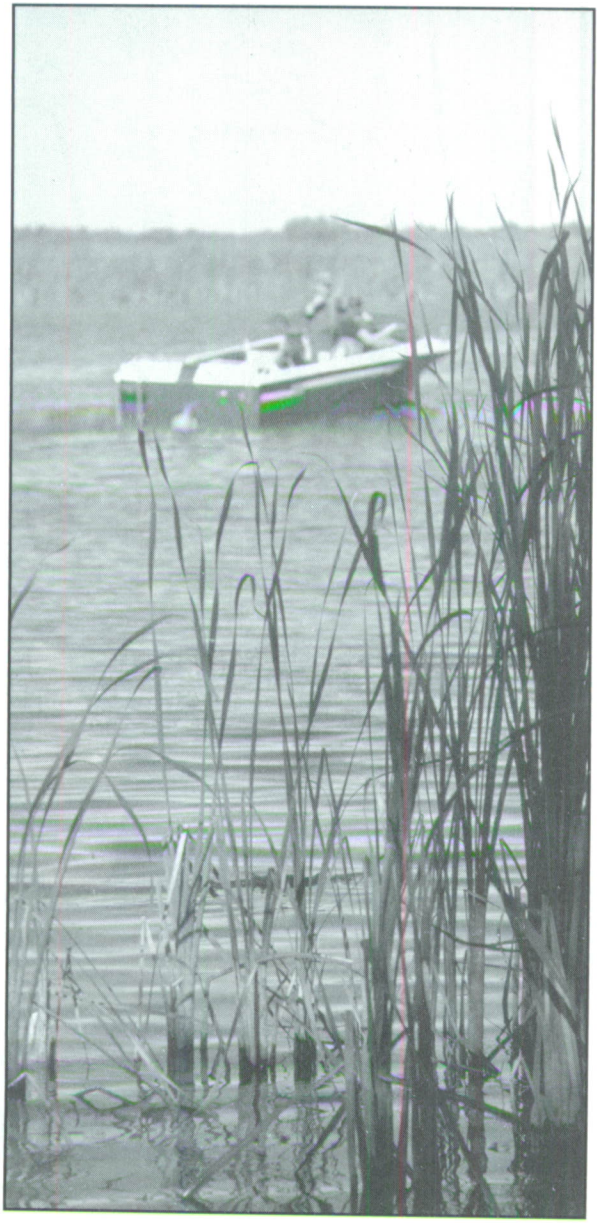
Chain O'Lakes

STATE PARK



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

Chain O'Lakes State Park

Located in the heart of Illinois' largest concentration of natural lakes, Chain O'Lakes State Park is a water-oriented recreation area with outstanding opportunities for boaters, anglers and skiers. The park borders three natural lakes — Grass, Marie and Nippersink — and the Fox River that connects the other seven lakes (Bluff, Fox, Pistakee, Channel, Petite, Catherine and Redhead) that make up the chain. In addition, the park contains a 44-acre lake within its boundaries.

The 2,793-acre state park and adjoining 3,230-acre conservation area are located in the northeastern corner of Illinois in McHenry and Lake counties. The park is 60 miles northwest of Chicago, 20 miles west of Lake Michigan and only 2 1/2 miles south of the Illinois/Wisconsin border. With access to nearly 6,500 acres of water and 488 miles of shoreline on the chain, Chain O'Lakes State Park is the heart of a water wonderland.

History

The Chain O'Lakes area was inhabited by central Algonquin tribes when Europeans first arrived in the mid-1600s. The predominant tribes in region at that time were the Miami, Mascouten and Potawatomi. These Native American groups led a semi-nomadic lifestyle and grew corn, hunted, fished and gathered wild plant foods.

Jolliet and Marquette passed through what today is Chain O'Lakes State Park in 1673 as they traveled the Fox River during their Illinois explorations. French trappers and traders were the first Europeans to explore the area. The first European settlement was at Fort Hill, near Mundelein, a large mound rising out of the prairie that native peoples used as a lookout point.

Chain O'Lakes became a state park in 1946 when the state made an initial purchase of 840 acres. In the 1930s, a Civilian Conservation Corps camp became the Chain O'Lakes Conservation Area. This land was incorporated into the state park in 1957.

Park Hours

Chain O'Lakes State Park is open every day except Christmas. Summer hours, observed May 1 through Oct. 31, are 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. During the winter, the park is open from 8 a.m. until sunset. The park is closed for all activities except hunting from the beginning of November through December. Hunting is by registration only.

Recycling

Please place all litter in trash cans. Special recycling receptacles for aluminum cans and glass bottles are located in the Honeysuckle Hollow camp area. Other recycling containers are available throughout the park.

Picnicking

The park features seven picnic areas with tables, grills, water fountains and toilets. The Oak Grove, Maple Grove and Oak Point areas have playground equipment. Oak Point, Oak Grove and Deer Path have shelters.

