guide and a handout of guided hiking opportunities this spring.

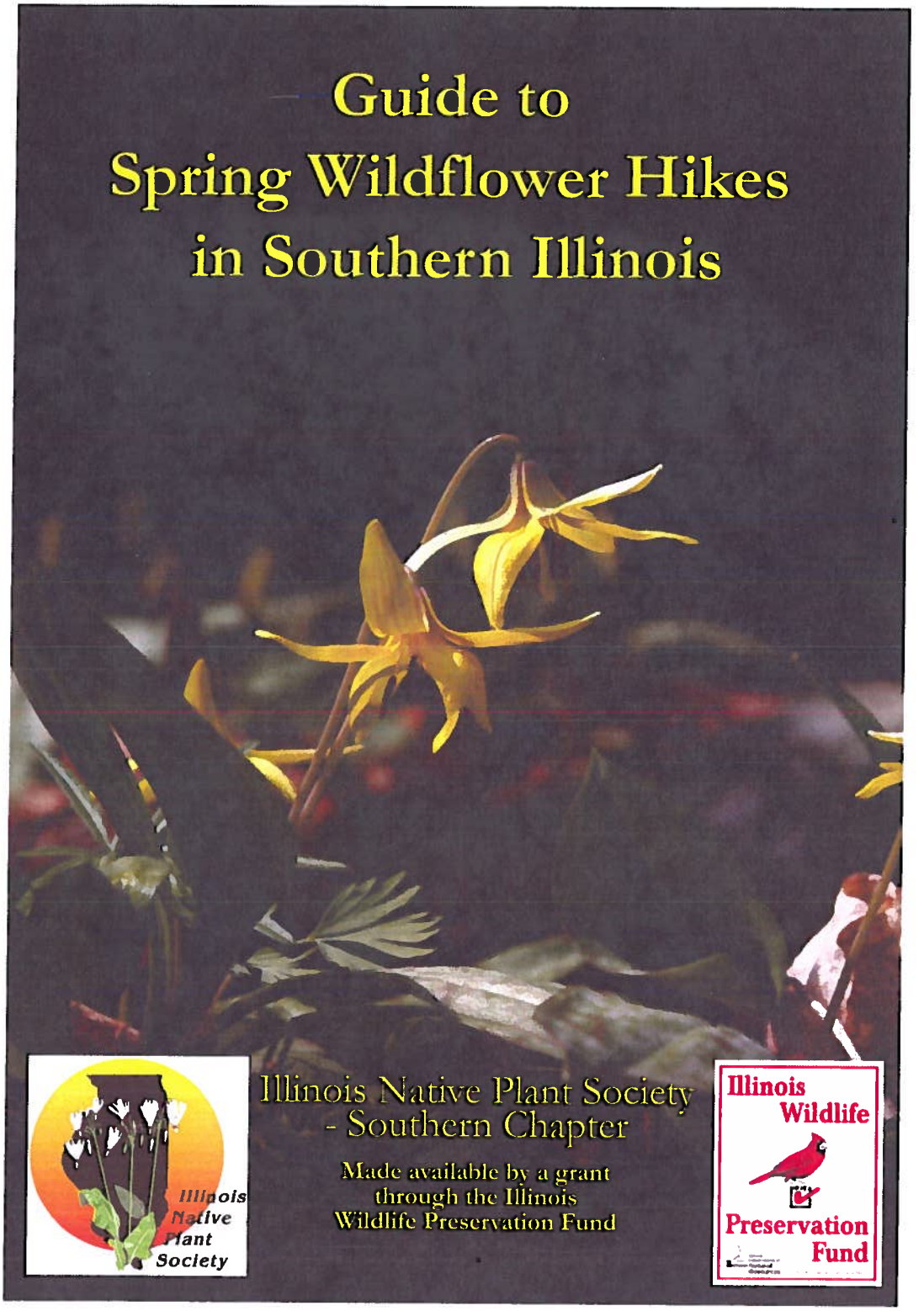
Submitted Photo

ROCKY BLUFF TRAIL — Located in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, Rocky Bluff trail is one of seven trails described in a new publication from the Illinois Native Plant Society. The flower in the inset is Blue-eyed Mary.

The guide will be available free of charge to anyone interested in learning about wildflower viewing opportunities in Southern Illinois at monthly meetings of the INPS Southern Chapter and at many local nature centers, extension offices, and even some libraries. In addition, the INPS Southern Chapter has received a second grant from the Wildlife Preservation Fund to produce a second booklet on hiking opportunities for viewing summer wildflowers.

The Southern Illinois Chapter is very active, hosting meetings and guided hikes throughout the year. Information on the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society can be found on our website at www.ill-inps.org or Facebook page at www.facebook.com/southernillinoisplants or by sending an email to southernillinoisplants@gmail.com.

Guide to Spring Wildflower Hikes in Southern Illinois



Illinois Native Plant Society - Southern Chapter

Made available by a grant through the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund

Illinois Native Plant Society -
Southern Chapter

Guide to Spring Wildflower Hikes in Southern Illinois

All photos and text by Chris Evans and Chris Benda

Citation:
Evans, C.W. and C.D. Benda. 2013. Guide to Spring Wildflower Hikes in Southern Illinois. Illinois Native Plant Society - Southern Chapter. 20 pgs.

2013

Cover photo: Yellow trout lily along the Rocky Bluff Trail, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
Back photo: Woodland phlox at base of bluffs along the Snake Road Trail, Shawnee National Forest

Introduction

Springtime offers nature lovers an opportunity to view beautiful displays of wildflowers in southern Illinois. These gems can literally carpet forest floors in color, bursting forth as the spring sun warms the soil. These species take advantage of that sunlight in early spring, before the tree leaves have emerged and cast the area into heavy shade. This trick of timing allows these diminutive plants that need a lot of sun to survive, reproduce and even thrive alongside the towering oaks, hickories and maples of our hardwood forests. Rich, undisturbed woods are the best sites for seeing large, breathtaking displays of wildflowers. Fortunately, many of these sites are now being protected by state or federal agencies and have been designated as state nature preserves or research natural areas. To help protect sensitive species and preserve the sites for the enjoyment of others, please remain on marked trails.

Through a grant from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund, the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society has produced this guide to spring wildflower hikes in southern Illinois. This guide was designed to highlight the best wildflower viewing opportunities and the seven sites described are all on public lands, have well-marked trails and are relatively easily accessible.

The guide includes a written description of each trail, a list of notable spring wildflowers found at the site, trail distance, difficulty rating and a trail map. Driving directions are included in the text and coordinates for the trailheads are given for GPS users. On the trail maps, the hiking trails are marked with a gray dashed line and public land is beige in color.

