Plant and Animal Life

Geologic Features

Matthiessen State Park

P.O. Box 509
Utica, IL 61373; (815) 667-4868

made by yellow-bellied sapsuckers can be found on

Jack-in-the-pulpits, pastel-colored hepatica and delicate pink spring beauteous blossom in the shaded forest soil during the spring. In the area where the sun breaks through the trees, black-eyed Susans and pink, spiked tick-trefoil bloom through the summer. Raccoons and flying squirrels spend hours among the trees searching for and gathering berries and nuts.

Along the forest edges, bright blue indigo buntings fly among the wild crabapple and plum trees. Cottontail rabbits scamper through the bluestem and Indian grasses. Red-tailed hawks soar overhead searching for field mice. Three-leaved poison ivy plants are found in all areas of the park, growing both as a vine and as an individual woody plant. Its greenish-white berries are a prime source of food for the many birds residing here.

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Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.
Picnicking
The Deills Area of the park provides a perfect setting for picnics and an afternoon of relaxation. This area has picnic tables, water fountains and playground equipment, as well as a large parking lot and toilet facilities. An added attraction is the restored fort representative of the fortifications the French built in the Midwest during the 1600s and early 1700s. The main trail to the Cascade Falls area originates in this area.

To the south, at the Vermilion River Area, additional picnic shelters, picnic tables, grills and drinking fountains provide convenient picnic facilities. Alcohol is prohibited Jan. 1 through May 31 in the picnic area. It is always prohibited on all trails.

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/lans/education/ExoticSpecies/exoticspintro.htm

Trails
The park has five miles of well-marked, well-surfaced hiking trails for a relaxing walk or a vigorous hike. Large trail maps are located at all major trail intersections so visitors can choose a variety of routes. The upper area and bluff tops are easy hiking paths for the novice, but the trails into the interiors of the two areas may be difficult to negotiate, particularly during spring and early summer. Hikers must stay on marked trails, as steep cliffs and deep canyons can be dangerous. Hikers will marvel at the plant and animal life along the trails, and have an unparalleled view of geological wonders as they travel through the park. Alcohol is prohibited on all trails.

Horseback Riding
End the day horseback riding with a picnic in the Deills Area picnic grove. A field archery range with a sight-in area and four separate targets is located in the northwestern portion of Matthiessen State Park near Deer Park Country Club. A radio-controlled model airplane field is located at the Vermilion River Area. Hobbyists and visitors will enjoy flying or watching as these crafts are maneuvered around this open field area.

An equestrian campground for horseback riders and their horses is located on Route 178 1/2 mile south of Route 71. The horseback riders campground and horseback trails are open as weather permits May 1 – Oct. 31. Call the park office to check conditions and statuses before coming to use these facilities.

For further information, contact the site superintendent, Matthiessen State Park, Box 509, Utica, IL 61373, phone (815) 667-4868, fax (815) 667-5533.

LaSalle Peru & Geneseo
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