

French trappers and traders were the first Europeans to pass through this area. The land encompassing Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area was part of the Northwest Territory claimed by France. Following the French Indian War, the land was ceded to Great Britain in 1765, becoming part of the colony of Virginia. The land was later part of the Northwest Territory and Illinois Territory before Illinois gained statehood.



The park also has Sauk Trail Pond, a scenic 3-acre pond near the park's round barn, that provides fishing opportunities in a restful setting.

From spring through fall, visitors will find a wide array of both woodland and prairie wildflowers, including bluebells, Dutchman's breeches, trillium, prairie anemone, yarrow, field daisies, vervain and goldenrod.

While fewer than 1,000 natural areas exist in Illinois, one of them is located in Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area. The area contains a population of skunk cabbage, an early bloomer that sometimes blossoms in the snow - rare for this part of the state.

White-tailed deer, raccoons, squirrels, opossum and rabbits are among the myriad wildlife found in the park; while birders have ample opportunities to catch sight of chickadees, nuthatches, goldfinches and hundreds of other avian visitors.

Exotic Species

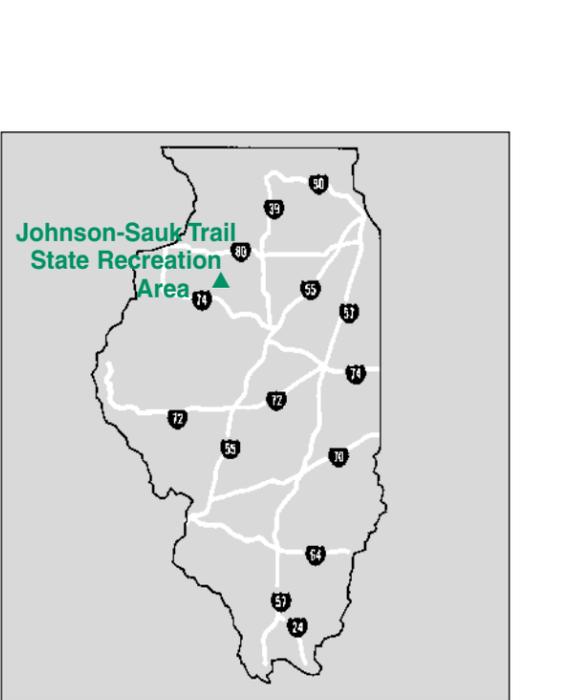
Plants and animals not native to Illinois are exotic species. Most of them are harmless to our state; however, some can be very invasive to native plant communities and can overwhelm or wipe out native species. Prevention and control of exotic, invasive species requires tremendous cooperation between managers and all users of parks, natural areas, and privately owned land.

To learn more about exotic and invasive species and how you can help prevent their spread, visit the IDNR Exotic Species Website at: (http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/Exotic_Species/exoticspintro.htm).

The abundance of wild game and fur-bearing animals was what attracted Indians - the area's first inhabitants - to this part of Illinois. Although mound-building tribes were the first Native Americans to settle this part of the state, tribes of Sauk, Fox, Winnebago, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Kaskaskia, Peoria and Piankashaw Indians later established villages here. Winnebago Indians are known to have used the Sauk Trail and to have camped at or near the area regularly. The Sauk Tribe moved from Wisconsin to the confluence of the Rock and Mississippi rivers and joined with the Fox Indians to form a confederation. These tribes sent hunting parties to this part of the marsh frequently.

The Indian tribe most associated with the park when Europeans began settling the area. The two most popular choices were combined to form the park's official name. Today, Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area features 1,361 acres. Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area is located in a part of Illinois that was a vast shallow sea millions of years ago. Two glaciers covered this part of Illinois, the last being the Wisconsin Glacier, which shaped the land as we know it today. The state recreation area is located on the southern edge of what once was the Great Willow Swamp, a marsh area covering the low-lying areas between the Mississippi, Rock and Green rivers. It is believed to have contained one of the most concentrated and varied wildlife populations in the central part of North America. Attracting large numbers of both market and sport hunters, the area was considered a hunter's paradise. The marsh eventually was drained for agricultural purposes.

History



Johnson-Sauk State Recreation Area
28616 Sauk Trail Road
Kewanee, IL 61443, 309-853-5589

- 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 Department of Natural Resources, Clearinghouse, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271 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.

