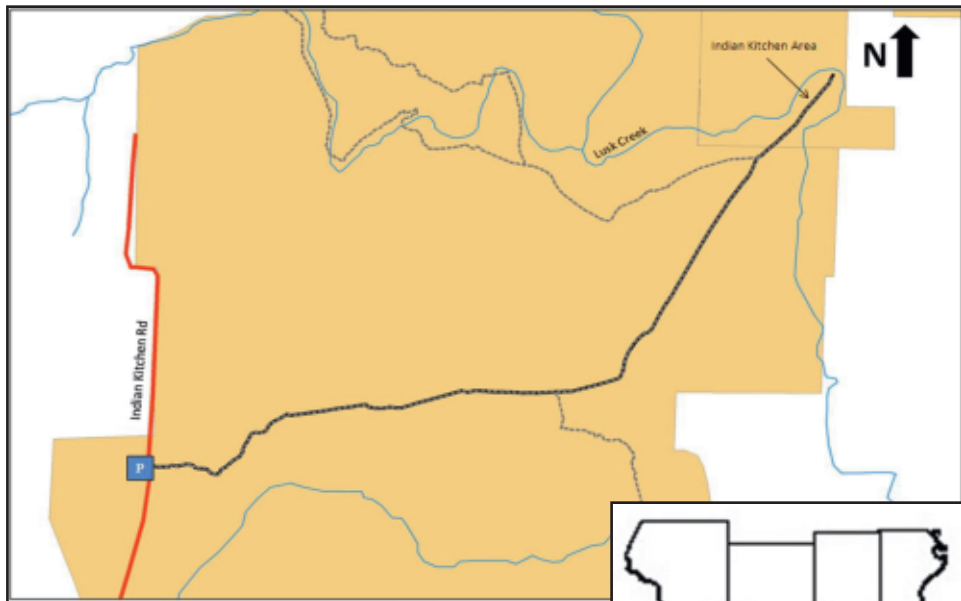


# Indian Kitchen Trail

Shawnee National Forest

3.2 mile - Moderate Rating

Trailhead: 37.5060, -88.5609



One unusual thing about this site is that it is a state-owned Nature Preserve in the middle of the Shawnee National Forest in Pope County. This is a good thing, since Illinois Nature Preserves receive the highest level of protection designated by state law and federally owned land cannot become an Illinois Nature Preserve. In fact, this site has a unique success story in that it was saved from a project to create a reservoir by placing a dam along Lusk Creek before its dedication as an Illinois Nature Preserve. Now the waterway is being proposed as a National Wild and Scenic River.

The area called Lusk Creek Canyon Nature Preserve is also called Indian Kitchen and it is within the Lusk Creek Wilderness Area. There are many neat spots in this wilderness area, but the Indian Kitchen area is the most botanically interesting, due partly to the protection the site receives for being a nature preserve. Lusk Creek carved a horseshoe-shaped canyon that contains many disjunct species and glacial relicts, and it is one of very few remaining high quality streams in the entire state. The exposed rock areas contain species adapted to dry conditions, such as prickly pear, widow's

cross, and partridgeberry. Large clumps of water willow occur along the shallow margins of Lusk Creek. The views are superior high upon the cliffs, and toward the southern end of the canyon is a hanging shelter bluff. This spot can accommodate a dozen hikers and is a perfect place for a mid-hike snack.

There are two ways to approach Lusk Creek Canyon. The easiest way is to drive to the parking lot along Indian Kitchen Road near Eddyville and hike east on trail 433 about two miles to the nature preserve. The trail can be muddy and mainly goes through pine plantations and low quality forest, but it's worth the effort. There is a large staging area for horses once you reach the entrance to the nature preserve. Return on the same trail back to your vehicle.

## Notable wildflowers present at site

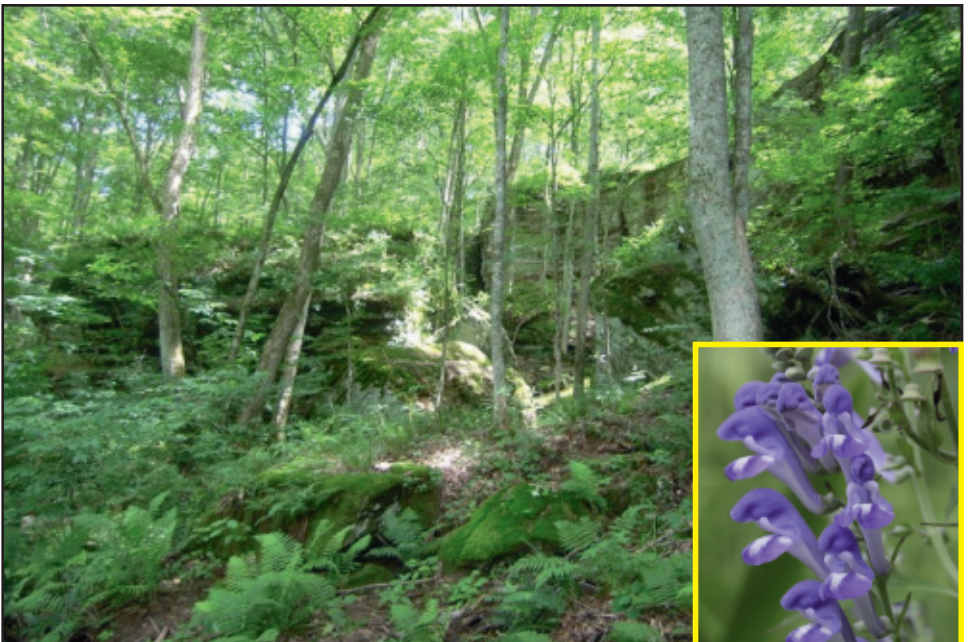
Downy skullcap  
*Scutellaria incana*

Partridgeberry  
*Mitchella repens*

Prickly pear  
*Opuntia humifusa*

Shrubby St. Johnswort  
*Hypericum prolificum*

Water willow  
*Justicia americana*



Forested bluffs along Lusk Creek. Downy skullcap (inset)