

History
Matthiessen State Park was named for Frederick William Matthiessen, a prominent industrialist and philanthropist from LaSalle. He originally purchased the land near the end of the 19th Century and developed it as a privately owned park for many years. Mr. Matthiessen employed about 50 people to construct trails, bridges, stairways and check dams. The area was originally referred to as "Deer Park," in reference to the large deer population. The original 176-acre park consisted primarily of a long narrow canyon with a small stream flowing through it. At that time these formations were called "dells," a name that has stayed with the park. After Matthiessen's death, the park was donated to the State of Illinois, which opened it as a public park. In 1943, the state renamed the park in honor of Matthiessen. Since then, the park has grown to 1,938 acres and includes much of the significant natural areas along the main dell, some former prairie land, and some forest land and south of the original park.

Upper Dell to Dam



Matthiessen State Park
Canyons, streams, prairie and forest combine to delight visitors at Matthiessen State Park. Located in central LaSalle County, approximately four miles south of Utica and three miles east of Oglesby, Matthiessen is a paradise for those interested in geology as well as recreation. Visitors can expect to see beautiful rock formations in addition to unusual and abundant vegetation and wildlife. All of this, along with park and picnic facilities, make Matthiessen State Park a popular choice for a special outing.

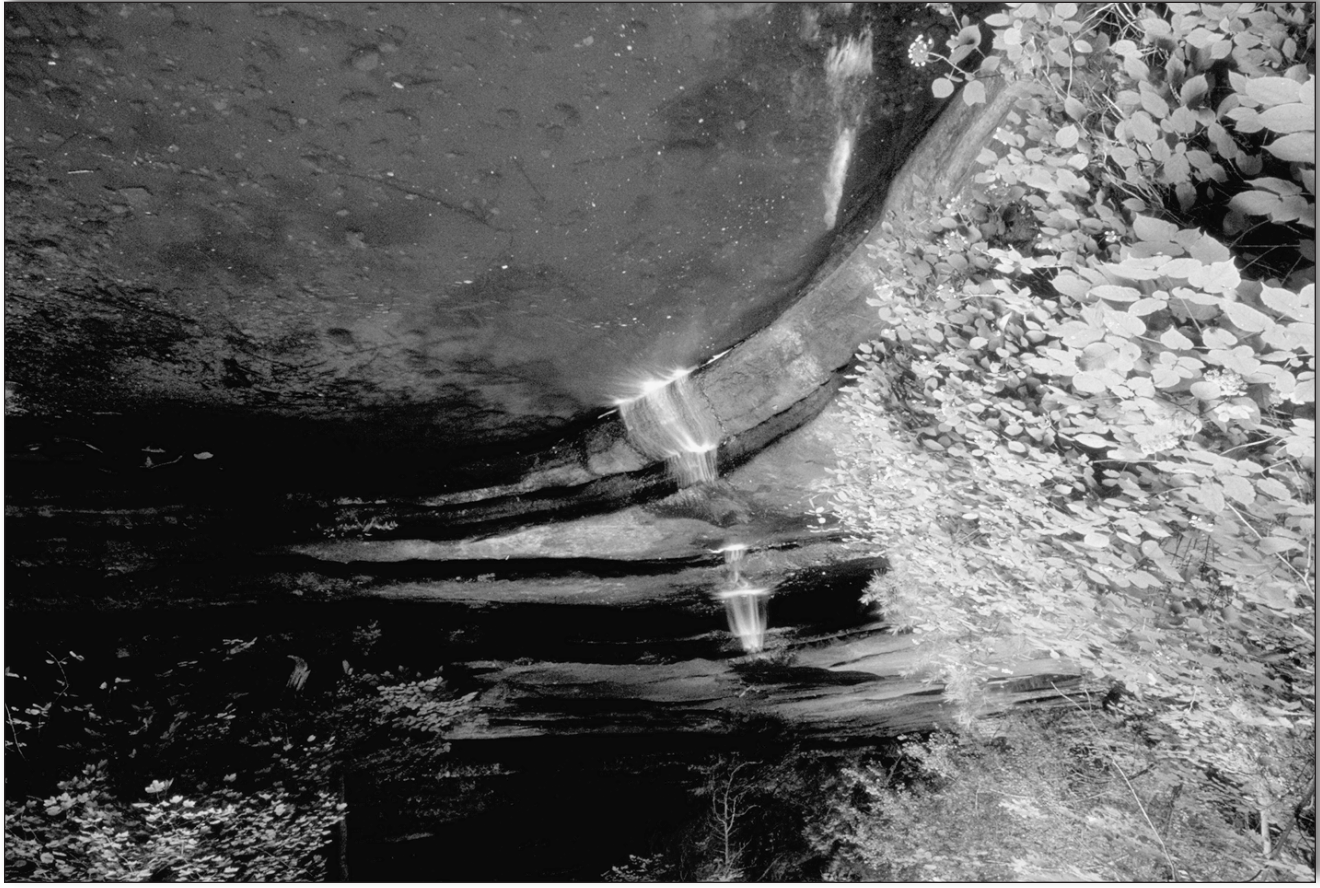
Geological Features

The many unusual and beautiful rock formations make a trip to Matthiessen State Park an educational as well as a fun experience. Exposed sandstone can be seen throughout. The main canyon, consisting of the Upper and Lower Dells, provides an unusual and interesting walking tour. The Upper Dell begins at Matthiessen Lake and continues to Cascade Falls, where the canyon drops 45 feet and the Lower Dell begins. The canyon, formed by water erosion, is approximately one mile long, from Matthiessen Lake to the Vermillion River. Visitors may observe ground water seeping out along the sandstone of the canyon walls. As the ground water evaporates along the canyon walls, the minerals that are carried in solution in the water contribute to the beautiful coloring of the rocks.
The park has several mineral springs, and each was a popular spot for the large deer population that used it as a salt lick.

Plant and Animal Life

Visitors will delight at the abundance of plant and animal life. The park is alive with common and uncommon species of flora and fauna. The canyon provides a perfect habitat for many mosses and liverworts which thrive on the damp shady walls. Ferns also grow in the rich soil. Other vegetation in the canyon interior is limited to the simpler or lower orders of plant life, because most plants cannot take root on the steep rock walls. Cliff swallows and rock doves may be seen perching on the canyon walls, while frogs, toads and salamanders seek out the cool, moist canyon floors.
Along the dry, sandy bluff tops near the canyon edge, black oak, red cedar and white oak grow in abundance. White pines and white cedar are also found here, carried south by the glaciers of long ago. Shrubs common to this area include serviceberry and northern honeysuckle. Scarlet tanagers and cedar waxwings can be seen feeding on the berries of these shrubs. Holed

