

Trail Of Tears

STATE FOREST



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

The Site

Trail of Tears, one of Illinois' five state forests, is located 5 miles northwest of Jonesboro and 20 miles south of Murphysboro. It lies within the southern section of the Ozark Hills, among one of the most rugged landscapes in Illinois. The site is accessible from Illinois Route 127 (on the east) and Route 3 (on the west). It encompasses 5,114 acres and includes the Union State Nursery, which is operated by the DNR's Division of Forest Resources. Site management goals include the growing of timber for forest products, protecting watersheds, providing places for outdoor recreation, and protecting ecosystem and wildlife habitat.



History

The area once was used extensively by prehistoric Native Americans, who were pushed south and west around 1803, as settlers of European descent entered. In 1838-39 the Cherokee, Creek and Chickasaw nations were forced by the U.S. Army to move from the southeast to reservations in Oklahoma Territory. They overwintered at makeshift camps 2 miles south of the forest, where bitter cold and starvation claimed hundreds of lives. The cruel trek came to be known as the "Trail of Tears," an event now memorialized by the state forest's name.

In 1929, the state purchased 3,000 acres, first known as the Kohn-Jackson Forest, later the Union State Forest and finally, in 1978, the Trail of Tears State Forest. Beginning with World War I veterans in the early 1930s, a series of camps was established at the site, including the Civilian

Conservation Corps (CCC), temporary work camps for World War II prisoners of war and finally a state corrections youth camp, which closed in the late 1960s. The CCC, in particular, had a profound effect on the forest, as it built many of its stonework creek walls, log shelters and roads.

Natural Features

The forest's hills are comprised of a weathered limestone bedrock known as chert. Ridge tops are narrow, often rocky and dry; soils are shallow and can erode easily. Clear streams with gravel bottoms lie in narrow forested valleys, hemmed in by steep terrain.

Dry ridge tops and south-facing slopes have black oaks, white oaks and hickories. Extremely dry sites contain prairie-like openings, filled with a mingling of gnarled, open-grown trees and shrubs like wild azalea, farkleberry and low-bush blueberry. The shaded north-facing slopes and protected coves support stands of American beech, tuliptree and sugar maple, or red oak, tuliptree and sweetgum.

A rich understory of shrubs, including pawpaw, buckeye, bladdernut and hornbeam, exist in moister sites. In stream valleys, there is a canopy of American elm, sweetgum, tuliptree, sycamore and sugar maple over a shrub layer of redbud, deciduous holly and spicebush. Thickets of wild cane (bamboo) also occur.

Lush and diverse wildflowers flourish on the forest's lower slopes. On a spring walk, a visitor can see many of the woodland wildflowers native to southern Illinois. All-in-all, 620 species of flowering plants, ferns and fern allies are reported to occur at the forest. *Visitors are reminded that removal of plants, including medicinal plants such as ginseng and goldenseal, is prohibited without a state collecting permit. However, picking berries or fruit and collection of mushrooms for personal consumption is allowed. Please check with the Forest staff on specific rules.*

There are many species of songbirds, including some that are found only in large woodland tracts. Two species of poisonous snakes, timber rattlesnakes and northern copperheads, occur here. They present no danger to cautious visitors and must be left as part of the forest's natural environ-

ment. *(Indiscriminate killing or collecting of wildlife, including snakes, is prohibited.)* Woodland mammals such as gray and fox squirrels, chipmunks, flying squirrels, opossums, skunks and raccoons are common. Larger animals that are known to inhabit the forest are whitetailed deer, red and gray foxes, wild turkeys, coyotes and the wary bobcat.

Natural Heritage

Some of the natural plant and animal communities are permanently protected within the 222-acre Ozark Hills Nature Preserve, where hunting, horseback and vehicle access and the collection of any animal or plant are not permitted. The forest and dry barren communities of this natural area exist today much as they appeared to the first non-Indian visitors. Visitors are welcome to use the Ozark Hills Hiking Trail for an opportunity to see spectacular examples of Ozark flora and fauna.



Forestry

The Union State Nursery, one of Illinois' two plant propagation centers, occupies 120 acres of the forest and produces up to 3 million seedlings a year. Approximately 10 acres are devoted annually to growing nursery stock. Certain tree plantations within the forest are seed sources for producing genetically superior stock.

The nursery distributes seedlings in late winter/early spring to private landowners and to state and federal agencies. Seedlings are planted to reforest disturbed lands, establish windbreaks, control soil erosion, and provide food and cover for wildlife.