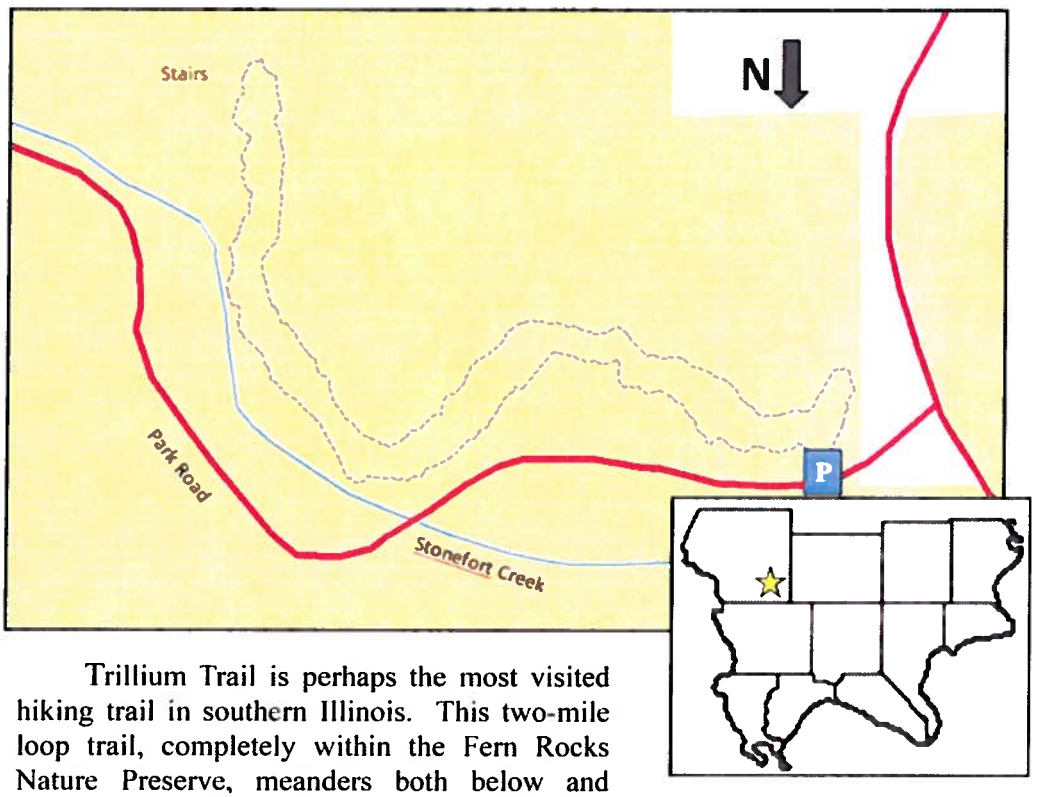
While this is not a field guide, instructing the reader on how to identify the wildflowers, a small section is included to show fifteen of the most common wildflowers that you are likely to observe on any of the hikes. To learn more about the identification of spring wildflowers or just to enjoy our native plants in general, please consider getting involved with the Illinois Native Plant Society. The Southern Illinois Chapter is very active, hosting meetings and guided hikes throughout the year. Information on the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society can be found on our website at www.ill-inps.org or by sending an email to southernillinoisplants@gmail.com. Please "like" us on facebook at www.facebook.com/southernillinoisplants.

A Note on Invasive Plants

Invasive plants, species not native to the natural ecosystems of southern Illinois, can have a devastating effect on our native wildflowers. Unfortunately, sometimes people unintentionally introduce these species into our natural areas through seeds on their clothing or in mud on their shoes. To help prevent this from happening, we ask that everyone hiking on these trails makes sure their clothing and footwear is free of any seeds or mud before taking the hike.

Trillium Trail

Giant City State Park
2 mile - Moderate Rating
Trailhead: 37.6249, -89.2037



Trillium Trail is perhaps the most visited hiking trail in southern Illinois. This two-mile loop trail, completely within the Fern Rocks Nature Preserve, meanders both below and above a large sandstone bluff, the prominent geological feature of this area. Hikers need to know that a steep and somewhat long set of stairs awaits them at the east end of the trail, though once on top of the bluff the walking is flat and easy with some gentle switch-backs leading back down the bluff on the west end. From the trailhead, go left along the bottom of the bluff to get right into the wildflowers. You should be able to easily find some of the very earliest spring wildflowers, such as harbinger-of-spring, spring beauties and toothwort. The trail gets its name from the amazingly beautiful display of white and purple trilliums that occur below the bluff among the large boulders that lie scattered as a reminder that erosive powers helped form this area. Other common wildflowers along this trail are yellow trout lily, dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, waterleaf, phacelia and valerian.

The low woods on either side of the road that runs along the northern edge of the nature preserve boasts one of the most impressive displays of blue-eyed Mary flowers in southern Illinois. It is truly a sight everyone should witness. While the areas below the bluff contain most of the showy wildflowers, the section above the bluff should not be overlooked as it can provide hikers with views of unique species, such as cleft phlox and false dandelion.

This trail is located on the north end of Giant City State Park next to the small town of Makanda. The small trailhead parking lot only has room for 6-8 vehicles and is often filled to capacity. In that case, you can park at the nearby Shelter One parking lot and access the trail via a short spur just across the bridge. More information on this trail and other hiking opportunities at Giant City can be found at the Visitor Center.

