

## Natural Scene

If you're a hiker, a wildflower enthusiast or a lover of wildlife, Kickapoo State Park is a prime area for you to pursue your passion year-round.

Once stark strip-mine banks now are covered with a forest of cottonwood, haw, ash and wild cherry. Deep water ponds abound with aquatic insects, plants, crustaceans, amphibians and a variety of fish. Cypress, introduced along the pond edges, add to the variety.

The Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, a federal and state designated Scenic River, runs through the park.

A bottomland forest of sycamores and silver maples and upland timbers of stately oaks, hickories, beeches, sugar maples and dogwoods are an endless source of fascination for nature lovers and habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. The variety, number and mix of hardwood species present in Kickapoo's upland and bottomland forests translate into a firestorm of fall color each autumn.

In spring, the woods explode with a vibrant display of colorful wildflowers, including jack-in-the-pulpits, violets, bluebells, sweet Williams, spring beauties, Dutchman's breeches, wake-robins and nodding trilliums.

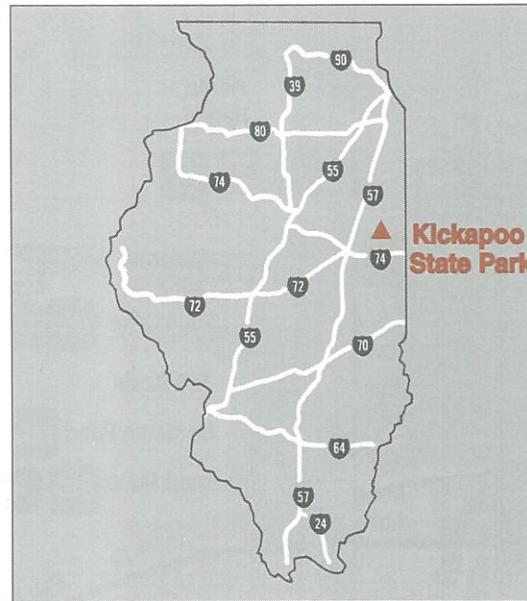
In the bottomlands, birders may spot kingfishers or pileated woodpeckers flitting among the stately trees. Other species that may be glimpsed include red-winged blackbirds, least bitterns, grebes, great blue herons, warblers, vireos and a variety of songbirds, and even wild turkeys. A birding checklist available at the park office lists more than 100 species documented at the park.

A variety of animal life can be seen, including white-tailed deer, squirrel, raccoon, cottontail rabbit, muskrat, mink and ground squirrel.

Nature lovers should be wary. In addition to the trees and wildflowers that proliferate at Kickapoo State Park, poison ivy is abundant. People using the trails should learn to identify the poison ivy plant and avoid it at all times of the year.

## Fishing, Boating and Canoeing

With 22 lakes and access to the Middle Fork River, Kickapoo State Park is known for the opportunities it provides for water-based outdoor activities. Anglers find excellent fishing for largemouth and smallmouth bass, channel catfish,



### Kickapoo State Park

10906 Kickapoo Park Road  
Oakwood, IL 61858, 217-442-4915

- 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.
- We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Public Services, 524 S. Second St., Springfield, IL 62701-1787, call (217) 782-7454 or visit its website at <http://dnr.state.il.us>.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY (teletypewriter) number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

