

coniferous forest



RECREATION

hiking, hunting, cross-country skiing, camping, horseback riding, picnicking, bicycling, wildlife watching, photography

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Most of the coniferous forest in Illinois may be found in the southern one-third of the state. The Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois, managed by the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, and White Pines Forest State Park near Mt. Morris in Ogle County are two examples of places where coniferous forest may be easily accessed and visited in Illinois.

CHARACTERISTICS

Coniferous forests contain cone-bearing, evergreen trees. Illinois has about 72,000 acres of coniferous forest, most of it in the southern one-third of the state. Pope County alone has 36 percent of Illinois' coniferous forest. Fourteen Illinois counties have no coniferous woodland. This forest type has little understory. The trees grow tall and straight with the canopy closed. Not much sunlight is able to reach the forest floor at any time of the year. Evergreen trees do lose their leaves, but not all at one time like deciduous trees, and the ground becomes needle-carpeted. Conifers naturally grow in poor soil and can withstand drought conditions. In Illinois, many species of conifers have been planted outside of their native range and may be found growing in pine plantations and other locations.

WHAT LIVES HERE?

More than one-half of Illinois' native flora and one-half of the threatened or endangered flora are found in Illinois' forests. More than 75 percent of the wildlife habitat in the state is in the forests. White pine is the most common native Illinois pine. Other evergreen species, either natural or exotic, that may be found in Illinois include red pine, loblolly pine, Scotch pine and shortleaf pine. White-tailed deer, opossums, raccoons, owls, woodpeckers, reptiles and insects are among the many animal species that either live in the coniferous forest or use it when migrating through.