Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area

A tranquil setting, flowing rivers, and natural prairie land – the Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife Area has it all! Visitors will delight in the abundance of wildlife, restful picnic areas and variety of sport fishing species. Farmland and woodland, prairie and swamp, still water and shoreline offer unlimited opportunities for nature lovers and sportsmen.

History

Located ten miles south of Joliet and 55 miles southwest of Chicago in Will County, the site is accessible from Interstate 55 at mile marker No. 241, Wilmington exit. Prior to 1948 what is now called the Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife Area was owned by the federal government. The Illinois Department of Conservation acquired the site in 1948 and established its use as a recreation area. Additional land was accessed following the completion of Interstate 55 in the 1960's. From that time to 1975, the area was used primarily by hunters and unmanaged day use. The Office of Land management took over the area in 1976 and since then, extensive upgrading of facilities has occurred. In recent years, more than 350,000 people annually visit Des Plaines – an area of over 5,000 acres, with approximately 200 acres of water.

Picnicking

A restful break from hunting, fishing or hiking can be a special event at the Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife Area. Picnickers can choose to lunch along the Kankakee River or Milliken Lake. Both sites provide tables and stoves along with cooling shade trees and picturesque views. A playground area is also provided at the Milliken Lake site.

Fishing

Open water and ice fishing are popular events at the Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife Area – and productive! Milliken Lake, as well as several ponds and the river backwaters, provide panfish, catfish, and bass fishing. The Kankakee River borders the site on the south with 3 miles of shoreline providing access to boating enthusiasts and excellent walleye and northern pike fishing.

Hunting

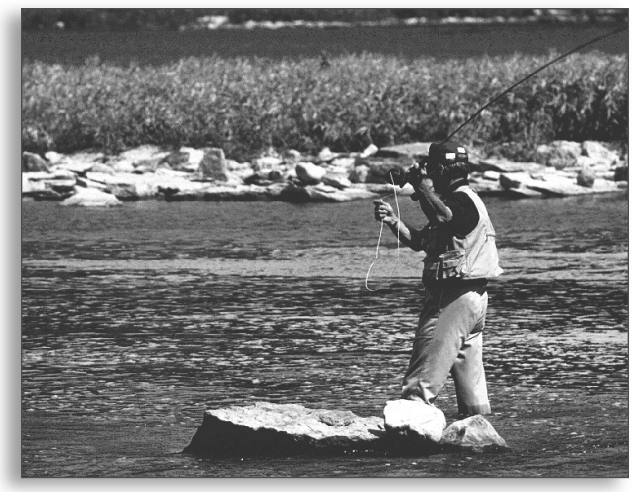
Pheasant hunting is the most popular choice for sportsmen at Des Plaines and the largest pheasant hunting (by permit only) facility in the state is located at the site. For variety, however, there are unlimited numbers of deer, rabbit, coyote and dove. All hunters are required to have permits and check in at the site office. Waterfowl hunting is available at the nearby Will County Waterfowl Management Area, with hunting blinds being allocated via drawings.

Boating

A public boat launch with two paved ramps is available on the Kankakee River for boating on the river or its backwaters. Motors are limited to 10 horsepower or less on the backwaters, but there are no limits on the Kankakee River. No boating is allowed on Milliken Lake.

Nature Preserve

Eighty acres of the Des Plaines Wildlife and Conservation Area make up a dedicated nature preserve which contains many remnants of the natural prairie of years past. The preserve is managed so it can protect and perpetuate this prairie heritage for future generations. Visitors are encouraged to view this area, but are reminded that all plants and animals here are protected and are not to be disturbed in any way.

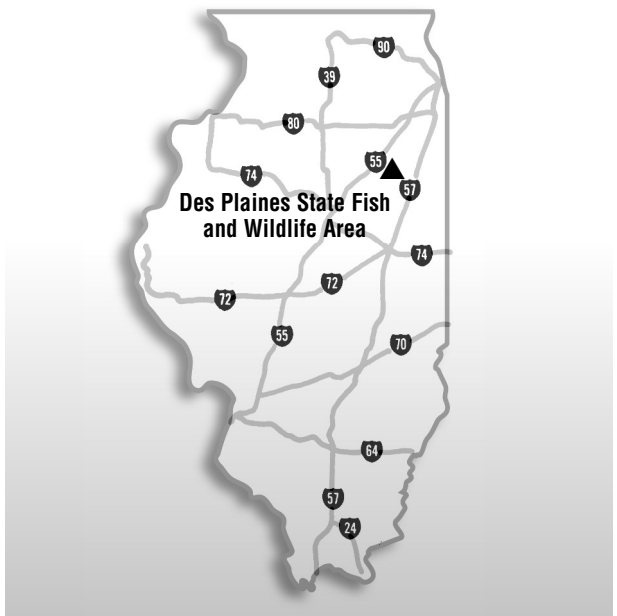


Exotic Species

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/Exotic Species/exoticspintro.htm

Recreational Trails Program

This trail brochure was made possible due to funding provided by the Federal Highway Administration through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Monies are funded through the Federal Motor Fuel Tax and administered through the National Recreational Trails Fund Act. Trail projects are sup-



Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area
24621 North River Road
Wilmington, IL 60481, (815) 423-5326

- 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 62702-1271, 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 sources 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.

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ported by the federal government, which provides up to 80% reimbursement of cost. State funds provide the balance of the funding for the projects. The trails program encourages trails management practices to serve a wide variety of trail users. The program is administered in Illinois by the Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Equestrian Trail

A 12 mile trail is open from mid-April through October. Weather and trail conditions may necessitate temporary closings throughout the year. Directional signs for the trail are posted and maps are available at the Trail Head parking lot, located just north of the main office.

Other

Two hand trap ranges and an archery range are open to the public daily except during pheasant hunting season. Sportsmen are welcome to practice and hone their skills so they will be ready to go on opening day.

The Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife Area is well known for numerous field trials and dog training events held throughout the year. The plentiful open areas, swampy backwater areas, and woodlands provide a perfect spot for all types of training. Whether you are training your animal or just being a spectator, these events can be a great way to spend a day or weekend outdoors.

For Your Information

Groups of 25 or more persons will not be admitted to any state site unless permission from the site superintendent has been obtained to use the facilities. In addition, groups of minors must have adequate supervision and at least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area

Legend

- Boundary
- Drinking Water
- Gravel Parking
- Main Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Vault Toilets
- Office
- Picnic Area
- Boat launch Area
- Handicap
- Fishing
- Equestrian Trail

Conroy Island
Des Plaines River
3 Rivers Marina
Levee
To Joliet
Frontage Road
I-55 to Joliet and Chicago
N
W
E
S
Grant Creek
To County Line Road
Blodgett Road
Equestrian Trail
Equestrian Trail Head Parking
Check Station/Office
Phillips Road
Archery Range
Natural Area
Hand Trap Ranges
Natural Area
KANKAEE RIVER
Vault Toilet
Prairie Creek
Rt. 53 to Joliet
55
Day-Use Area
Milliken Lake
Handicap Fishing
River Road
Field Trial Headquarters and Stable
Boathouse Road
Des Plaines Game Farm
To Bloomington
To Wilmington

55
59
Joliet
53
6
80
Channahon
Illinois River
Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area
Kankakee River
55
Wilmington