Iroquois County

STATE WILDLIFE AREA

Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

Hooper Branch Savanna Nature Preserve

Hooper Branch Savanna Nature Preserve occupies 480 acres at the edge of former glacial Lake Watseka. Some 14,000 years ago, this lake formed between moraines damming up glacial meltwaters. The soils of Hooper Branch Savanna are sandy, having derived from beach and near-shore sand deposits of Lake Watseka. The lake was drained after the morainal dams were breached, leaving the sand deposits exposed to wind action. A dune and swale topography developed that is quite noticeable today.

Savanna developed on the dry dune ridges, while shrub prairies and mesic sand prairies developed in the wetter swales. Savannas are composed of a mix of trees with prairie grasses and forbs. Savannas are fire-maintained natural communities with widely spaced trees and little brush. Periodic fires swept through this area prior to settlement, killing small trees and shrubs, but the thick bark of the large trees protected them from fire. Black oaks are the dominant savanna trees at Hooper Branch Savanna, while prairie grasses include porcupine grass, June grass and little bluestem. Prairie forbs such as puccoons, lupines, lead-plant, spiderwort and butterfly weed provide color to the savanna landscape in the shrub-prairie portions. Mosses carpet the sand surface.

Facilities

Picnicking: Designated picnic areas with tables and grills are located in shady areas convenient to parking lots, and drinking water is available at the area's headquarters. Although there are no shelters, most areas have restroom facilities.

Hiking: A 1.2-mile hiking trail, of which 0.3 mile is handicapped accessible, a 0.75-mile trail, a 1.4-mile trail and several miles of unmarked trails afford the opportunity to observe interesting plant, animal and bird life.

Archery: An archery range located in the northwest corner of the area is available for visitors.

Hand-trap Range: A designated shooting area, only for shotguns, is available for anyone wishing to warm up for the hunting season. The range is open daily, except during November and December.

Dog Training: There is a designated area for training or exercising dogs. The area is closed April 1 to Aug. 1 for the protection of breeding wildlife.

Concession: During hunting season, a concession operates at the headquarters.

Winter Activities: When weather permits, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are allowed on designated fire lanes and service roads.

Hunting

Iroquois County State Wildlife Area is operated primarily as a permit pheasant hunting area. However, there is rabbit, quail and pheasant hunting on the area after the permit season has been concluded. Prior to the permit portion of the hunting season, squirrel and dove provide early hunting action. Archery deer hunting is allowed on the area prior to and following the permit portion of the hunting season. Lesser opportunities for deer (taken by shotgun), woodcock, rail and snipe also are available. Check with the site superintendent for upland game species and hunting dates on the area.

- During the permit pheasant season, all hunters must check in and check out, before and after hunting, at the area's headquarters.
- Before and after the permit pheasant season, all hunters must check out at the area's headquarters after hunting.
- Furbearer hunting is available after the permit pheasant season with a special permit issued from the site superintendent.

For more information, contact Iroquois County State Wildlife Area, Beaverville, IL 60912, phone (815) 435-2218.

Iroquois County State Wildlife Area

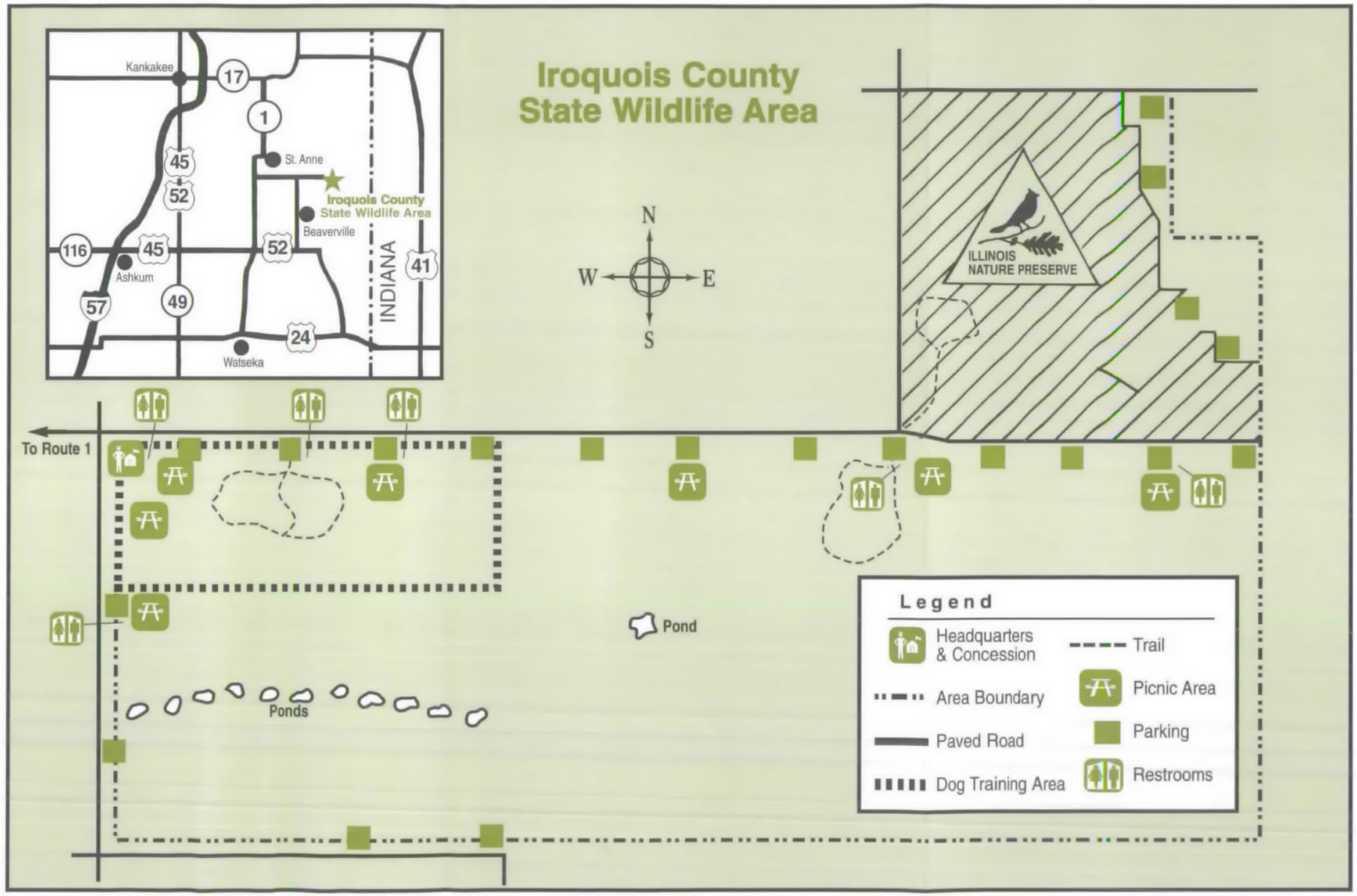
Iroquois County State Wildlife Area is situated in a low glacial outwash plain associatedœwith the Kankakee River Valley that consists of marshland, sand ridges and dunes. The initial acquisition of land occurred in 1944 for the purpose of protecting the declining prairie chicken population in the state. The prairie chickens did not survive and public hunting became the major use. The state purchased an additional 560 acres in 1984. The total acreage is now 2,480 acres.