Notable wildflowers present at site

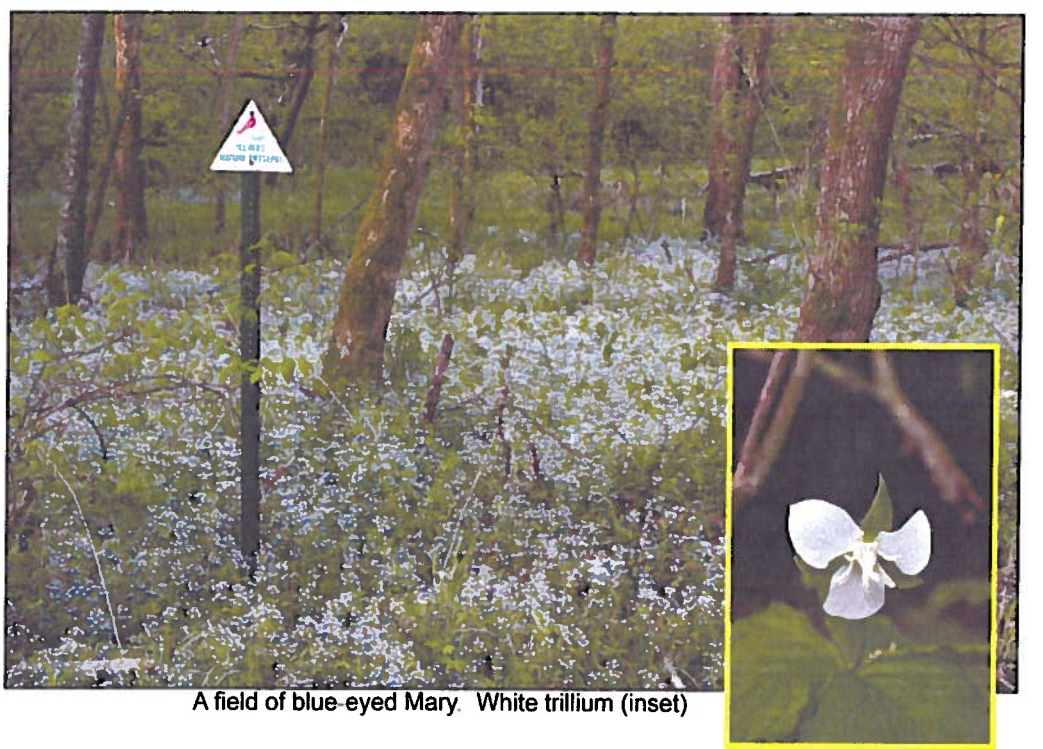
White trillium
Trilium flexipes

Celandine poppy
Stylophorum diphylllum

Yellow trout lily
Erythronium americanum

Harbinger of spring
Erigenia bulbosa

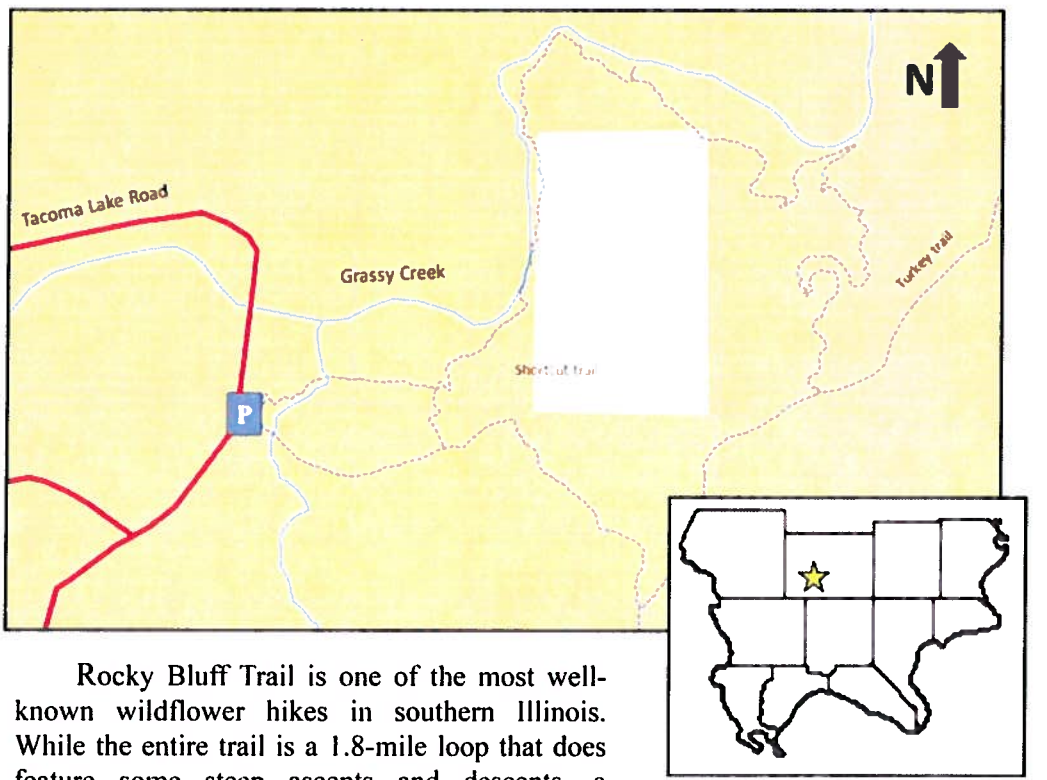
Blue-eyed Mary
Collinsia verna



A field of blue-eyed Mary. White trillium (inset)

Rocky Bluff Trail

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
0.5 mile - Easy Rating
Trailhead: 37.6419, -89.0977



Rocky Bluff Trail is one of the most well-known wildflower hikes in southern Illinois. While the entire trail is a 1.8-mile loop that does feature some steep ascents and descents, a recommended 'shortcut' trail is well marked and shortens the trip to an easy .5-mile loop that accesses the best wildflower viewing areas. From the trailhead, you can go either way along the loop. Left from the parking lot brings you immediately down the bluff next to an intermittent waterfall that is impressive when it is running. The other direction goes through an upland pine stand and upland hardwoods before reaching the 'shortcut' trail and decending steeply down the bluff into the heart of the wildflower area. Once at the bottom of the 'shortcut' trail, turning left will complete the loop, but you can follow the trail to the right for several hundred yards to view more wildflower habitat. Famous for its display of celandine poppies, this short, easy trail also provides great opportunities to view a wide array of spring wildflowers. Other specialties include spring beauties, dutchman's breeches, purple trilliums, false rue anemone and bloodroot.

This trail is located near the dam of Devil's Kitchen Lake, on Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. The trail is accessed via a small gravel lot off of Tacoma Lake Road, .5-mile south of Grassy Road. Parking, particularly on weekends in spring, can sometimes be tricky as this is a very popular hiking location. Keep in mind that this trail is on a National Wildlife Refuge and any visitor will need to have a pass to use the area. Annual and day passes are inexpensive and available at the Refuge Visitor Center on Route 148. The Refuge also typically hosts spring wildflower hikes on Saturdays in April. Contact the Refuge Visitor Center at 618-997-3344 for more information on these.

