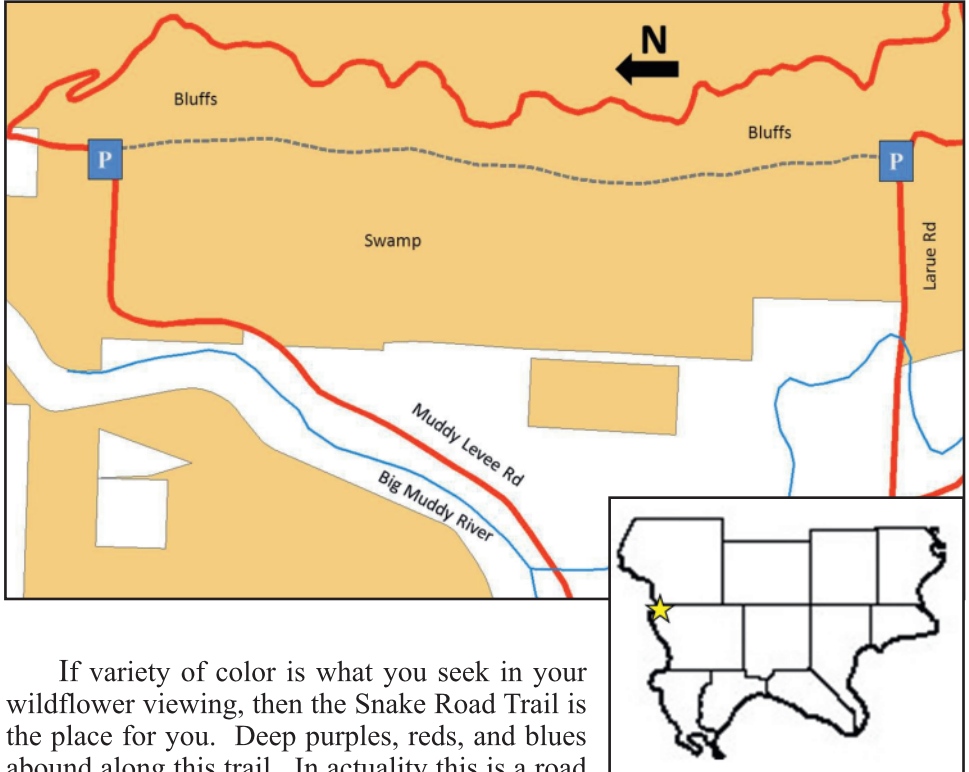


Snake Road Trail

Shawnee National Forest

2.5 mile - Easy Rating

Trailhead: 37.5455, -89.4394



If variety of color is what you seek in your wildflower viewing, then the Snake Road Trail is the place for you. Deep purples, reds, and blues abound along this trail. In actuality this is a road and not a trail, but every spring and fall the Shawnee National Forest closes down this road to protect reptiles and amphibians migrating between the bluffs and swamps that border this amazing road. While this site is best known for the animal life, it has an amazing display of spring wildflowers as well. This is an easy hike, though it is not a loop. For those wanting to walk the entire length of the closed portion, two vehicles, one parked at each end, is your best bet. In the spring this trail gets a lot of use, mainly from people looking for snakes. You'll have an excellent opportunity to see cottonmouths, water snakes, green snakes, and a myriad of frogs and salamanders. In fact, 65% of all reptile and amphibian species in Illinois can be found at this one site. Collecting of any kind is not allowed.

As for wildflowers, the displays of dwarf larkspur and woodland phlox are some of the best in southern Illinois. Keep an eye on the bluff and take a few of the well worn paths going along the base to see species such as the beautiful wild hyacinth and wild columbine.

Higher up on the bluff, you can see displays of cleft phlox clinging to the rocks. Ohio buckeyes, one of our tree species with very showy flowers, is found along this trail as well. The Snake Road Trail is part of the LaRue Pine Hills area of the Shawnee National Forest, which has the distinction of being the most botanically rich area in Illinois and perhaps in the entire country. The parking lot on the south end of the Snake Road provides the best access to wildflower viewing. It can be easily accessed from Route 3, either south of Murphysboro or north of Jonesboro. From Route 3, follow the signs to LaRue Pine Hills. Be sure to also check out the small road leading from the parking lot south to Otter Pond, as the best displays of bluebells can be found along this path.

Notable wildflowers present at site

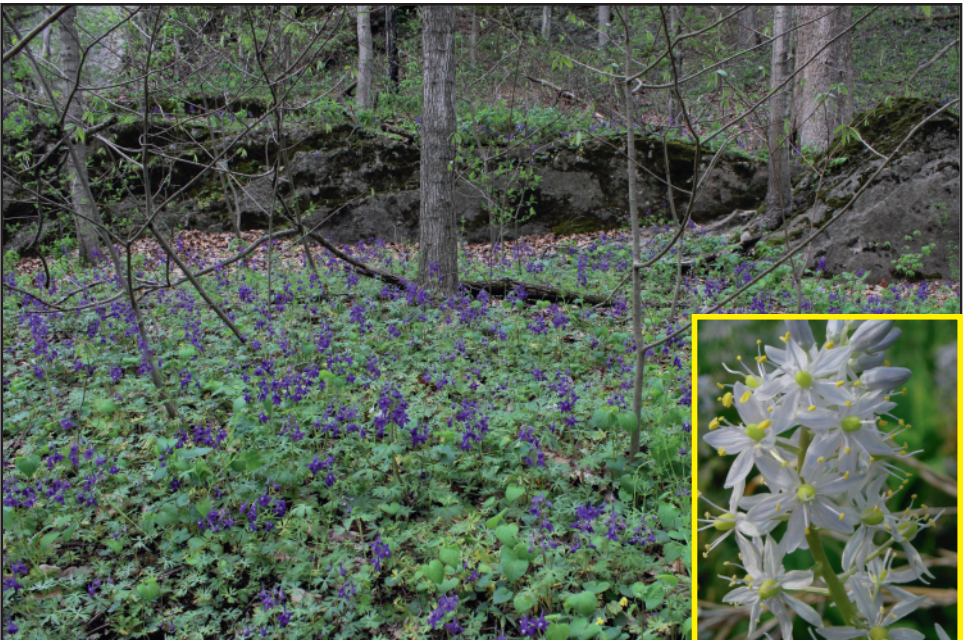
Dwarf larkspur
Delphinium tricorne

Woodland phlox
Phlox divaricata

Wild hyacinth
Camassia scilloides

Miami mist
Phacelia purshii

Virginia bluebells
Mertensia virginiana



Dwarf larkspur in full bloom. Wild hyacinth (inset)