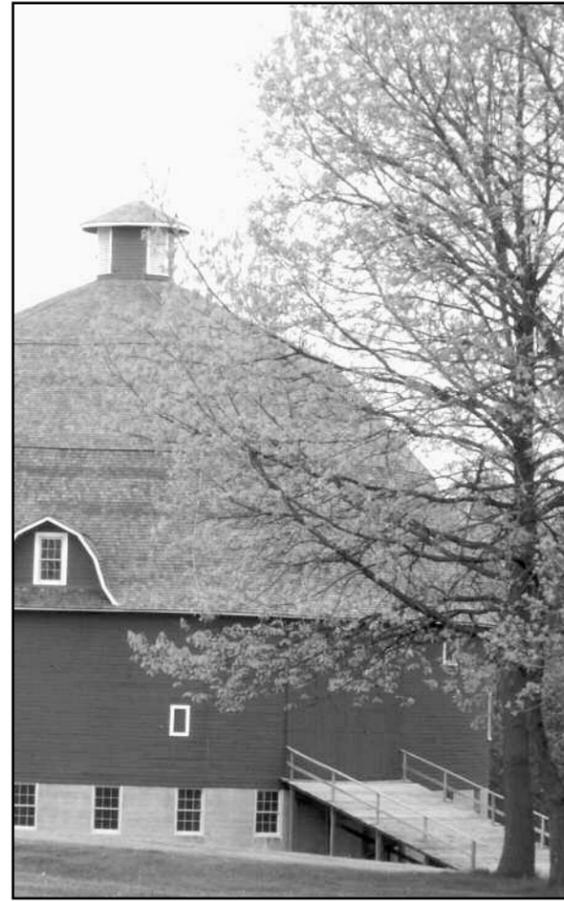
Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other nonmerit factors. 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.

From cross-country skiing in the winter to a lazy picnic in the summer, from a fall fishing trip to exploring fields of spring wildflowers amid giant oaks, Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area truly is a park for all seasons. Located on a glacial moraine that forms the beautiful, rolling hills of Henry County in north-central Illinois, the park is along a trail that led Native Americans from Lake Michigan to the confluence of the Mississippi and Rock rivers. Located off Illinois Route 78, Johnson-Sauk Trail is 6 miles south of Interstate 80 and 5 miles north of Kewanee. Originally known as the Henry County Conservation Area, a local newspaper invited the public to suggest names when the conservation area became a state park. Two names were popular with the public. One would name the park after State Sen. Frank P. Johnson, a tireless worker on behalf of the park, while the second suggested Sauk Trail as a fitting name for the Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area.



State of Illinois
Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Johnson-Sauk Trail
STATE RECREATION AREA



RYAN'S ROUND BARN

Picnicking

The park features 9 picnic areas - mostly around the lake area - with tables and cooking stoves. Two of the picnic areas have shelters.

Camping

The Chief Keokuk Campground features 70 pads with electrical hook-ups (Class A camping), plus 25 tent sites (Class C camping). A sanitary dump station is near the camping area. In addition, Chief Black Hawk Group Area is available for group camping.

Playground

The park features one playground in Chief Keokuk campground.

Fishing

The 58 acre lake has a maximum depth of 21 feet and features excellent populations of largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, channel catfish and bullhead. Numerous fish cribs and attractors have been put into the lake to enhance fishing. In addition, muskie and northern pike have been added to the lake, providing visitors with an exciting fishing opportunity. Fishing is permitted by boat (electric trolling motor only) or from fishing piers and along the shoreline.

Boating

Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area lake's boat launch is adjacent to the Marina near the dam. Boats also are available for rent from the concessionaire. Only electric trolling motors are permitted on the lake.

Concession

In addition to renting boats and selling fishing bait and supplies, the park's concession sells food, souvenirs and camping supplies. The concession provides seasonal services.

Trails

Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area has 4 miles of trails, ranging from 1/4 mile to 1 mile in length, from easy to moderate. They take hikers along the lake through rolling prairie, to pine plantations and inside bottomland hardwood forests. Because the trails are linked, hikers can select varied routes. Please stay on the trails. They were created to protect you and the natural environment.

Winter Sports

Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area is an all-season park, with summer hiking trails doubling as trails for 3 miles of cross-country skiing and 2 miles of snowmobiling when snow accumulation allows. The park's hills also are ideal for sledding and the lake provides an excellent place to go ice fishing or ice skating.

Hunting

Hunting is a popular activity at the park. Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area is one of the Department of Natural Resources' popular controlled hunting sites, with pheasant being released daily during the statewide hunting season (closed Mondays and Tuesdays). Reservations are taken and a fee is charged. The park also allows hunters to pursue deer with a bow and arrow, plus dove and squirrel with shotgun only.

Ryan's Round Barn

One of the most unique features of Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area is the large, round barn built in 1910 and located near the park entrance. One of the largest round barns in the country, the architectural marvel stands more than 80 feet high and is 85 feet in diameter. The barn has a 16-foot ceiling-to-floor silo inside. Round barns originally were built by religious groups because they "left no corners in which the devil could hide." Today, the barn is available to be toured only by appointment with Friends of Johnson's Park Foundation. For more information, contact the park office.

Natural Features

Johnson-Sauk Trail State Recreation Area features a varied terrain, with rolling hills covered with a mix of hardwoods and pines in the southern half of the park and a flatter landscape with wildlife plantings, environmental field strips and grasslands making up the northern half of the park.

The park's centerpiece is a 58 acre lake that offers both fishing and boating, as well as nearly 2 1/2 miles of shoreline to explore.

The lake was one of a series of lakes considered for Illinois in 1944. After studying a number of sites, 369 acres of land known as Whiting's Woods were purchased. Actual construction of the lake didn't begin until 1949 and was halted soon after when engineers encountered unfavorable soil conditions. Work didn't get underway again until the summer of 1955, after advanced methods of dam construction were developed.