Notable wildflowers present at site

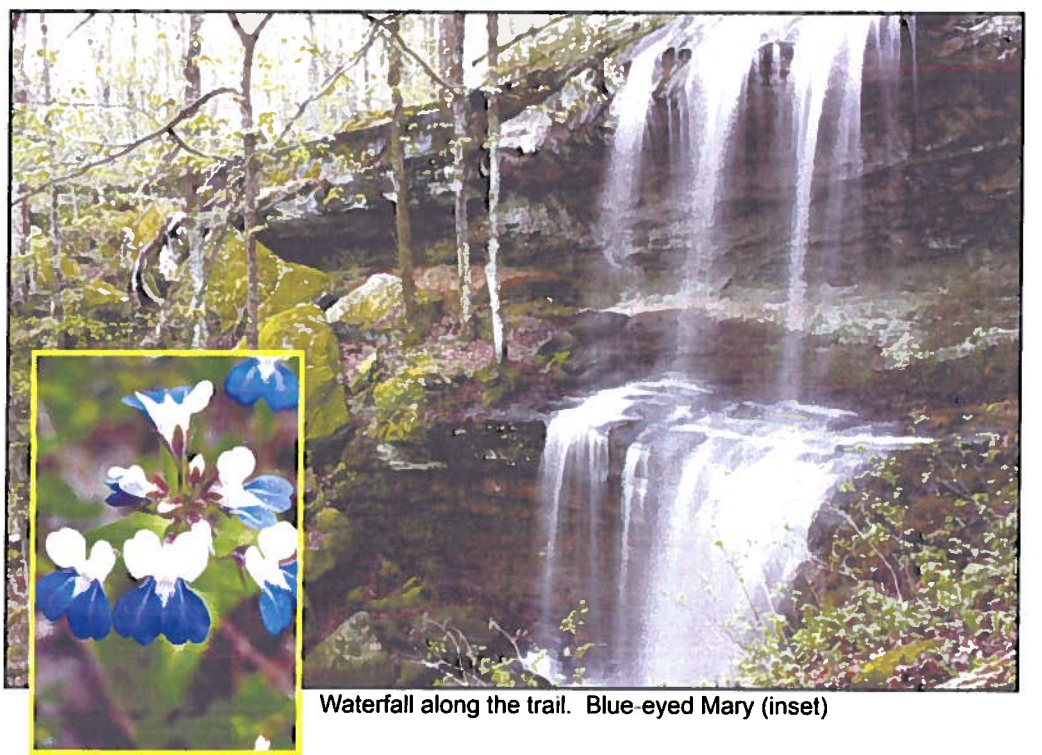
Celandine poppy
Stylophorum diphylllum

Bloodroot
Sanguinaria canadensis

Yellow trout lily
Erythronium americanum

Harbinger-of-spring
Erigenia bulbosa

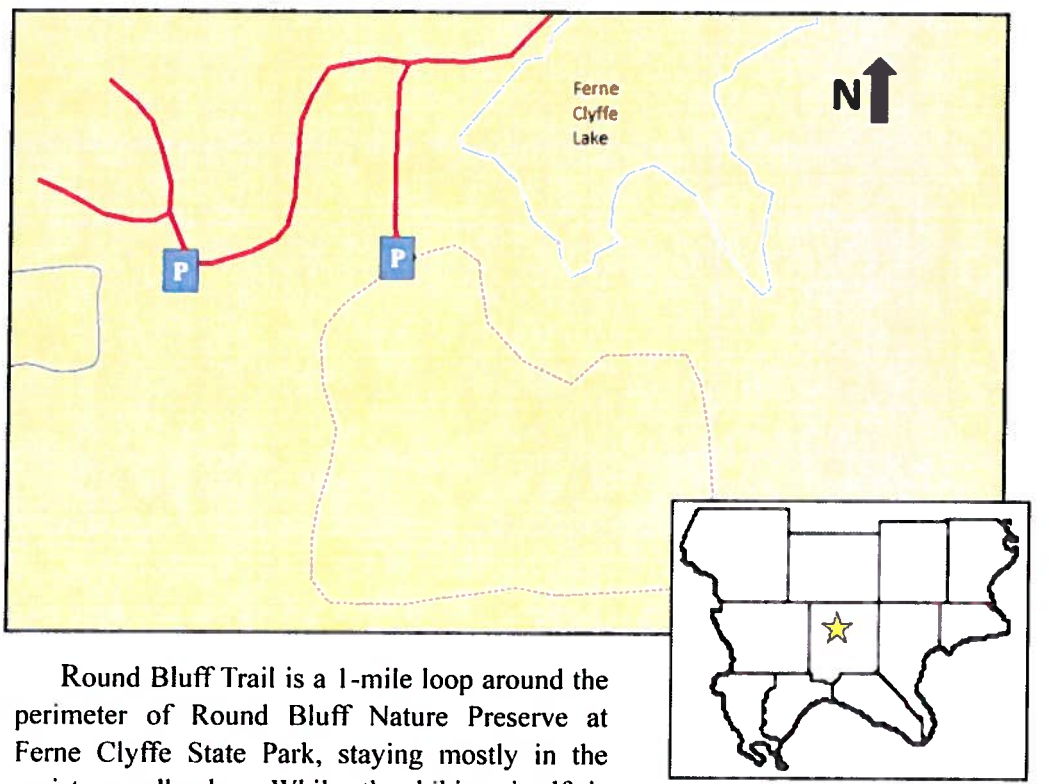
Toothwort
Dentaria laciniata



Waterfall along the trail. Blue-eyed Mary (inset)

Round Bluff Trail

Ferne Clyffe State Park
1 mile - Moderate Rating
Trailhead: 37.5317, -88.9879



Round Bluff Trail is a 1-mile loop around the perimeter of Round Bluff Nature Preserve at Ferne Clyffe State Park, staying mostly in the moist woodlands. While the hiking itself is mostly easy, the trail does have several long series of steps, leading to its moderate rating. The trail begins at the edge of the parking lot and returns by leading hikers through the adjacent picnic area. This picnic area and the latter part of the trail offer beautiful vistas of the 16-acre Ferne Clyffe Lake.

The first half of the trail mostly winds through younger forest and somewhat follows a old roadbed. The second half of the trail is where the wildflower viewing gets really good. What is most impressive about Round Bluff is the large displays of early spring wildflowers, such as spring beauty, toothwort and corydalis. The rich woods along the trail can be entirely blanketed by these flowers. Later in spring, the observant wildflower watcher may spot some of the rare and beautiful fire pink blooming near the base of the bluff.

When the trail winds close to the base of towering bluffs, keep an eye out for wild columbine flowering on the rocks. Even though this is a wildflower guide, the ferns found at Round Bluff need to be mentioned. The rugged sandstone bluffs and boulders found abundantly along the trail are often covered in beautiful ferns and the fragile, fall-flowering small-flower alumroot. Keep an eye out along the bluffs for the rare cinnamon fern, easily distinguished by the cinnamon-colored fertile fronds sticking up like spikes from the center of the fern. Hay-scented fern can also be found on these bluffs. The trail is accessed via the main entrance at Ferne Clyffe State Park, 2-miles south of Goreville on Route 37. Go past the lake, turn left, and follow the signs to the trailhead.

