

The area is the result of a prehistoric dry period when more desert-like conditions existed. Today it remains one of the very few places in Illinois that supports an intriguing variety of plants and animals more associated with the Southwest than the Midwest, including badger, pocket gopher and prickly pear cactus.

For the dedicated outdoors person this is truly an island of opportunity to encounter Illinois' great diversity. The raw, undeveloped expanses of hardwood and conifer blanketing the rolling hills and val-



Sand Ridge State Forest

To those who think central Illinois is one big cornfield, Sand Ridge State Forest will come as a very pleasant surprise. Just minutes southwest of Peoria, this 7,500 acre area—largest of Illinois' State Forests—boasts sweeping expanses of native oak-hickory timbers, extensive plantations of pine, sprawling open fields, grasslands, and completely matchless sand prairies.

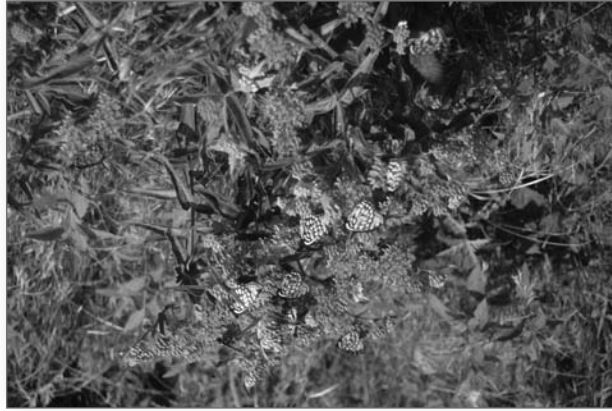
For a refreshing, invigorating taste of unspoiled nature and an opportunity to experience a genuinely distinctive and unexpected environment, Sand Ridge State Forest is ideal.

Originally called Mason State Forest, the State of Illinois purchased the first 5,504 acres in 1939. Under Division of Forestry management as an experimental forest, the Civilian Conservation Corps planted pines to accomplish three objectives: to control erosion, enrich the soil enough to support native timber, and to demonstrate the ability to grow a commercial crop in sand without supplemental irrigation. These plantations now total almost 2,500 acres and are producing marketable timber.

History

Fifteen thousand years ago the flood waters of the last glaciation receded from the Illinois River valley, leaving in their wake a vast deposit of sand from near past Beardstown. A subsequent period of extreme dryness and warmth invited plants and animals of the southwestern states to extend their range into the area. Shifting winds sculpted 100-foot-high sand dunes visible today as the timbered ridges the forest is named for.

In addition, as an important nesting habitat for a number of increasingly rare neo-tropical migratory birds such as ovenbird, indigo bunting, veery, and scarlet tanager, Sand Ridge State Forest is a bird-watcher's paradise.



Leys offer the visitor many choices: 49 miles of marked trails open to hiking, backpacking, snowmobiling and horseback riding; many kinds of hunting, including deer, turkey, pheasant, quail and squirrel; hand trap shooting facilities; an archery range and trail with 11 targets at marked yardage; panoramic vistas of great beauty and much more.

Day visitors have many picnic facilities and the chance for a fascinating experience with nature at the Henry Allan Gleason Nature Preserve. Enjoy the pristine sand prairie in a protected area closed to vehicles and domestic animals. Deer hunting is allowed at Henry Allan Gleason Nature Preserve.

Many different species were planted as an experiment in erosion control and to test viability as a commercial crop. As a result, 2,500 acres of the forest are in pine plantations, currently producing marketable timber purchased under a fixed price contract sale, mostly using a selective cut technique to improve the remaining stand.

About 7,500 acres, or just over 11.7 square miles, of the forest is of the Plainfield-Bloomfield association, primarily sand and not much else. Air and water move rapidly through these soils there is very little water holding capacity, and very little organic matter.

Land and Cover

(7,500 acres). Camping is available year-round; all groups, backpackers, and first-time visitors are asked to check in at Sand Ridge State Forest headquarters prior to using forest facilities. DNR-Sand Ridge State Forest, P.O. Box 111, Forest City, IL 61532-0111 (309) 597-2212; fax (309) 597-2240.



In 1971 management was transferred to the Division of Land Management and Education, and the area became known as Sand Ridge State Forest. The forest presently covers 11.7 square miles

There are about 4,000 acres in mesic upland forest—primarily black oak and mockernut hickory. These woods are used primarily for DNR's "you cut" firewood program, with 24"x48"x96" loads selling for \$10.

Another 300 acres are in agricultural crops grown to improve soil, provide high quality nutrients to wildlife and provide cover for wildlife. Crops include cowpeas, corn, soybeans, sunflowers, wheat, clover, alfalfa, sorghum, sudan grass and hairy vetch. Emphasis is in production without use of pesticides that would be persistent or that leach readily, and without use of chemical fertilizers.

Finally, 700 acres are in prairie restorations and the Henry Allan Gleason Nature Preserve, and includes rare sand blow-outs, badgers, pocket-gophers, prickly pear cactus and the endangered silvery bladderpod found here as a relict population.

Programs

- **Camping** ■ 24 Class C drive in sites, well shaded; 1 Class C Equestrian Campground; 1 Organized Group Campground; 12 Class D primitive sites on trails.
- **Trails** ■ 49 miles of marked trail; 26 miles may be used by snowmobiles, 47 miles may be used by equestrians, all 49 are open to hikers and backpackers. In addition, there are over 120 miles of unmarked fire lanes open to both equestrians and hikers.
- **Hunting** ■ Squirrel, dove, pheasant, quail, rabbit, woodcock, deer, crow, turkey, fox, raccoon, opossum, striped skunk and coyote. Seasons, bag limits and other regulations are site specific. All hunting is by registration only.
- **Archery/Hand Trap Range** ■ An archery trail with 11 targets at marked yardage and a hand trap range are open except during the upland game season.



Sand Ridge State Forest
P.O. Box 111
Forest City, IL, 61532, (309) 597-2212

- 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.
- Alcohol is prohibited.
- 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, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Department of Natural Resources, Clearinghouse, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271 visit our website at www.dnr.state.il.us.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other nonmerit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175.

State of Illinois
Pat Quinn, Governor

Department of Natural Resources

Sand Ridge

STATE FOREST

Recreational Trails Program

This trail brochure was made possible due to funding provided by the Federal Highway Administration through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Monies are funded through the Federal Motor Fuel Tax and administered through the National Recreational Trails Fund Act. Trail projects are supported by the federal government, which provides up to 80% reimbursement of cost. State funds provide the balance of the funding for the projects. The trails program encourages trails management practices to serve a wide variety of trail users. The program is administered in Illinois by the Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation.

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 inva-



sive 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/lands/education/ExoticSpecies/exoticspintro.htm>.

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If the outdoors in Illinois is where you want to be . . .



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