In the Cache River State Natural Area, you’ll experience a place where the natural and cultural history of the Cache River Wetlands is preserved. Located south of Whetstone on Illinois Route 37, the center is named for Henry N. Barkhausen, who served as Director for the Illinois Department of Conservation from 1970-73 and for 18 years, served as Secretary of the Citizens Committee to save the Cache River. He worked to encourage government agencies, organizations and residents to protect and restore the natural character of the Cache Wetlands. Wetlands Center hours and days of operation are Wednesday through Sunday 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Address and phone number: 8855 State Rte. 37 South, Cypress, IL 62908, 618-657-2064.

For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity’s Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-222-2222 or the Americas Rail Number, 1-800-526-0844.

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, face only memories, leave only footprints.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and Bureau of Tourism at www.visitillinois.com is provided regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the leading officer of your right office or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, Ill. 62707-1071, 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

State of Illinois
Department of Natural Resources

Cache River State Natural Area
830 Sunflower Lane
Beloknap, IL 62908; 618-634-9678

Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.
Canoe Trail
The Lower Cache River Trail offers paddlers a quality canoe experience. To 3 to 6 miles in length, through a magnificent cypress-tupelo swamp. This highlight of the trail is Illinois' largest and, therefore, state champion bald cypress tree. Like many trees within Cache River State Natural Area, it is more than 1,000 years old. Canoeists can begin at the Lower Cache River access area or at a private boat launch ($1 fee) south of Perks. Car shuttles are not necessary. The trail is marked with international canoe symbols and arrows and/or yellow stripes on trees. Canoe maps and fast sheets are available at the site headquarters and wetlands center.

While canoeing the Lower Cache is enjoyable, paddlers should be aware that the Upper Cache is difficult if not impossible to canoe. Severe bank erosion, which is responsible for trees tipping over and creating log jams, makes canoe portages necessary. The trail is marked with international canoe symbols and arrows. The highlight of the trail is Illinois' largest and, therefore, very frequent. Other than Little Black Slough, the Lower Cache and the Henry N. nak-Belknap Road on its northern side, the Tunnel Hill Trail will expanded opportunities for hikers and cyclists. Paralleling the Kar - Cache River State Natural Area, it is more than 1,000 years old. The pelo swamp. The highlight of the trail is Illinois' largest and, therefore, very frequent.

Hiking Trails
There are more than 18 miles of designated foot trails within Cache River State Natural Area. Other than Little Black Slough Trail and Tupelo Trail which are considered moderate in difficulty, the trails are easy to walk. A five-mile segment of the 45-mile-long Tunnel Hill State Trail will pass through some region, providing expanded opportunities for hikers and cyclists. Paralleling the Kar - nak-Belknap Road on its northern side, the Tunnel Hill Trail will link Little Black Slough, the Lower Cache and the Henry N. Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center. All trail lengths are based on round trip distances.

Todd Fink-Heron Pond Trail (1.5 miles) with access at the Heron Pond area: This easy trail includes a truss bridge over the Cache River and features a floating boardwalk to the middle of Heron Pond's cypress pond. There are 10 interpretive panels lo - cated along the trail.

Little Black Slough Trail (5.5 miles) with access via Wildlife Bluff, Marshall Ridge and Heron Pond areas: Bald cypress and tupelo swamps, sandstone bluffs, floodplain forests and hillside glades highlight this moderately difficult trail that gives hikers pas - sage to Boss Island. A rock ford on the Cache River, difficult to cross during high water, must be negotiated. 1.5 miles west of the Wildcat Bluff access.

Lookout Point Trail (1 mile) with access east of the Wildcat Bluff access area: Taking visitors along the edge of a high-quality hillside barrens, this trail provides an overview of the Cache River, its swamps and floodplain forests.

Linkage Trail (2.4 miles) with access via Heron Pond, Wildcat Bluff and Marshall Ridge areas: Linking Heron Pond Trail and Lit - tle Black Slough Trail, this easy hike offers a chance to observe the state champion cherrybark oak tree.

Marshall Ridge Trail (2.8 miles) with access via the Marshall Ridge area: Winding through reforested fields, this easy trail con - nects with the Linkage Trail and provides a gateway to Heron Pond or Little Black Slough.

Tupelo Trail (2.5 miles) with access via Marshall Ridge Trail area: This moderately difficult trail begins a quarter-mile north of the Marshall Ridge access area and goes through rolling upland forest to the southern shoreline of Little Black Slough. It gives ex - cellent views of tupelo gum trees and swamp.

Lower Cache River Swamp Trail (2.5 miles) with access via the Lower Cache River area: Paralleling Cypress Creek and Cache River on a high earth berm, this trail takes hikers to a cypress and tupelo swamp. It is a great place to hear the rhythmic croaking of tree frogs at dusk in the spring. With 3,000 linear feet surfaced in aggregate, much of the trail is accessible year-round, except during periods of flooding. A 1,000-foot handicapped- accessible trail, located west of the toilet facility, ends with a viewing platform overlooking the swamp. A 20’ x 28’ picnic shelter is available with privy toilets, water hydrant and drinking fountain.

Big Cypress Tree Trail (250 feet) with access via the Big Cy - press area on the Lower Cache River. This short floodplain forest trail takes visitors to one of the bald cypress trees older than 1,000 years and whose base circumference is more than 40 feet.

Section 8 Woods Nature Preserve Boardwalk (475 feet) with access via Section 8 Woods area. Passing through a cypress-tu - pelo swamp and a flood-plain forest, this handicapped-accessible boardwalk ends with a view of the state champion water tupelo. Along the boardwalk, 10 tree species are identified and there is a kiosk with interpretive panels.

Past and Present
The area's natural resources have always been important to peo - ple living in the Cache River valley. Native Americans found the region rich in wildlife and relied on their expertise in fishing, hunt - ing and trapping for food, hides and furs. The first European set - tlers arrived in 1803, and, finding the soil too wet to farm, concentrated their efforts on timber harvesting. By 1870, several saw mills were processing timber for lumber, railroad ties, boxes and charcoal. Large-scale drainage and land-clearing efforts began in the early 1900s, eventually bringing thousands of acres of bottomland under cultivation. The state of Illinois acquired the first parcel of Cache River State Natural Area in 1970, following cooperation among private, governmental and commercial groups working together to conserve this unique natural resource.

Today, a cooperative effort called the Cache River Wetlands Joint Venture Partnership is working to protect and restore a 60,000-acre wetland corridor along 50 miles of the Cache River. Partners include the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Cy - press Creek National Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Ducks Unlimited with support from the Friends of the Cache River Watershed. The focus is to repair natural ecosystems and provide hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing and other recreational opportunities, which will promote economic development and tourism.

Scientific and educational use of the area is allowed by permit, issued by the Department of Natural Resources. For information about the permit, hunting and fishing regulations or the site in gen - eral, contact Cache River State Natural Area, 930 Sunflower Lane, Belkin, IL 62008, or phone (618) 634-9678 or Henry Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center 8885 State Rt. 37 South Cypress, Illinois 62923 phone (618) 657-2064.