Notable wildflowers present at site

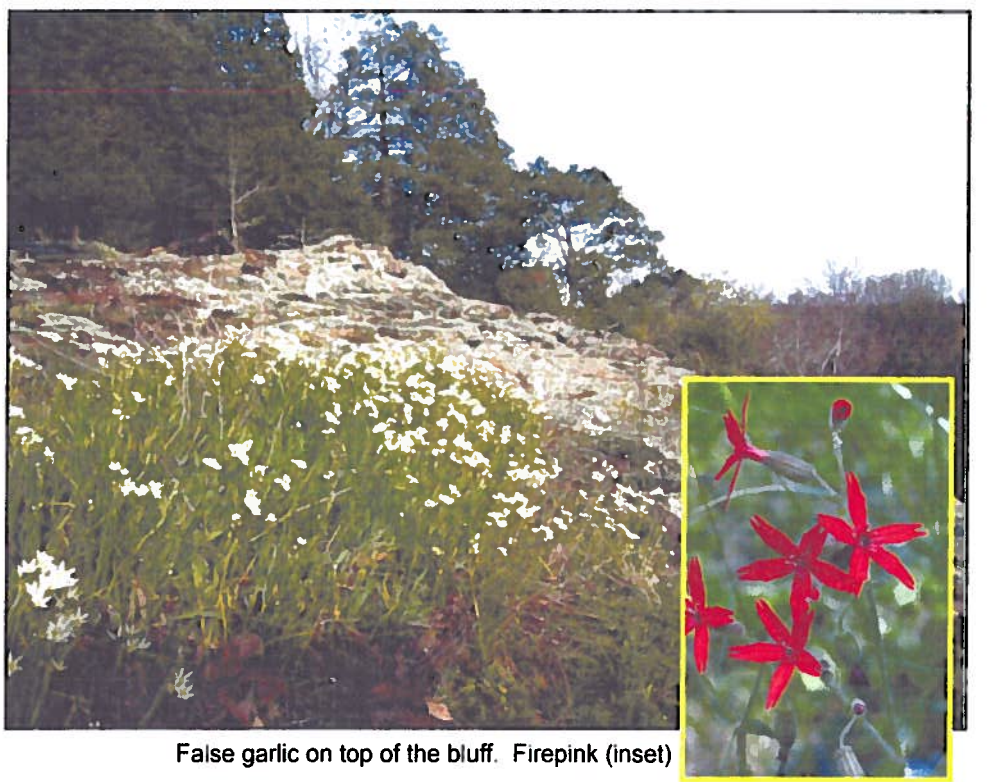
Dutchman's breeches
Dicentra cucullaria

Fire pink
Silene virginica

Waterleaf
Hydrophyllum appendiculatum

Toothwort
Denataria laciniata

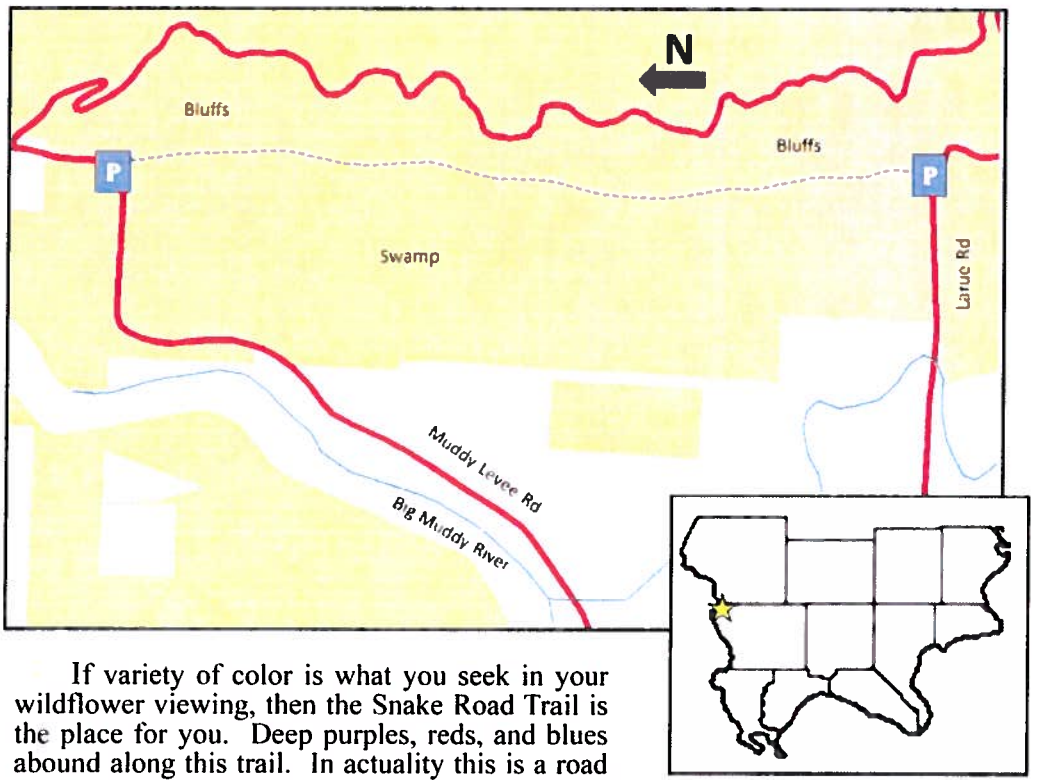
Wild columbine
Aquilegia canadensis



False garlic on top of the bluff. Firepink (inset)

Snake Road Trail

Shawnee National Forest
2.5 mile - Easy Rating
Trailhead: 37.5455, -89.4394



If variety of color is what you seek in your wildflower viewing, then the Snake Road Trail is the place for you. Deep purples, reds, and blues abound along this trail. In actuality this is a road and not a trail, but every spring and fall the Shawnee National Forest closes down this road to protect reptiles and amphibians migrating between the bluffs and swamps that border this amazing road. While this site is best known for the animal life, it has an amazing display of spring wildflowers as well. This is an easy hike, though it is not a loop. For those wanting to walk the entire length of the closed portion, two vehicles, one parked at each end, is your best bet. In the spring this trail gets a lot of use, mainly from people looking for snakes. You'll have an excellent opportunity to see cottonmouths, water snakes, green snakes, and a myriad of frogs and salamanders. In fact, 65% of all reptile and amphibian species in Illinois can be found at this one site. Collecting of any kind is not allowed.

As for wildflowers, the displays of dwarf larkspur and woodland phlox are some of the best in southern Illinois. Keep an eye on the bluff and take a few of the well worn paths going along the base to see species such as the beautiful wild hyacinth and wild columbine.

Higher up on the bluff, you can see displays of cleft phlox clinging to the rocks. Ohio buckeyes, one of our tree species with very showy flowers, is found along this trail as well. The Snake Road Trail is part of the LaRue Pine Hills area of the Shawnee National Forest, which has the distinction of being the most botanically rich area in Illinois and perhaps in the entire country. The parking lot on the south end of the Snake Road provides the best access to wildflower viewing. It can be easily accessed from Route 3, either south of Murphysboro or north of Jonesboro. From Route 3, follow the signs to LaRue Pine Hills. Be sure to also check out the small road leading from the parking lot south to Otter Pond, as the best displays of bluebells can be found along this path.

