Beall Woods

STATE PARK

Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

Beall Woods

Located on the banks of the Wabash River in southeastern Illinois, Beall Woods attracts visitors from around the world wanting a glimpse of one of the few remaining tracts of old-growth forest found east of the Mississippi River.

Besides hiking through this primeval woodland, Beall Woods also offers camping, picnicking and fishing to the visitor who wants to spend time in a quiet, relaxing setting.

History

Beall Woods (pronounced Bell) had been under the ownership of the Beall family since the mid-1800s. While a working farm, almost half of the 635 acres consisted of forest that had been left relatively untouched by man.

When Laura Beall, the last living heir, died without a will, the property went up for auction and was sold to a man who allegedly intended to clear the timber. Many individuals and organizations came together in an effort to prevent this from happening. A trial took place and the land was purchased by the State of Illinois in 1965 by invoking the law of eminent domain against the unwilling seller. The state received a grant from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to help defray the cost of the purchase.

In 1966, the 329 acres of old-growth forest were dedicated as the 14th Illinois Nature Preserve by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. With this action, a piece of Illinois' natural heritage was preserved so future generations will have the opportunity to see an example of the magnificent forest that once grew along the Wabash River.

Also, because of its importance to our country's natural heritage, Beall Woods is registered as a National Landmark by the United States and is listed in the United States Register of Natural Landmarks as the "Forest of the Wabash."

Natural History

Long ago, the entire eastern United States was covered with forest much like Beall Woods. This primeval woodland helps us recapture the everlasting forest influence that shaped our nation's ancestors and their destiny. As a young man, Robert Ridgway, a great American ornithologist, roamed this area.

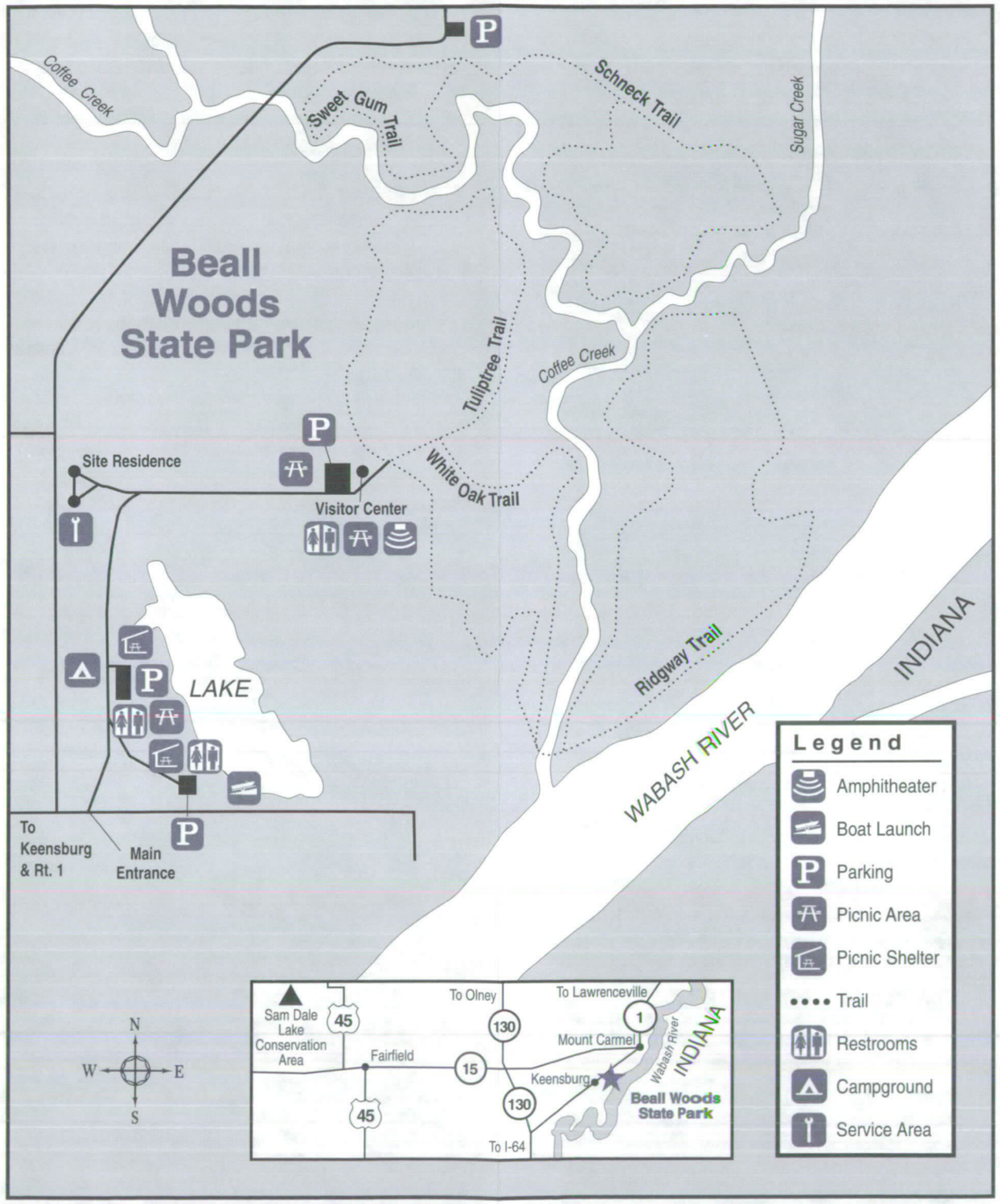
The stand has several distinct forest sites ranging from well-drained, rolling uplands to low areas that are subject to frequent flooding and standing water. This diversity of sites has produced a surprising number of tree species. Sixty-four have been identified. The height and size of the trees are awe-inspiring.

