

bottomland forest

CHARACTERISTICS

Bottomland forests are large timbered areas bordering swamps or rivers. In Illinois, they cover about 809,000 acres. In the south-central portion of Illinois, 78 percent of the forested area is within two-tenths of a mile of the streams. Composed mainly of trees, bottomland forests are subject to repeated flooding. When not flooded, they may lack continuously standing water, or it may be present in oxbow lakes or sloughs. If floods occur frequently, the understory may be very open with rotten logs and woody debris covering the forest floor. Plants that grow in the understory must be able to withstand wet soil and/or reproduce rapidly. If floods are not frequent, the forest floor may have a variety of annual and perennial plants, and the tree species may include oaks, elms and hickories.

WHAT LIVES HERE?

More than one-half of Illinois' native flora and one-half of the threatened or endangered flora are found in Illinois' forests. More than 75 percent of the wildlife habitat in the state is in the forests. Trees, shrubs and vines are the characteristic plants found in bottomland forests. Many animal species utilize this habitat type permanently while others search for food and water here on a regular basis or during migration. Birds that nest in cavities find plenty of dead trees in bottomland forests. White-tailed deer, squirrels, opossums, racoons, wild turkey, owls, woodpeckers, reptiles and insects are commonly found in this habitat.

RECREATION

canoeing, boating, fishing, hiking, hunting, trapping, wildlife observation and/or photography

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Bottomland forests are large timbered areas bordering swamps or rivers. They are found throughout Illinois. Oakwood Bottoms and Greentree Reservoir in Jackson County and Allerton Park in Piatt County are two examples of the many places where a bottomland forest may be easily accessed and visited.

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