Notable wildflowers present at site

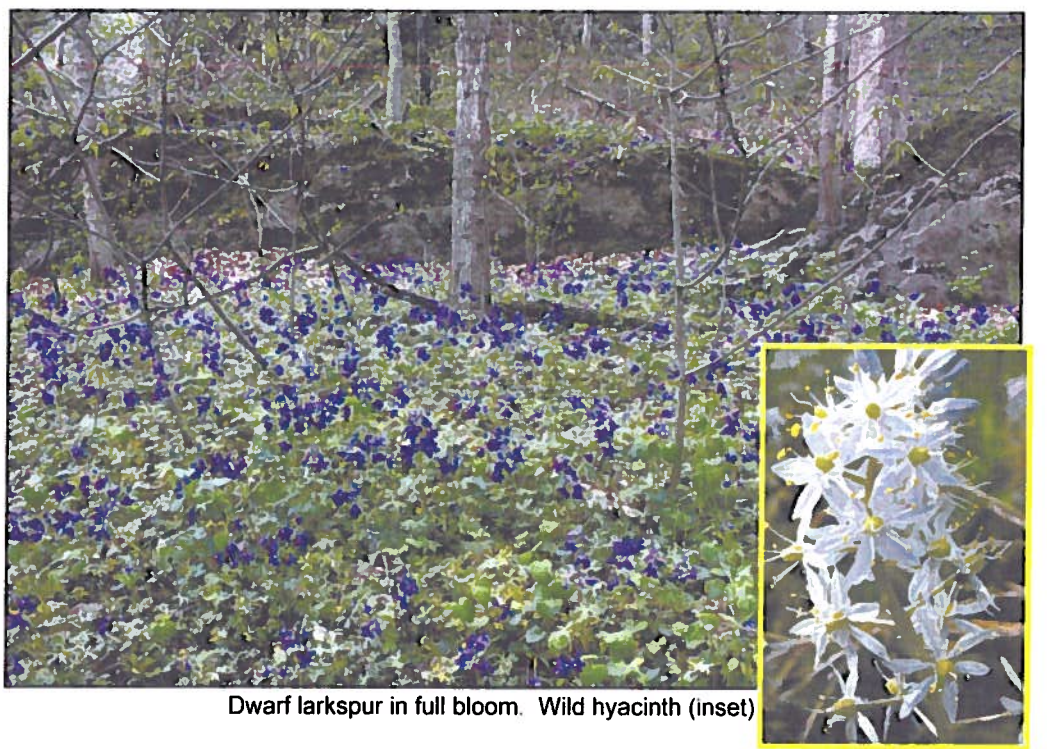
Dwarf larkspur
Delphinium tricorne

Woodland phlox
Phlox divaricata

Wild hyacinth
Camassia scilloides

Miami mist
Phacelia purshii

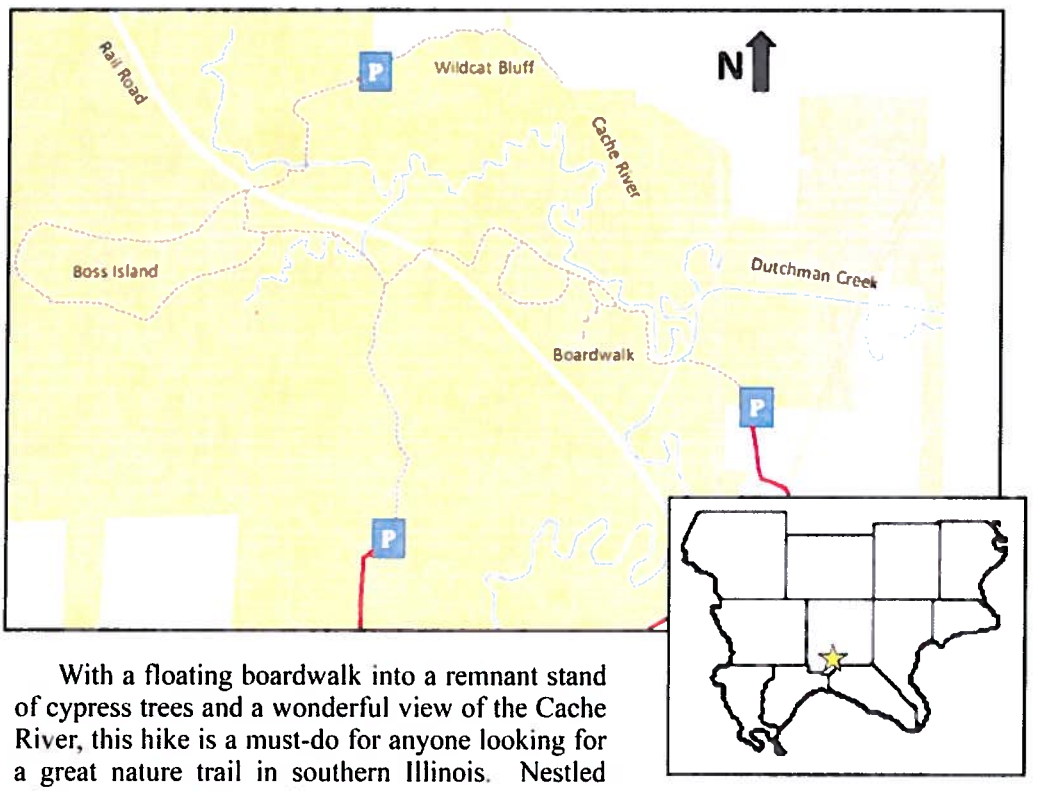
Virginia bluebells
Mertenisa virginiana



Dwarf larkspur in full bloom. Wild hyacinth (inset)

Heron Pond Trail

Cache River State Natural Area
1.5 mile - Easy Rating
Trailhead: 37.3572, -88.9132



With a floating boardwalk into a remnant stand of cypress trees and a wonderful view of the Cache River, this hike is a must-do for anyone looking for a great nature trail in southern Illinois. Nestled within the coastal plain, this region was once covered by an ancient sea which led to its formation as a cypress swamp similar to those found farther south.

Located near the small town of Belknap, Heron Pond Nature Preserve lies within the Cache River State Natural Area and is managed by the IDNR. The trail begins at a parking lot at the end of Heron Pond Lane, which is north of Belknap Road near Highway 45 south of Vienna. This short trail descends a small hill to a bridge over the Cache River. Look for the interpretive signs along the way.

A flat gravel trail leads through a floodplain forest with many beautiful wildflowers in the woods and along the trail. Look for Jacob's ladder, rue anemone, blue star, wild geranium, yellow violet, woodland phlox, swamp buttercup and spring cress. Some uncommon species for southern Illinois are also present at this site, and include white trout lily and sessile-leaved bellwort. Yellow lady slipper orchids once occurred here, but were taken illegally many years ago.

At the split in the trail go left to get to the boardwalk, or stay right to go to the champion cherrybark oak tree, or see both by completing the loop trail.

From the boardwalk, you can see an excellent example of a cypress/tupelo swamp. Two rare plants occur in the swamp: Virginia sweetspire and American featherfoil. In some years, the featherfoil can be seen blooming in great abundance in the swamp. Also note the small pinkish brown floating plants. These are the leaves of the mosquito fern, an important wetland plant. Later in the spring, the boardwalk erupts in pink when the swamp rose begins to bloom.

Visitors may also wish to view Cave Creek Glade Nature Preserve, which is nearby along Highway 45 north of Belknap Road. A small parking lot is located on the west side of the highway. Carefully cross the road and walk up the hill to see a totally different suite of wildflowers indicative of prairie habitats in the northern part of the state.