**George H. Ryan**  
Governor

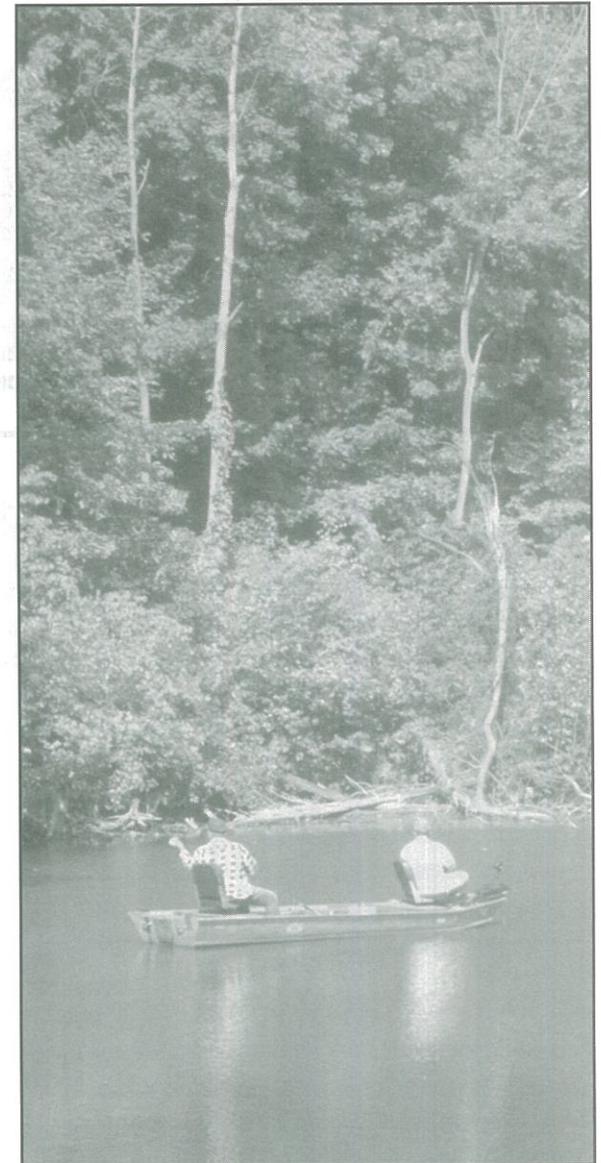
**Brent Manning**  
Director, Dept. of Natural Resources

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# Kickapoo

## STATE PARK



**Illinois**  
Department of  
Natural Resources

bluegill, crappie and redear sunfish. Especially popular are the annual fall and spring stockings of rainbow trout, which provide an unusual opportunity for central Illinois anglers to fish for catchable-size trout.

There are 13 launching ramps on nine of Kickapoo's lakes. Boat and canoe rental is available for Long Lake. Electric motors only are allowed on the park's lakes.

For people wanting to canoe the scenic Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, a canoe rental and shuttle service is available. Equestrian trail rides are available through a private concession.

### Scuba Diving

Kickapoo State Park is unique in that it is one of only a few state parks and recreation areas in Illinois allowing scuba diving. Divers who register and who show proper certification may dive in the clear, deep waters of Inland Sea and Sportsman's Lake.

### Hiking, Biking and Running

If you're into physical fitness, the 7.6-mile Out and Back running and hiking trail offers you a chance to exercise while enjoying awe-inspiring natural scenery. The course is rated "difficult" and is designed to meet the demands of experienced outdoor hikers or runners, passing through forests, bottomlands and the

edge areas of abandoned croplands.

If you want a less demanding walk, there are a number of shorter and easier hiking trails in the park, as well as several nature trails. More than 6 miles of mountain bike trails are available.

### Picnicking

You bring the hot dogs and the burgers, and Kickapoo State Park has everything else you need for a summertime picnic. Six main picnic areas are available with shelters, tables, outdoor stoves, drinking water and playground equipment. A concession stand offers refreshments and souvenirs on summer weekends, and rents canoes and rowboats daily except Wednesday. Picnic shelters may be reserved upon request by writing or visiting the site.

### Camping

For campers, Kickapoo has two major campgrounds for tent and trailer camping, with 183 sites. About half the sites have electrical hookups, and a sanitary dump station is available. Campers occupying electrical sites are required to pay for the availability of electricity even if the service is not used. A limited number of walk-in sites are available for primitive campers.

Several campsites can be reserved in advance by writing the site or applying in person. The maximum length of stay is 15 days in a 30-day period. Group camping is permitted.

Campers must have camping equipment with them when they register to camp. All campers must obtain a camping permit before entering the campgrounds.