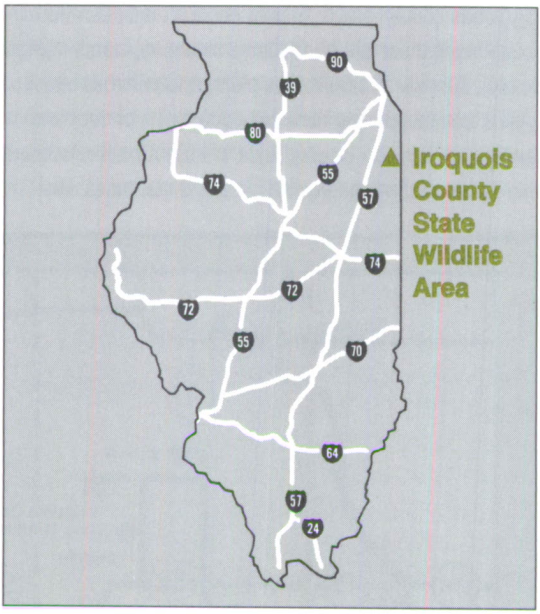
The area is located 2 miles north and 3 miles east of Beaverville in the extreme northeastœcorner of Iroquois County, about 80 miles south of Chicago. The majority of the area, 2,000 acres, is open to public hunting. The remaining 480 acres compose a dedicated nature preserve. Non-consumptive recreation in the form of hiking, picnicking and nature study is available when the site is closed to hunting.

Natural Features

Iroquois County State Wildlife Area contains one of the finest and most extensive sedge meadow/wet prairie/marsh complexes remaining in Illinois. The expansive sedge meadow is a defining feature that today makes this area unique. The occurrence of this vegetation is regulated by soil characteristics and moisture. The dry sand ridges are dominated by black oak forest. Lower lying areas range from dry prairie to march, depending on soil moisture. Dominant grasses on dry prairie areas are little bluestem and switch grass. Grasses such as big bluestem, Indian grass, little bluestem and switch grass are dominant on mesic (intermediate between wet and dry) prairie. Areas of wet prairies are indicated by bluejoint grass, cord grass and sedges. Several boggy areas contain plants seldom encountered elsewhere in Illinois. Among these are huckleberry, blueberry, marsh marigold, colic root, sundew (a carnivorous plant) and primrose violet.

Aside from supporting huntable populations of deer and upland game, Iroquois County State Wildlife Area is inhabited by numerous, interesting non-game birds and mammals. Wet prairies and marshes provide preferred habitat for birds such as herons, bitterns, rails, snipe and northern harriers. During migration, marshes are visited by numerous species of waterfowl and the state-endangered sandhill crane. Mammals utilizing Iroquois' marshlands include muskrat, mink and beaver. Upland forest and prairie at Iroquois are inhabited by many species of songbirds. During migration, the number of species that may be seen on the area is increased even further. The veery, a state-endangered thrush, is reported to nest within the area. Unusual mammalian species occupying the uplands include the plains pocket gopher, the red squirrel and the southern flying squirrel.





Iroquois County State Wildlife Area

2803 East 3300 North Road
Beaverville, IL 60912, 815-435-2218

- While groups of 25 or more are welcome and encouraged to use the park's facilities, they are required to register in advance with the site office to avoid crowding or scheduling conflicts.
- At least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
- Pets must be kept on leashes at all times.
- Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities. Please call ahead to the park office before you make your trip.
- We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Department of Natural Resources, Clearinghouse, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-6302 or visit our website at www.dnr.state.il.us.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other nonmerit 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, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175.

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

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