Trails

Chain O'Lakes has hiking, biking and horse trail systems, all of which can be used by cross-country skiers in the winter. The Nature's Way hiking trail starts at Oak Grove Picnic Area and is 2l/2 miles in length. The Pike Marsh North Picnic Area has a trail specifically designed for disabled users that is l/4-mile long. The park also features an equestrian trail with three loops that has a total length of 8 miles. Horses can be rented at the park or visitors can bring their own. A parking lot for horse trailers with access to the equestrian trail is located near the park entrance. A biking/hiking trail 6 miles in length can be accessed at any picnic area between the concession stand and the park office. Bike rentals are available.

Horse Rental

Horses can be rented at the park May through October. The horse corral is located at the west end of the park near the entrance. Hay rides also are available.

Camping

The park's Class A campground, with 150 sites, has electricity, disposal stations, flush toilets and shower houses. Chain O'Lakes three Class B campgrounds, with a total of 87 sites, have water, vault toilets and access to showers. The park accepts advance reservations for approximately 25 percent of its camping sites. There also is a youth group camping area that can accommodate up to 150 youngsters, which is available by advance reservations.

Rent-A-Camp

If you're a novice camper, Chain O'Lakes has two Rent-A-Camp units available. Each campsite comes with a tent or cabin, cots, fire extinguisher, light, broom, dust pan, charcoal grill, fire ring and picnic table.

Boating

There is no charge to launch boats at the park. However, the Fox Waterway Management Agency charges a user fee for all boats using lakes in the Chain, with stickers available at the park concession stand. While there are no horsepower limitations on boats using the Chain O'Lakes, only boats with electric trolling motors are allowed on Turner Lake, a 44-acre lake in the park.

Concession/Boat Rental

The park's concession stand is open April through mid-October and offers food, soft drinks, ice cream, ice, firewood, fishing equipment, baits and camping supplies. Bicycle, boat and canoe rentals also are available. The required safety equipment must be provided by the user or rented from the concessionaire. There is a 10-horsepower maximum on rental boats.

Fishing

Among the popular fish available to angles in the Chain O'Lakes are bluegill, largemouth bass, walleye, crappie, muskie, northern pike, bullhead, catfish, and yellow and white bass. Due to the marshy nature of much of the park' s shoreline, most fishing takes place from boats or fishing piers.

Hunting

Dove, waterfowl, archery deer and permit pheasant hunting are available at the park by registration only. A hunting fact sheet, containing all hunting regulations, is available at the park office.

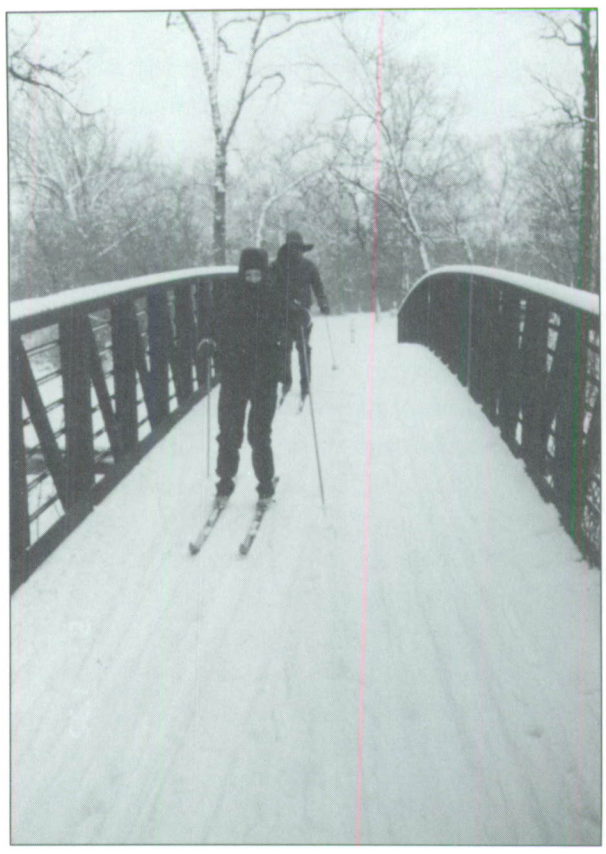
Winter Sports

Ice skating and ice fishing are popular activities when the temperature drops and the ice thickens. When snowfall is sufficient, cross-country skiers can use the horse trail, bike trail and Nature's Way trail. Sledding is another popular winter activity. Snowmobiling is not permitted in the park, but access to the frozen lake water is provided for snowmobile enthusiasts. During winter months, the park office doubles as a warmmg house.

