



CACHE RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Land Management



Canoe Fact Sheet

PUBLIC ACCESS: Between Route 37 and Perks, IL, Lower Cache River access

DISTANCE: 3-6 miles on canoe trails and in Cache River Channel

AVERAGE TIME: Allow 3-5 hours

HABITAT: Southern Baldcypress/Tupelo Swamp

Thank you for your interest in canoeing the Cache River State Natural Area. Although the Cache River meanders for approximately 110 miles through southern Illinois, there are only small sections that are navigable by canoe. Man has extensively altered the Cache since the early 1900's. The River is divided into the Upper and Lower Cache by means of a diversion channel that forces the Upper Cache to empty directly into the Ohio River. The Lower Cache is then diverted into the Mississippi River near Horseshoe Lake.

As a result, increased stream velocity has deepened and broadened the riverbed causing severe bank erosion on the Upper Cache. Many fallen trees and log jams make canoeing this section of the river difficult or impossible. However, the Lower Cache River offers the canoeist a quality experience of three to six miles of trails through the still waters of a southern cypress swamp. Visitors can bring their own canoes and access the Lower Cache River from the Lower Cache River access located 1 3/4 miles west of IL Rt 37 on the Perks, IL road and then 1 mile south on gravel road. Please see map and follow brown and white directional signs. No fee access area. Car shuttles are not necessary since the river gradient and velocity are very small, allowing for an easy return to the access site. The trail is marked with international canoe symbols and arrows and/or yellow markers on trees. The Lower Cache is known as a precious remnant of a once-common wetland and is the northernmost range of a true southern cypress/tupelo swamp in the Midwest. The highlight of the trail system is an opportunity to view the state champion Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) which is over one thousand years old. You may also tour Eagle Pond, owned by The Nature Conservancy, which contains a 850 year old Cypress tree that has 209 cypress knees, tallest knee over 11 feet and aged at 190 years old. There are also canoe opportunities on Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge on the Lower Cache river, south of Ullin, IL, for information call 618-634-2231

Among the quiet waters of the Cache River there exists a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna. There are excellent opportunities for viewing wildlife, especially birds. You may observe Blue and Green Herons, Pileated Woodpeckers, Black and Turkey Vultures, Egrets and other waterfowl during your visit. At dusk, bats frequently sweep over the water in search of insects, and tree frogs fill the night air with their rhythmic chorus. The three poisonous snakes of southern Illinois are found here; however, encounters with them are rare. It is best to be cautious and observant.

For hikers, the Lower Cache River "Swamp Trail" takes you into a true southern cypress/tupelo swamp on foot. It is two miles in length and parallels Cypress Creek and the Cache River on an earthen berm created by channelization dredging. It is an excellent trail for wildlife observation, especially at dusk in the spring when you can hear the swamp come alive with the rhythmic croaking of numerous frog species. During periods of flooding, this trail may be impassable or have wet and muddy conditions. The Section 8 Woods Nature Preserve offers a 475-foot boardwalk that offers a view of the state champion Water Tupelo tree, with a circumference of 22.5 feet and is over 1000 years old

Please respect private property and obtain permission before using or entering private property. Pole and line fishing and hunting are permitted in this area and there is a 10 H.P. limit on all motorized boats. There are two private guided canoe companies available, Peddles and Paddles, Inc., 618-658-3641 and Land for Learning Institute, 618-833-5801. They only do guided canoe trips on a fee basis per person and do not rent individual canoes. Enjoy your visit to the Cache River State Natural Area. For additional information, contact the Cache River State Natural Area, 930 Sunflower Lane, Belknap, IL, 62908, phone 618-634-9678. 10/07

