

southern Illinois lowlands



RECREATION

canoeing, fishing, hiking, hunting, trapping, wildlife observation and/or photography

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

The southern Illinois lowlands communities in Illinois are in the extreme southern portion of the state near the Cache, Ohio and Mississippi rivers. These areas are the northernmost remnants of a vast network of swamps that once covered much of the southern United States. Two beautiful swamps that may be visited are located at the La Rue Swamp Nature Preserve in Union County and Heron Pond-Little Black Slough Nature Preserve in Johnson County.

CHARACTERISTICS

Southern Illinois lowlands cover about 11,700 acres in the state. This area is found at the southern tip of Illinois and is the northernmost extension of the Gulf Coastal Plain in North America. Many organisms living in the southern Illinois lowlands are at the northern edge of their range and are unique to the extreme southern portion of the state. Bald cypress-tupelo gum swamps are a characteristic feature. Surface water is usually present in the swamps. Trees provide a canopy cover of more than 30 percent of the area (often exceeding 80 percent). Most of the vegetation is woody, adapted to living in water and more than 20 feet tall. Swamps have a water depth of about two feet. This region has the warmest climate in the state.

WHAT LIVES HERE?

More than one-half of Illinois' native flora and more than 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. Many organisms living in southern Illinois lowlands are at the northern edge of their range and are unique to the extreme southern portion of the state. An abundance of species may be found in this productive habitat. Plants like the cherrybark oak, white oak, shagbark hickory, beech, cucumber magnolia and pecan grow here. Flycatchers, warblers, squirrels, bats, foxes, mink, muskrat, beaver, cottontail, swamp rabbit, bobcat, river otter, frogs, turtles, snakes and many more animal species live here.