The Illinois Department of Transportation acquired 290 acres of the property in 1968 for construction of Interstate 57. With only 10 acres needed for highway construction, IDOT transferred the remaining 280 acres to the Department of Natural Resources. Additional land purchases during the 1970’s brought the total acreage to 371.

For 20 years, however, the land was virtually inaccessible. It wasn’t until 1993 that IDOT transferred to DNR a 30-foot easement on the area’s southwest corner, which provided a way for the public to enter the property. Then in 1996, the state partnered with the National Wild Turkey Federation to purchase a 174-acre tract immediately north of the original acreage, which allowed access into the area from a township road. The purchase also was significant for another reason – it marked the first time the state acquired land using the Illinois Habitat Stamp Fund.

The land now known as Wildcat Hollow State Habitat Area was acquired for another reason – it marked the first time the state acquired land using the Illinois Habitat Stamp Fund. The Illinois Department of Transportation acquired 290 acres of the property in 1968 for construction of Interstate 57. With only 10 acres needed for highway construction, IDOT transferred the remaining 280 acres to the Department of Natural Resources. Additional land purchases during the 1970’s brought the total acreage to 371.

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Activities

- Hiking—Wildcat Hollow is an undeveloped area that does not offer restrooms, picnic tables, campsites or other facilities. Hikers, however, will find a maintained 3.5-mile hiking trail, whose trailhead is at the south parking area. The trail winds past springs and among the bluffs common to the area. From one bluff, hikers can see the remains of the Kepley farm.

- Hunting—The more open areas in the northern section provide some hunting opportunities for quail and rabbit. Among the species most pursued at Wildcat Hollow are deer, turkey and squirrel. Hunters are permitted to use only portable deer stands, and stands must not damage trees. Please check DNR website for site regulations. The use of all-terrain vehicles and horses is prohibited.

Directions

At the town of Mason, which is on Illinois Route 37, travel north on Main Street, which is also County Road 24. To get to the south entrance, turn right on the first crossroad after I-57 and continue until the road ends. Turn left on the gravel lane abutting the interstate fence and continue for 1 mile to the parking area. To get to the north entrance, stay on County Road 24 to Road 550N, and then turn right. The first parking area is about ¼ mile after you make the turn and is located on the right. To get the second parking area follow the road until it makes a 90-degree turn to the north and park in the cleared area.

Wildcat Hollow State Habitat Area is managed by staff from Stephen A. Forbes State Park, and on-site personnel are not present. For more information, contact Stephen A. Forbes State Park, 6924 Omega Road, Kinmundy, IL 62854 or phone (618)547-3381.