Giant's Bathing



made by yellow-bellied sapsuckers can be found on the cedar trees, as these birds feed on the sap and small insects located there. In the spring, beautiful magenta-colored blossoms erupt on the shooting star plants and the bright orange of the columbine delights the eye. By summertime, a rainbow of color emerges with the yellow partridge pea, the violet spiked lead plants and purple square-stemmed mint plants.

Farther back from the bluffs, bur oak and hickory grow. At the foot of these trees grow American witch hazel, black huckleberry and bracken fern. Nuthatches and chickadees can be seen feeding on the nuts, seeds and insects here.



Jack-in-the-pulpits, pastel-colored hepatica and delicate pink spring beauties 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-trefoils 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.



Matthiessen State Park
P.O. Box 509
Utica, IL, 61373, (815) 667-4868

- 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.
- 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, Office of Land Management, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702 or 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 non-merit 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 Resource Way, Springfield, IL, 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.



State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Matthiessen

STATE PARK



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Matthiessen

Picnicking

The Dells 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/lands/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 dells 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.**



Lake Bridge

On the north side of the Dells Area entrance is a parking lot with a hitching post, which marks the access to 13 miles of horseback riding trails. Horse rental is located on Route 71 a half mile west of Route 178. It is open weekends in April and November and Wednesday through Sunday from May through October. There are also six miles of cross-country ski trails with ski rental available weekends from December through March.

Regulations

No camping, rappelling, or rock or ice climbing are allowed. Alcohol is prohibited on all trails.

Hike only the marked trails. Unmarked areas are dangerous. Numerous people have been seriously injured or killed in this park. Be off the trails by dark.

All pets must be on a leash.

In case of an accident, notify the Park Business Office, 667-4868, or Starved Rock Park Office, 667-4726. After 4 p.m., notify the **State Police, 224-1150. (All phone numbers are 815 area code.)**

To Find Your Way

Check the map to see where you are and decide where you want to go. This map is located at all major trail intersections with your exact location marked. There are additional directional signs along the trails to assist you.

Other Activities

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 just off Illinois Route 71.

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 status 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) 667-5353.

PLEASE NOTE!
It is a state offense to remove any archeological or Native American materials from any Illinois state park.