Notable wildflowers present at site

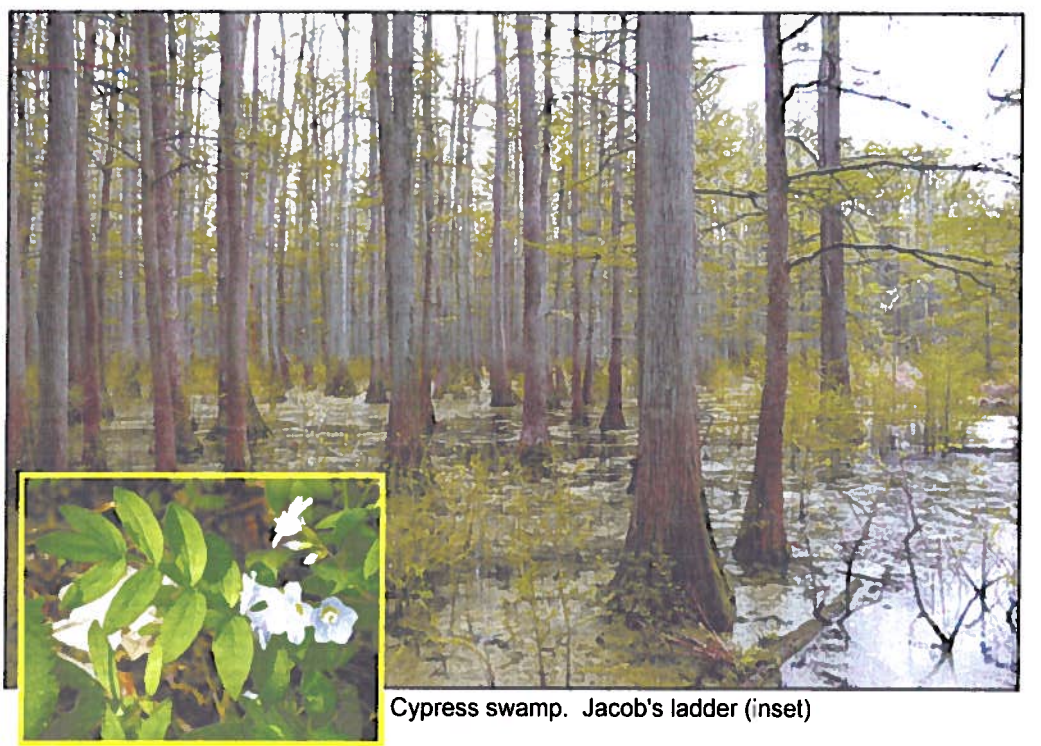
Jacob's ladder
Polemonium reptans

Wild geranium
Geranium maculatum

Woodland phlox
Phlox divaricata

White trout lily
Erythronium albidum

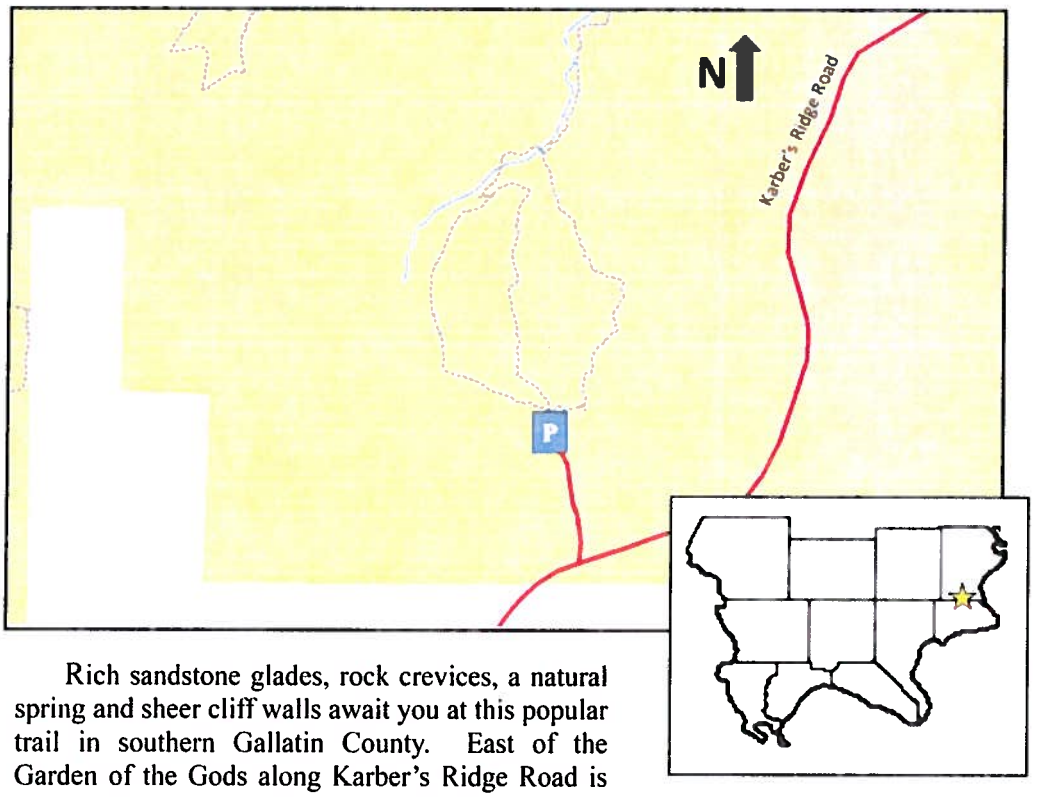
Rue anemone
Anemonella thalictroides



Cypress swamp. Jacob's ladder (inset)

Rim Rock Trail

Shawnee National Forest
0.5 mile - Moderate Rating
Trailhead: 37.6022, -88.2783



Rich sandstone glades, rock crevices, a natural spring and sheer cliff walls await you at this popular trail in southern Gallatin County. East of the Garden of the Gods along Karber's Ridge Road is Rim Rock National Recreational Trail, a natural area within the Shawnee National Forest. Although this site exhibits one of the better preserved stonefortsbuilt by the late Woodland culture in southern Illinois, this gem of a hike is often overlooked.

There are several options along this interpretive trail and the path leading to the left (northwest) out of the parking lot is recommended. A brick walkway leads you along the top of the escarpment and past the stonefort with buttercups, violets, chickweed, woodland phlox, violet wood sorrel, Virginia spiderwort and yellow star grass flowering along the edges. Wild columbine is also common, and later in the spring the trail is lined with shooting stars. In the rocky openings, false garlic, small bluets and widow's cross can be seen, and the careful observer may spot the perfectly camouflaged lichen grasshopper flying about.

The trail leads to an observation deck at the edge of the cliff and a set of stairs enables hikers to descend into Pounds Hollow. "Pounds" is a term that describes

the type of sandstone found here and it refers to an Old English term that means "some sort of enclosure." Notice the crack called Fat Man's Squeeze as you descend the stairs. Liverleaf, once erroneously used as a medicinal plant, can be seen flowering in the early part of spring.

Ox-Lot Cave is the area at the base of the cliffs. A permanent spring flows out of the rock and this area was once used as a livestock impoundment. The trail leads along the creek and around the other side of the cliffs, where white trillium, false rue anemone, mayapple, purple trillium, yellow trout lily, fern-leaved phacelia, pale corydalis and bellwort can be seen flowering near the trail. Look for the white flowers of the bladdernut shrub and notice the unique flowers of the jack-in-the-pulpit along the base of the cliffs. At least two orchid species can also be found in this area.