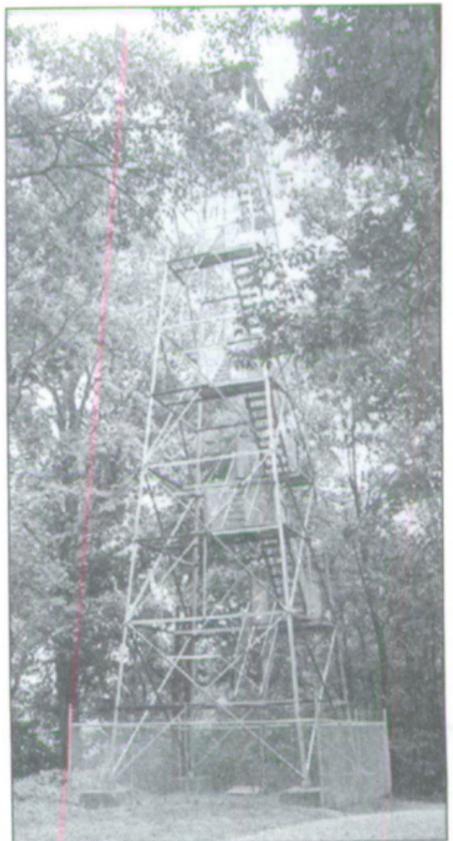
The forest is divided into 27 management compartments where the relationships of different timber harvest techniques to production of forest materials and their effects upon ecosystem function are studied. The results provide invaluable research and educational information. Proceeds from timber sales help support such forestry research and educational endeavors.

Wildlife

Woodland openings are managed to provide food and cover for upland game species and those small mammals that are important food for predators. Some areas are planted in grain crops; others are burned or mowed to maintain grassy habitats for nesting birds and the insects upon which they feed. Hollow trees are left for cavity-nesting species. In some areas, nest boxes have been placed to demonstrate how they can be used to increase populations of species like bluebirds, kestrels and wood ducks.

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Picnicking: The main day-use area contains three larger shelters ideal for reunions and two smaller rustic log shelters. Four more small log shelters are located along the forest's south and north gravel roads. Each picnic spot contains one or more tables, trash and recycling barrels and a grill. Toilets and drinking water are nearby. A ball field and smaller playing areas are also available. Handicapped parking and access to the shelters and toilets are limited to four sites. Some shelters and areas can be reserved for special gatherings or events by calling (618) 833-4910.



Hiking: There are a few developed hiking trails and 43 "fire trails" that can be used for a hike through the Ozarks. One trail is designed for cross-country running and another winds through the nature preserve. Hiking difficulty ranges from moderately difficult to difficult.

Camping: Class C campsites offer tent or shelter camping. The narrow gravel roads and steep hills do not allow access for large recreational vehicles. Each site has a picnic table, grill or fire ring and nearby privy. Some sites have rustic log shelters. A youth group facility with a log shelter, small amphitheatre and good access to hiking trails is available through special arrangement by calling (618) 833-4910. Class D campsites are available for backpack camping. Camping fees are collected nightly on a per-unit basis.

Horseback Trails: There are 18 miles of horseback trails, consisting of five separate but interconnected loops. Access to the trail system is from the trailhead/parking area along the main county. Horseback trails are open from May 1 until the first firearm deer season in mid-November. There are no stables or horses for hire, and no riding is permitted in any part of the forest south of the county highway. Horse trails

may be temporarily closed following heavy rains and re-opened after the trails have dried out.

Hunting: Deer, raccoon, squirrel and turkey are the most commonly hunted game animals. Hunters must sign in and out and report their harvest at registration boxes at various access points. **Please be aware that the following areas are closed to hunting:** Ozark Hills Nature Preserve; the restricted area around the picnic and day-use area; areas within 300 yards of any building or tree-seedling beds or any road right-of-way. Hunters must observe all state and federal regulations when hunting at the state forest.

Vehicles and other access: Motorized vehicles are not allowed off the paved or graveled roads. All-terrain vehicles are not permitted anywhere in the forest. Bicycles, including mountain bikes, can only be ridden on gravel and paved roads; they are not allowed on hiking or horseback trails or any other dirt-surface trail. From Dec. 24 through the end of the spring wild turkey hunting season, the north and south gravel roads are closed to vehicle traffic.

For more information, contact Trail of Tears State Forest, 3240 State Forest Road, Jonesboro, IL 62952, (618) 833-4910.

Keep Your Eye on Every Issue of Outdoor Illinois

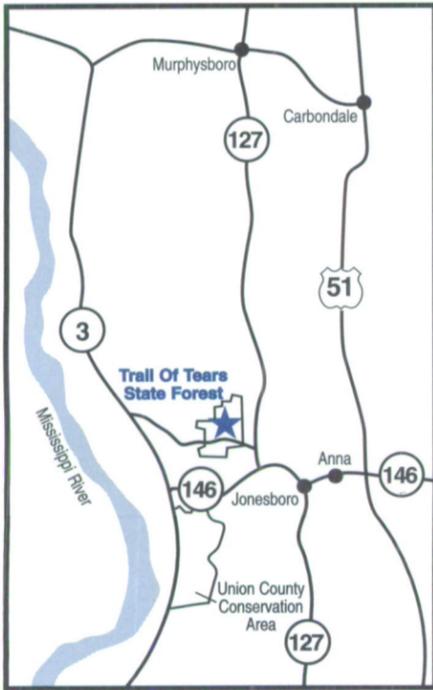
DNR's monthly magazine provides current news and articles on hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities, as well as information on the natural and cultural resources of Illinois.