### Hunting

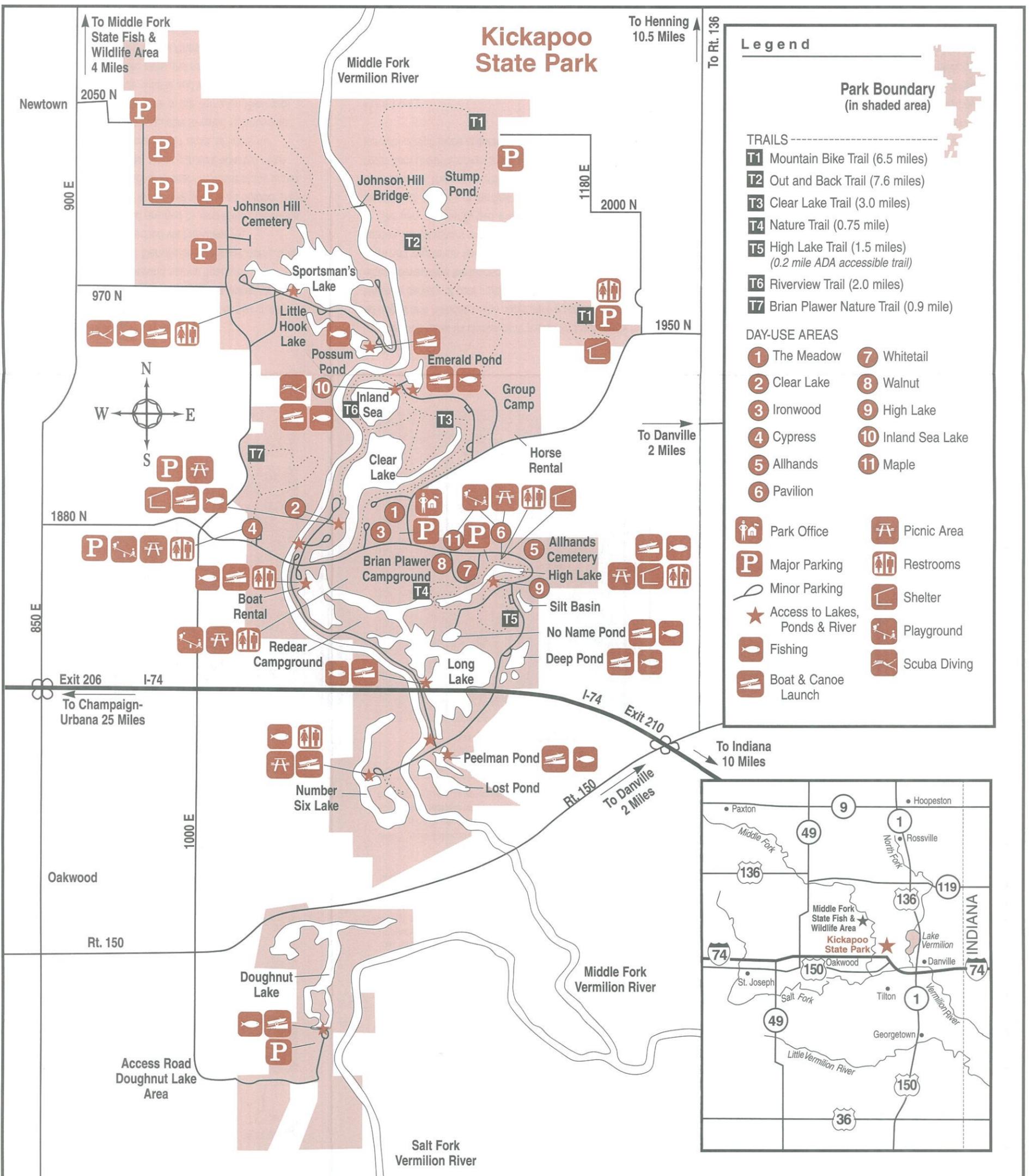
More than 1,000 acres — including forests, grasslands, edge and cropland — are available for the use of hunters each fall. Kickapoo State Park hunters may harvest white-tailed deer (both firearm and archery), squirrel, dove woodcock, quail, cock pheasant, rabbit, raccoon, opossum and turkey.