Notable wildflowers present at site

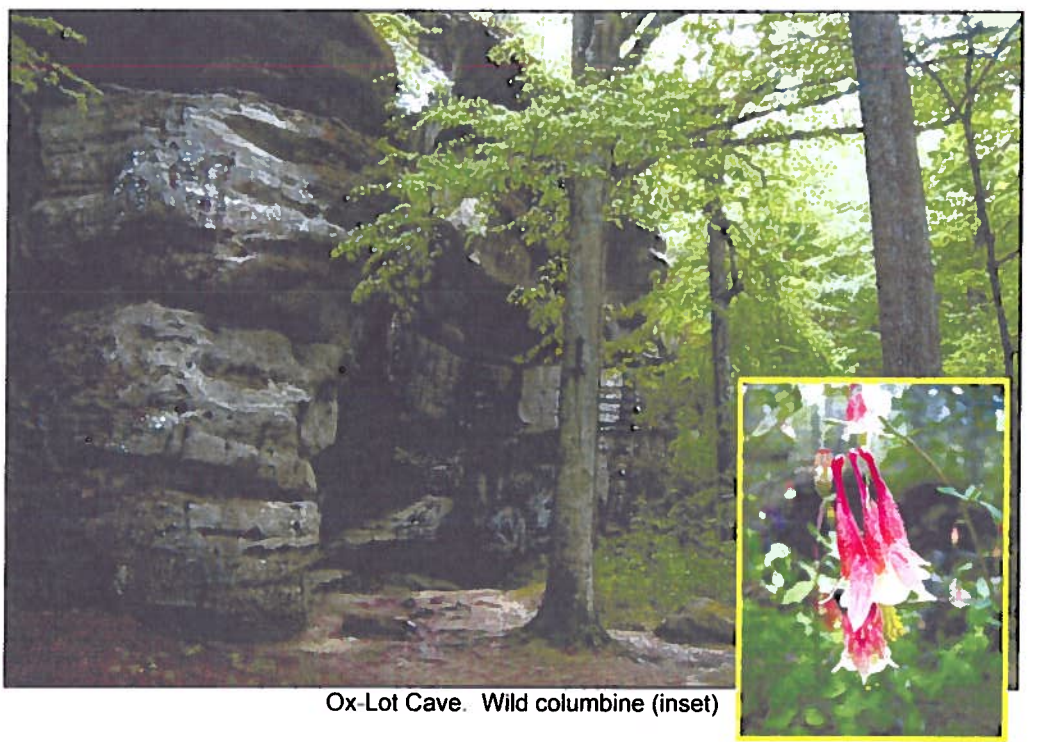
Wild columbine
Aquilegia canadensis

Shooting star
Dodecatheon meadia

False garlic
Nothoscordum bivalve

Liverleaf
Hepatica acutiloba

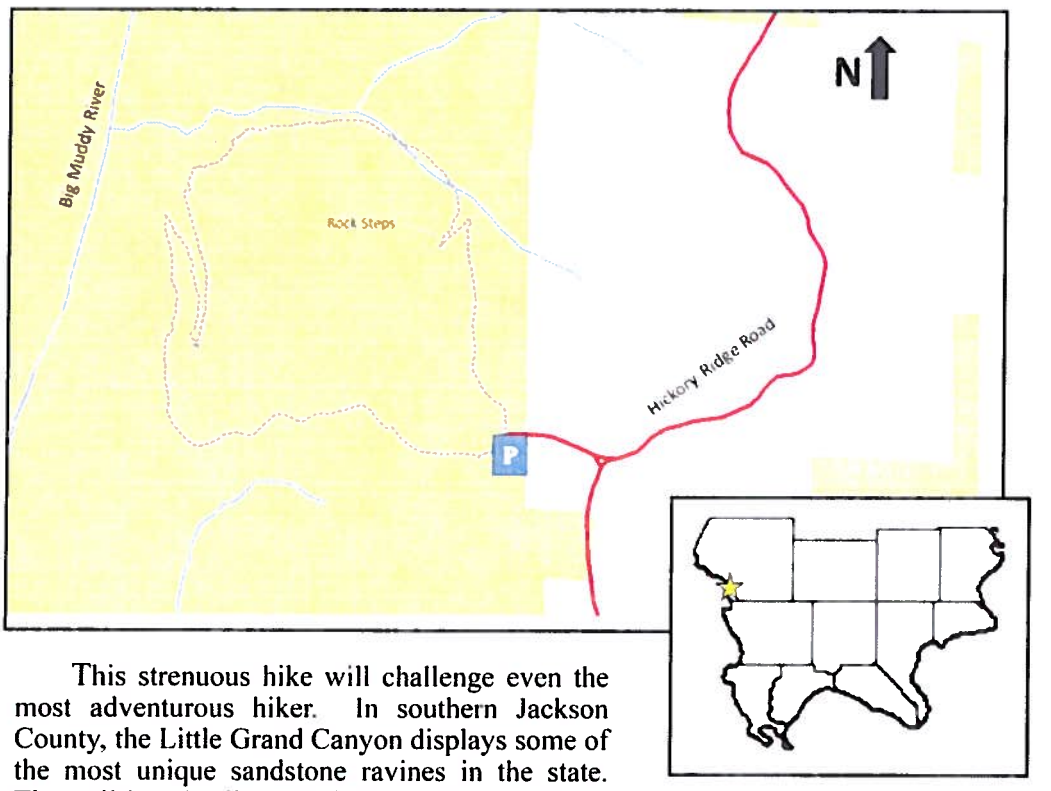
Yellow star grass
Hypoxis hirsuta



Ox-Lot Cave. Wild columbine (inset)

Little Grand Canyon Trail

Shawnee National Forest
4 mile - Difficult Rating
Trailhead: 37.6805, -89.3949



This strenuous hike will challenge even the most adventurous hiker. In southern Jackson County, the Little Grand Canyon displays some of the most unique sandstone ravines in the state. The trail is a 4-mile loop that is great from either direction from the parking lot. Descending the trail at the north end, you will walk through a small pine stand and make your way down the ridge to an overlook. After you round the corner, look for dry woodland wildflowers such as rue anemone, pussytoes, false dandelion and bee-balm.

The trail winds its way to a steep sandstone ravine that will take you to the bottom of the canyon. Rock steps have been created in the sandstone and are easy to follow. Flowing water often occurs in the sandstone chute, so extreme caution should be exercised. As you make your way into the canyon, look for dutchman's breeches, toothwort, pale corydalis, squirrel corn and spring beauty.

Some very interesting plants grow in the natural area. During the Illinoian glaciation over 100,000 years ago, plants adapted to northern climates flourished here and when the glaciers retreated, these "glacial relic" species persisted in moist, shaded, north-facing sandstone ravines like the Little Grand Canyon.

The characteristic example of this is bishop's cap, and the tiny snowflake-like flowers can be seen in flowering spikes covering the sides of the cliffs along the creek. Other relic species include partridge berry, shining clubmoss and sphagnum moss.

In the floodplain area at the base of the ravine is a rich display of spring wildflowers like liverleaf, bellwort, white trillium, celandine poppy and bloodroot, as well as many fern species. Blue cohosh, doll's eyes, dwarf phacelia and wild leeks are uncommon plants that call this area home. Flowering shrubs include pawpaw, redbud and flowering dogwood. At least one orchid has been seen along the trail and venomous snakes are known to inhabit the area.

The trailhead is located south of Murphysboro. From Highway 127, follow Orchard Hill Road west to Hickory Ridge Road. Go straight (west) 7 miles to the entrance road to the site.

Notable wildflowers present at site

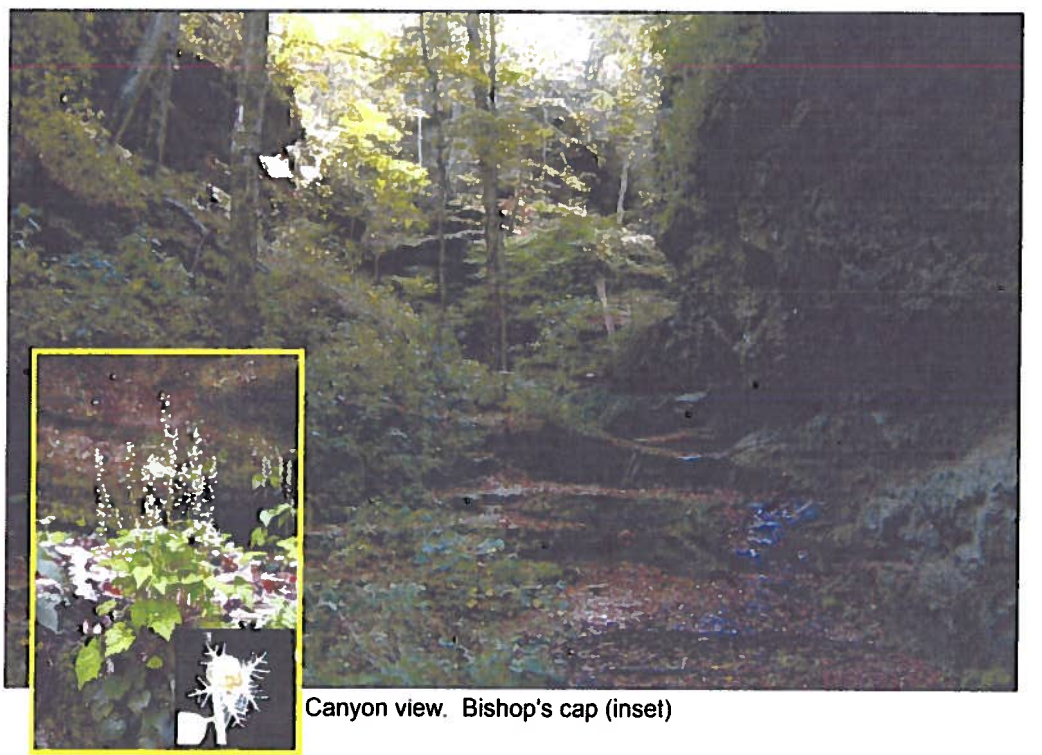
Bishop's cap
Mitella diphylla

Rue anemone
Anemonella thalictroides

Dwarf phacelia
Phacelia ranunculacea

Wild leek
Allium tricoccum

Blue cohosh
Caulopyllum thalictroides



Canyon view. Bishop's cap (inset)

Common Spring Wildflowers in Southern Illinois

Many species of wildflowers can be found blooming in the springtime in southern Illinois. Some are rare and not often seen or restricted to a very specific type of habitat. Others are common and can be found in many different locations. Here are fifteen wildflower species that you are likely to encounter in southern Illinois.

Spring beauty
Claytonia virginica

Yellow corydalis
Corydalis flavula

Dwarf larkspur
Delphinium tricorne

Cutleaf toothwort
Dentaria laciniata

Dutchman's breeches
Dicentra cucullaria

Yellow trout lily
Erythronium americanum

False rue anemone
Enemion biternatum

Harbinger of spring
Erigenia bulbosa

Virginia bluebells
Mertensia virginiana

False garlic
Nothoscordum bivalve

Fernleaf Phacelia
Phacelia bipinnatifida

Woodland Phlox
Phlox divaricata

Bloodroot
Sanguinaria canadensis

Celandine poppy
Stylophorum diphyllum

Purple trillium
Trillium recurvatum

This project was funded by a grant
through the Illinois Wildlife
Preservation Fund Program