



STATE CHAMPION BALD CYPRESS

(*Taxodium distichum*)



LOCATION: Lower Cache River Access, south of Perks Road

To view the State Champion Bald Cypress tree, walk the asphalt trail west 1200 feet along the shoreline until you reach the viewing platform. While standing on the viewing deck facing the water, the champion Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) can be seen slightly to the left (about 11 o'clock). This tree stands 73 feet tall, has a trunk circumference at 4.5 feet height from river bottom of 34 feet 3 inches, and boasts a crown spread of 35 feet.

The Citizens Committee to Save the Cache and Jack White submitted these measurements to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forest Resources in the early 1990's. Only native Illinois trees are considered for a Big Tree designation. Points are assigned based on a tree's measurements: one point for each inch in circumference; one point for each foot in height; and, one point for one-fourth the crown spread. This tree earned a score of 492.75, and was recognized as the State Champion Bald Cypress in 1992.

The Bald Cypress is a water-loving species that can grow to 120 feet tall. It is valued for its heartwood, which is resistant to decay. This deciduous tree species sprouts formations from its roots, called "knees", which helps stabilize the tree in the muddy bottom of the swamp.

There are three champion trees that can easily be observed from established trails, Cherrybark oak from Heron pond-Linkage trail, Baldcypress from Lower Cache River access-canoeing and viewing platform trail, and the Water Tupelo from Section 8 Woods boardwalk. The remainder of the champion trees are found in Section 8 Woods Nature Preserve and a map and compass are needed to find the trees.

The largest and oldest Cypress tree in the Cache Wetlands is viewed at the Big Cypress access (see brochure map), it has a circumference of 43 feet, height of 100 feet and crown spread of 75 feet and is over 1000 years old. This tree is not the state champion because you must measure the circumference of a champion tree 4.5 feet from ground level. When you measure this cypress tree, the buttress flares out very widely, so that the largest circumference is only two feet above the ground, which eliminates this tree as a state champion.

The Cache River Wetlands is home to a total of eleven state champion trees:

| | | Circum. | Height | Crown Sp. |
|--------------------|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Drummond Red Maple | <u>Acer drummondii</u> | 16' 4.5" | 75' | 26.4' |
| American Hornbeam | <u>Carpinus caroliniana</u> | 3' 7" | 47' | 34' |
| Water Hickory | <u>Carya aquatica</u> | 9' 9.5" | 105' | 50' |
| Green Hawthorne | <u>Crataegus viridis</u> | 3' 7" | 20' | 31' |
| Swamp Privet | <u>Forestiera acuminata</u> | 1' 8" | 33' | 33' |
| Pumpkin Ash | <u>Fraxinus tomentosa</u> | 11' | 103' | 48' |
| Water Locust | <u>Gleditsia aquatica</u> | 7' 4.5" | 94' | 49.3' |
| Water Tupelo | <u>Nyssa aquatica</u> | 22' 5" | 84' | 44' |
| Water Elm | <u>Planera aquatica</u> | 3' 3" | 54' | 33' |
| Cherrybark Oak | <u>Quercus falcata var. pagodaefolia</u> | 22' 6.5" | 100' | 113' |
| Bald Cypress | <u>Taxodium distichum</u> | 34' 3" | 73' | 35' |

If you would like more information about state champion trees, contact the Cache River State Natural Area, 930 Sunflower Lane, Belknap, IL 62901, phone 618/634-9678. Oct/07