• A one-year subscription is only \$10, and each December you'll receive a full-color calendar featuring important outdoor dates and events. To subscribe, contact DNR at (217) 782-7454. The TDD number is (217) 782-9175.



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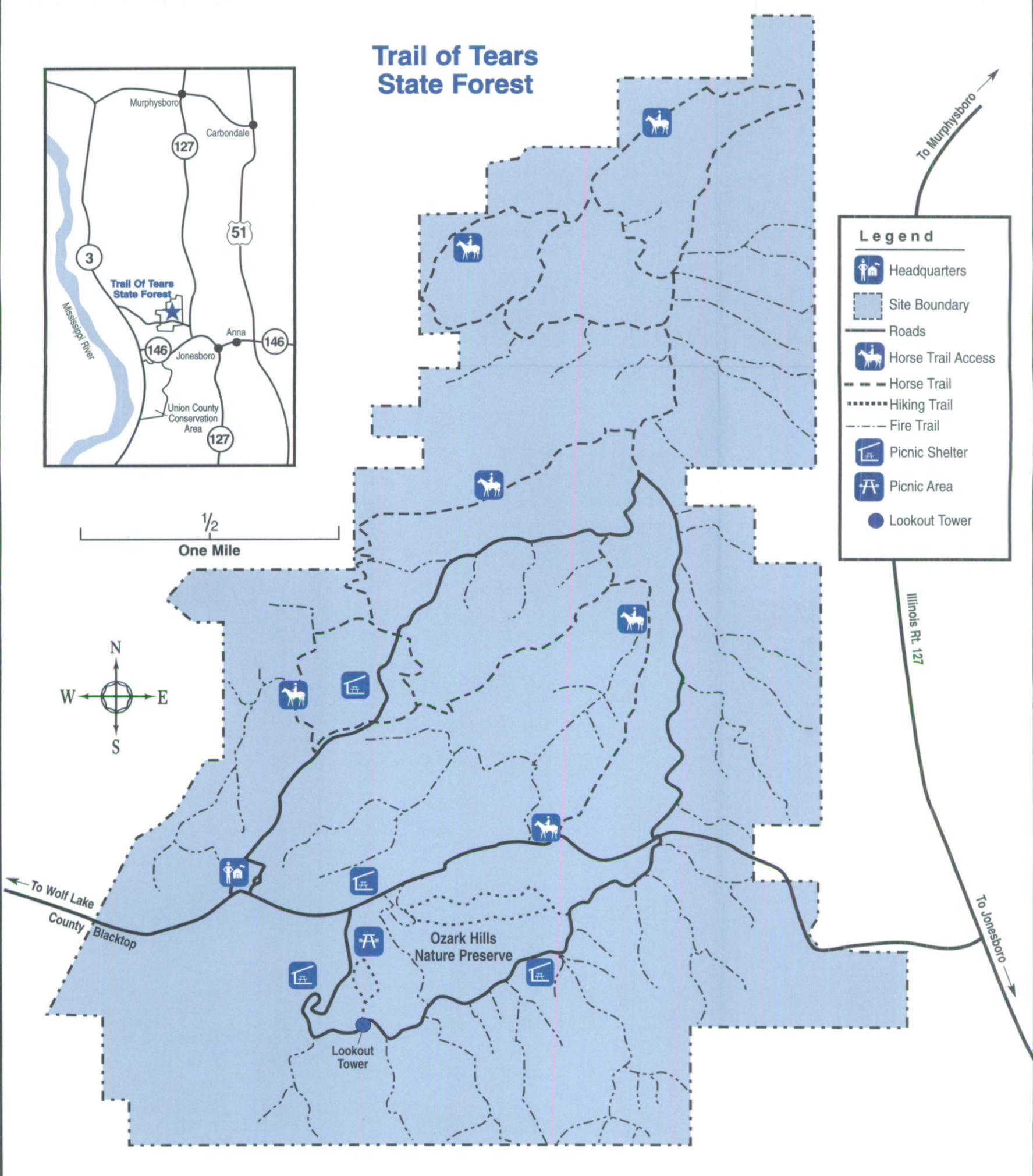


1/2
One Mile



Legend

- Headquarters
- Site Boundary
- Roads
- Horse Trail Access
- Horse Trail
- Hiking Trail
- Fire Trail
- Picnic Shelter
- Picnic Area
- Lookout Tower





Trail Of Tears State Forest
 3240 State Forest Road
 Jonesboro, IL 62952, 618-833-4910

- 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.