Special regulations and restrictions apply and all hunters must register before hunting the area.

### Winter Sports

When winter blankets the central Illinois landscape with ice and snow, cross-country skiing, sledding and ice fishing become popular activities at Kickapoo.

Because some fall-stocked trout usually survive over the winter, those fishing through the ice may reel a rainbow in addition to the species normally found at Kickapoo. Winter also is an excellent time of the year for photographers and wildlife observers to visit the park.



## Kickapoo State Park

Where in Illinois can you go running, biking or hiking, canoeing, fishing for trout, camping, hunting or scuba diving—all against a backdrop of breathtaking natural beauty?

Kickapoo State Park near Danville in Vermilion County, that's where. The park is easily reached via Interstate 74.

Once a scarred wasteland ravaged by strip-mine operations, Kickapoo State Park's 2,842 acres now provide an outdoor playground with something to appeal to every member of the family. Twenty-two deep water ponds, ranging in size from 0.2 of an acre to 57 acres, provide a total of 221 acres of water for boaters, canoeists and anglers. Lushly forested uplands and bottomlands along the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River provide habitat for enough birds, wildlife and wildflowers to please any nature lover, while nature trails and running trails provide pathways to inspiration and physical fitness. If you want a less demanding excursion in the outdoors, there are facilities for camping and picnicking.

Kickapoo owes its crystal clear ponds and luxuriantly forested ridges and hillsides to the regenerative powers of nature. Nearly a century of coal production using strip-mining techniques devastated the landscape. But during the past 50 years, trees and vegetation have gradually reclaimed naked ridges of subsoil, and stagnant mine ponds gradually have cleared.

The park apparently was the first in the nation built on strip-mined land, and one of the first to be subsidized through public contributions. The state's initial purchase of 1,290 acres of mined lands from United Electric Coal Co. in 1939 was largely underwritten with contributions collected from Danville area residents.

## History

Kickapoo State Park and the surrounding area have a long and rich cultural history. Archaeological excavations have provided evidence of a prehistoric village on the Middle Fork River near the park that was home to Native Americans of the Woodland and Mississippian cultures between A.D. 500 and 1500.

A Kickapoo village was located at the confluence of the Middle Fork and Salt Fork rivers. It was in this village that Kennekuk, the "Kickapoo Prophet," lived.

Kennekuk became a religious leader espousing a modified form of Christianity that incorporated elements of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. A staunch advocate of temperance, Kennekuk became a mediator between local Native Americans and European settlers. He was a signer of several Indian treaties with the United States.

European settlers were drawn to the area by the presence of salt springs, called salines, which were discovered in 1819. Wells were dug to obtain salt brine, which was then boiled down to obtain salt. The salt works were operated by a variety of operators until 1848, producing at the height of operation about 120 bushels of salt per week. One of the original iron rendering kettles can be seen in a small memorial at Salt Kettle Rest Area on I-74.

Among the early settlers in the area were John Cox, Indian fighter and scout during the Black Hawk War, and his wife, Polly. Both are buried in a small pioneer cemetery overlooking the former site of their farmstead cabin in the Brian Plawer Campground. Additional settlers from the area are interred in the Allhands Cemetery, just east of the main park pavilion.

Between 1850 and about 1940, much of the Kickapoo State Park area was strip-mined for coal. In fact, Vermilion County is said to be the birthplace of commercial strip-mining practices and one of the first areas to use mechanization for strip mining. The spoil piles and mine pits left behind after nearly a century of mining were the base from which nature had to recover to transform Kickapoo State Park into the outdoor playground it is today.

## Other Attractions

Kickapoo State Park is within 4 miles of the Middle Fork State Fish and Wildlife Area, which also offers hunting, fishing, canoeing, camping and picnicking opportunities, along with nearly 35 miles of equestrian and hiking trails.

The Orchid Hill Natural Heritage Landmark, home for several rare species of native orchids, is also nearby. Interested people may arrange to tour the site by calling the Natural Resources Department's Natural Heritage Division at (217) 345-2420.