Sometimes acclaimed the "University of Trees," Beall Woods is more than a collection of super-sized deciduous trees. It is a living forest community—a natural ecological system containing all native plant and animal life. Quiet hikers may be rewarded by a glimpse of a deer, a raccoon or a pileated woodpecker. In the spring, the forest floor is carpeted with a variety of wildflowers.

All trees make a major contribution to the natural beauty of the American landscape. They are living examples of the three basic concepts of beauty—variety, harmony and contrast.
The Department of Natural Resources is well aware of this natural jewel that was placed in its care to preserve for future generations.

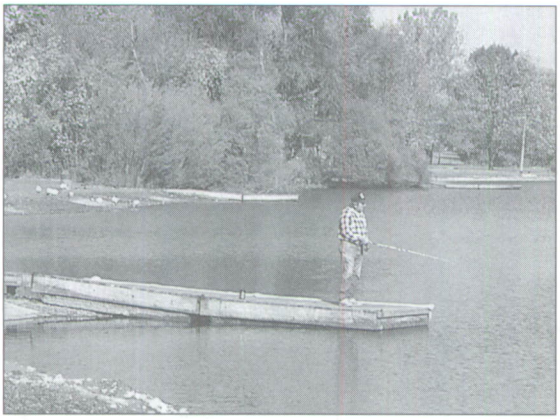
Picnicking

Picnic shelters, playground areas and pit toilets are located around the recreation area of the lake. No reservations are taken for the picnic areas. They are on a first-come, first-served-basis. Shaded picnicking is also available near the visitor center.



Camping

Sixteen Class C campsites with vehicular access and restrooms, but no showers or electricity, are available to overnight campers. A disposal station is also available for campers' use.



Fishing

In the late 1970s, a 15-acre lake was developed to provide additional recreation and scenic opportunities for park visitors. Anglers can fish for largemouth bass, bluegill and catfish. The lake is also stocked in the spring and fall for trout season. While a boat launch is located on the lake, only trolling motors may be used.

The Trails

The visitor center is a great place to start your visit to Beall Woods. Located at the entrance of the nature preserve, the center offers exhibits and educational displays explaining the natural history of the area. Established trails through the nature preserve offer the hiker an excellent view of the old-growth forest. From the easy 1-mile Tuliptree Trail which features a self-guided trail brochure to the 1.25-mile moderately easy White Oak Trail, the nature enthusiast can get a sense of what the settlers saw when they arrived at the banks of the Wabash River. To preserve the fragile ecosystem, hikers are urged to stay on the established trails. Pets, bicycles and horses are not allowed on the trails. Collecting or removing any natural objects is prohibited. Depending on the season, visitors should come prepared with insect repellent.

Tuliptree Trail - An easy 1-mile upland forest trail. Several self-guided brochures featuring tree identification and spring wildflowers growing along this trail are available for visitor use and can be picked up at the trail entrance or in the visitor center.

White Oak Trail - With the exception of two flights of steps, the White Oak is a moderately easy 1.25-mile trail that offers the hiker the greatest variety of vegetation and forest conditions. It passes over five soil types, through good examples of upland and bottomland forest and gives the visitor a good sense of what the settlers experienced when arriving at this part of the state. For those interested in a longer hike, the Ridgway Trail is accessed from the White Oak Trail.

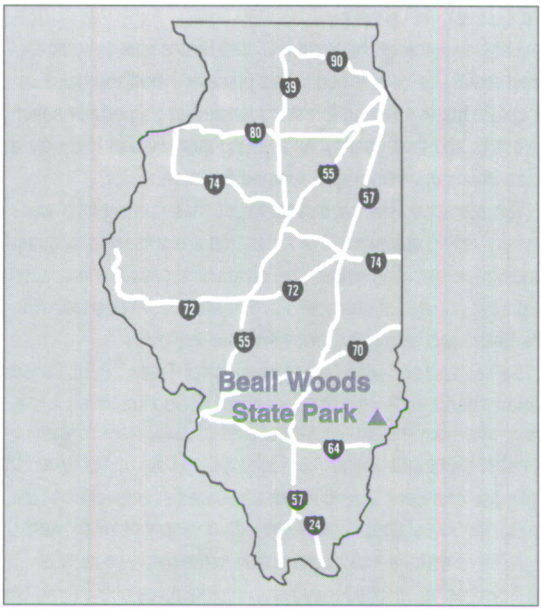
Ridgway Trail - This 1.75-mile moderately easy trail is accessed from the White Oak Trail. It is a dedicated living memorial to Robert Ridgway, one of America's foremost ornithologists (a person who studies birds), who spent his boyhood in this area. Closed periodically during flooding, this trail winds through a reforested field and features several varieties of bottomland oak and hickory trees. A combined White Oak-Ridgway Trail walk is a total of 3 miles in length.

Sweet Gum Trail - This .50 mile easy trail follows Coffee Creek and features an interesting rock cliff. Many plants adapted to cool, moist and shady conditions thrive here. The visitor must access this trail from the park's north side. The trail is closed periodically due to flooding.

Schneck Trail - This trail is dedicated to Dr. Jacob Schneck, a pioneer Mount Carmel physician and botanist. This easy 1.75-mile trail is accessed from the park's north side and is closed periodically due to flooding.

Water works wonders

Celebrate with us and discover just how much fun fishing and boating can be when you do it together.



Beall Woods State Park

9285 Beall Woods Avenue
Mount Carmel, IL 62863, (618) 298-2442

- 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 Public Services, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-7454 or visit our website at http://dnr.state.il.us.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' 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.

Rod R. Blagojevich
Governor

Joel Brunsvold
Director

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Printed by authority of the State of Illinois
(20M—10-2002)