Facilities for Disabled Visitors

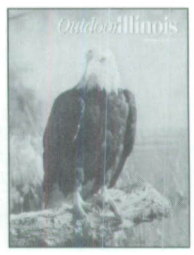
The Pike Marsh North picnic area and its l/4-mile hiking trail have been developed with disabled and elderly visitors in mind. We have 6 class A accessible sites.

For more information, contact Chain O'Lakes State Park, 8916 Wilmot Road, Spring Grove, IL 60081, (847) 587-5512.

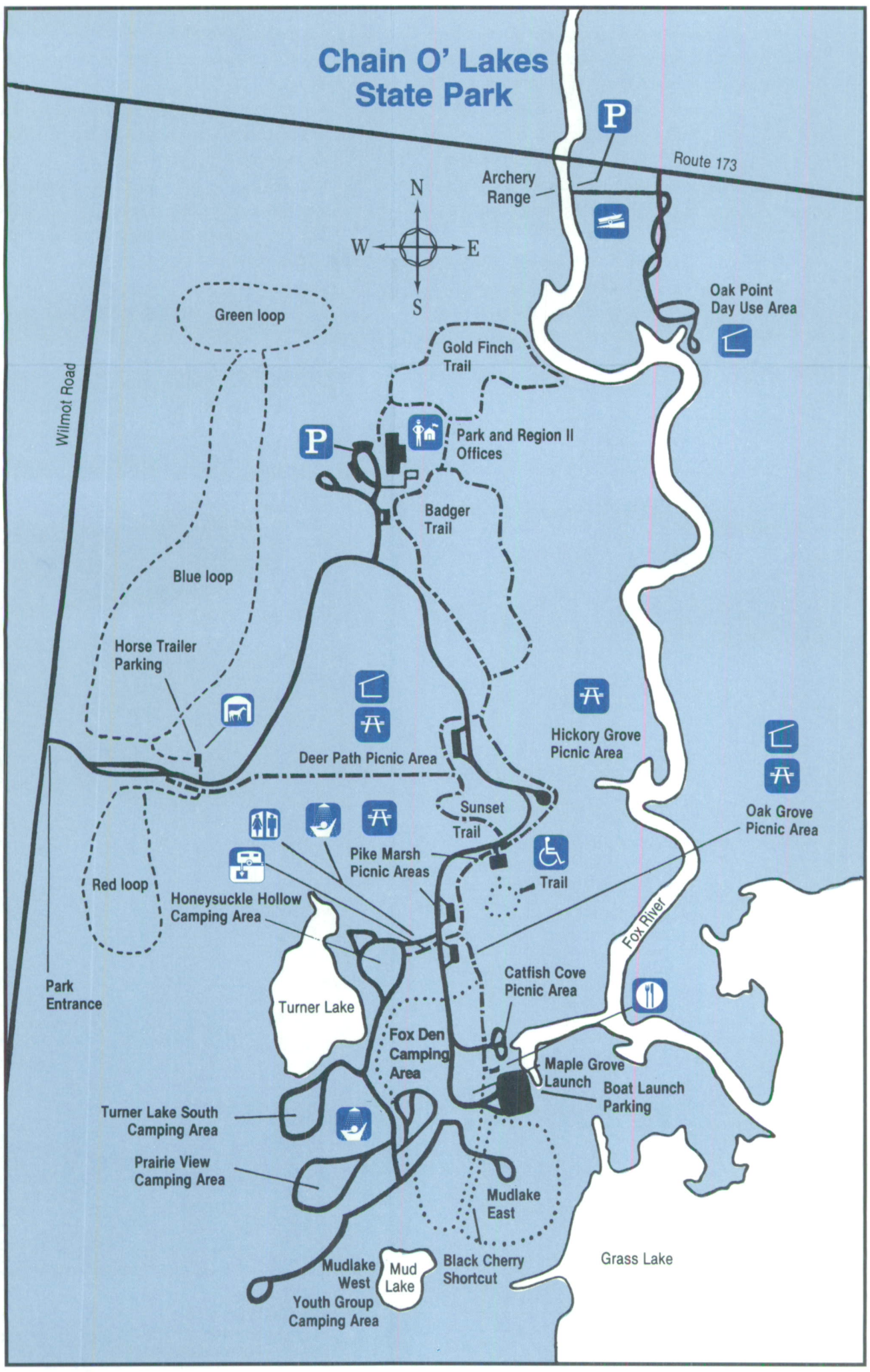


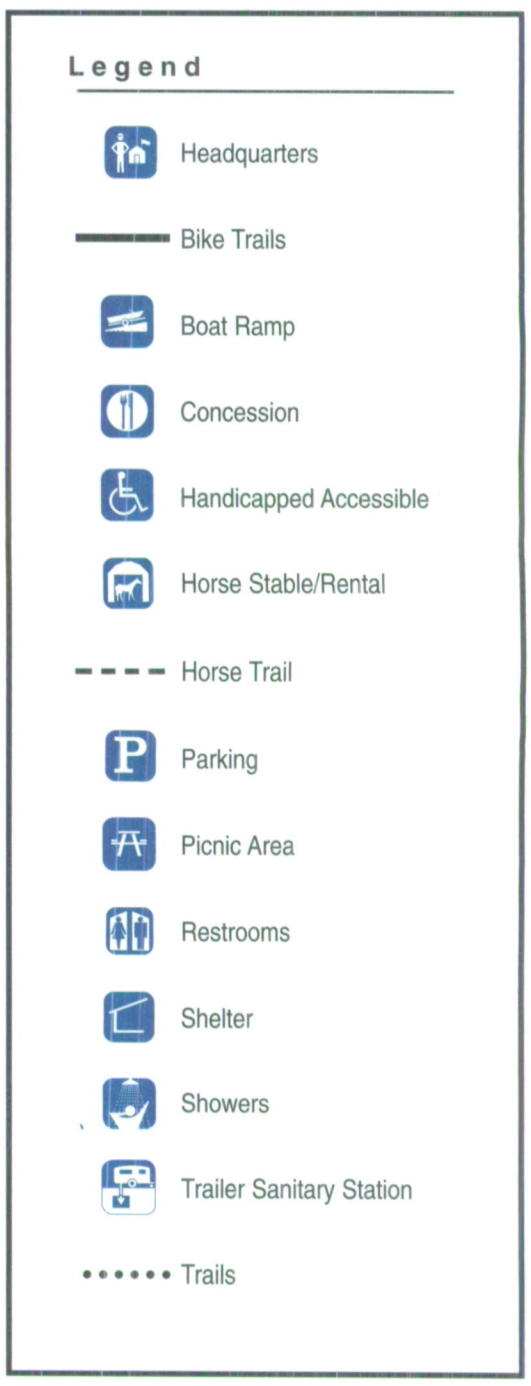
Keep Your Eye on Every Issue of *Outdoor Illinois*

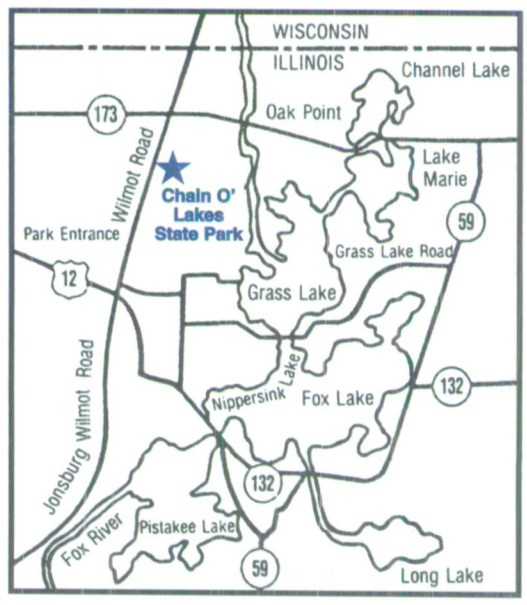
DNR's monthly magazine provides current news and articles on hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities, as well as information on the natural and cultural resources of Illinois.

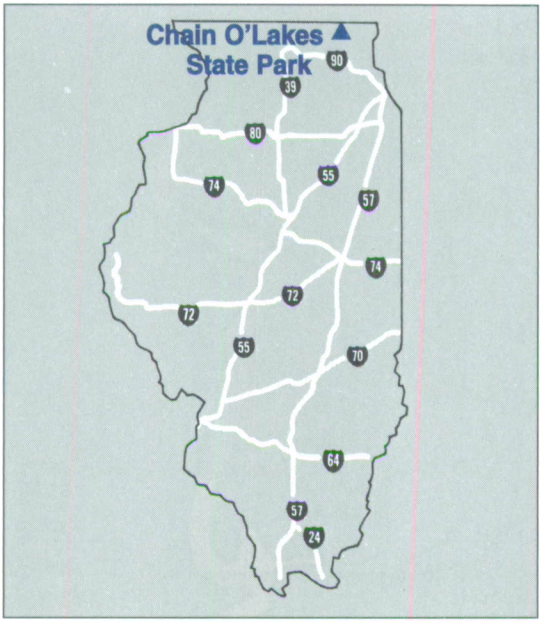


• A one-year subscription is only $10, and each December you'll receive a full-color calendar featuring important outdoor dates and events. To subscribe, contact DNR at (217) 782-7454. The TDD number is (217) 782-9175.









Chain O'Lakes State Park

8916 Wilmot Road
Spring Grove, IL 60081, 847-587-5512

- 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. Please call ahead to the park office before you make your trip.
- 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, Clearinghouse, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-6302 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 nonmerit 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 Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at (217) 782-7498 for assistance.

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