

Guide to Summer Wildflower Hikes in Southern Illinois



Illinois Native Plant Society
- Southern Chapter

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All photos and text by Chris Benda and Chris Evans

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Cover photo: Spiderlily, *Hymenocallis caroliniana*, a beautiful wildflower that can be found in bloom in later summer in bottomland forests in southern Illinois
Back photo: Goat's rue, *Tephrosia virginiana*, a summer wildflower found in open woodlands and barrens across southern Illinois

Introduction

Summer is a great time to get outdoors in southern Illinois. You can find beautiful summer wildflowers growing in most habitat types in southern Illinois. As with spring wildflowers, rich, moist woods are home to many beautiful summer-flowering species. In addition, open habitats, such as barrens, woodlands, and glades are great places to see spectacular wildflower displays in the summer. Many of these sites are now being protected and managed by state or federal agencies and have been designated as state nature preserves or research natural areas. To help protect sensitive species and preserve the sites for the enjoyment of others, please remain on marked trails.

Through a grant from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund, the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society has produced this guide to summer wildflower hikes in southern Illinois as a follow-up to the very successful Guide to Spring Wildflower Hikes in Southern Illinois (Evans and Benda 2013). This guide was designed to highlight the best summer wildflower viewing opportunities and the seven sites described are all on public lands, have well-marked trails and are relatively easily accessible.

The guide includes a written description of each trail, a list of notable summer wildflowers found at the site, trail distance, difficulty rating and a trail map. When multiple trails are shown on the map, we highlight the suggested trail in black. Driving directions are included in the text and coordinates for the trailheads are given for GPS users. On the trail maps, the hiking trails are marked with a gray dashed line and public land is beige in color.

While this is not a field guide, instructing the reader on how to identify the wildflowers, a small section is included to show fifteen of the most common wildflowers that you are likely to observe during the summer at any of the included locations. To learn more about the identification of summer wildflowers or just to enjoy our native plants in general, please consider getting involved with the Illinois Native Plant Society. The Southern Illinois Chapter is very active, hosting meetings and guided hikes throughout the year. Information on the Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society can be found on our website at www.ill-inps.org or by sending us an email to southernillinoisplants@gmail.com. Also, please "like" us on facebook at www.facebook.com/southernillinoisplants.

A Note on Invasive Plants

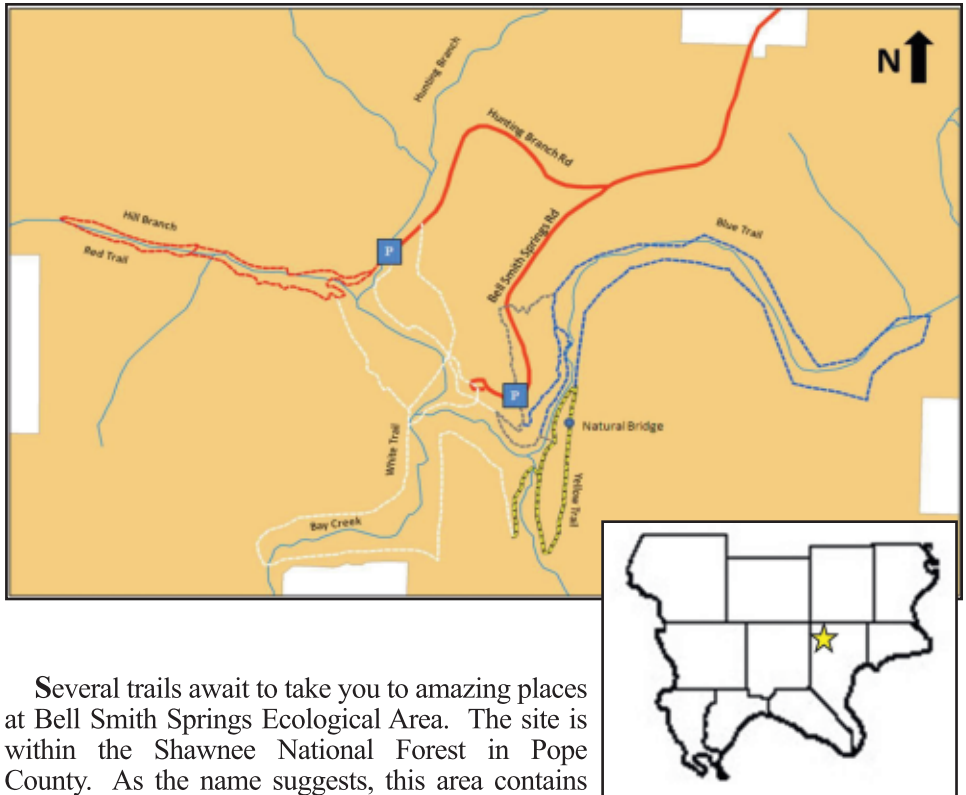
Invasive plants, species not native to the natural ecosystems of southern Illinois, can have a devastating effect on our native wildflowers. Unfortunately, sometimes people unintentionally introduce these species into our natural areas through seeds on their clothing or in mud on their shoes. To help prevent this from happening, we ask that everyone hiking on these trails makes sure their clothing and footwear are free of any seeds or mud before taking the hike.

Bell Smith Springs Trails

Shawnee National Forest

Various hike distances - Moderate-Difficult Rating

Trailhead: 37.5193, -88.6576



Several trails await to take you to amazing places at Bell Smith Springs Ecological Area. The site is within the Shawnee National Forest in Pope County. As the name suggests, this area contains several springs, which provide the turquoise color to the water of Bay Creek. Over 700 species of plants are known from the site, including many rare species such as French's shooting star. Also notable at this site is a large natural bridge, a rock staircase built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's, and an iron rung ladder up the side of a cliff.

Of the many trail options for exploration, two are worth mentioning. The first one is the blue trail. From the main parking lot, take the path downhill and follow the blue trail to the east (left). After a few miles the trail descends down to Bay Creek. This is a tricky water crossing that is sometimes impassable during periods of high water in the spring. The trail continues straight up the rocky cliff on the other side of the creek and joins a footpath at the top of the bluff. This part of the trail takes you back along Bay Creek in the other direction. Look for partridgeberry and clubmoss here, growing low to the ground. Enjoy the hike along the beautiful cliffs and canyons, and stop at the many scenic overlooks. When in doubt, follow the trail to the left at any junctures. This trail will lead to the top of the natural bridge where an iron rung ladder provides for a fun way to descend the cliff. Alternatively, go back to the last split in the trail and follow the other path which will lead to the base of the

natural bridge. From the natural bridge, follow the trail down to Bay Creek and use the rock stepping stones to get back to the other side. A rock staircase will lead you back to the parking lot at the top of the bluff. Another option is to drive to the short road off of Bell Smith Springs Road that leads down the hill to a creek called the Hunting Branch, where there is a picnic area. Cross the hunting branch near the parking area and follow the red trail to a large sandstone pavement area along a drainage known as Hill Branch. This wide open area is a natural community called a sandstone glade and the sandstone chute is a good place to see wildflowers such as cardinal flower and buttonbush.

While in the area, you may wish to visit another outstanding site nearby called Burden Falls, the tallest cascading waterfall in the state. It makes for a wonderful and easy side trip after your visit to Bell Smith Springs.

Notable wildflowers present at site

Cardinal flower
Lobelia cardinalis

Smooth phlox
Phlox glaberrima

St. Andrew's cross
Ascryum multicaule

Star tickseed
Coreopsis pubescens

Superb lily
Lilium superbum



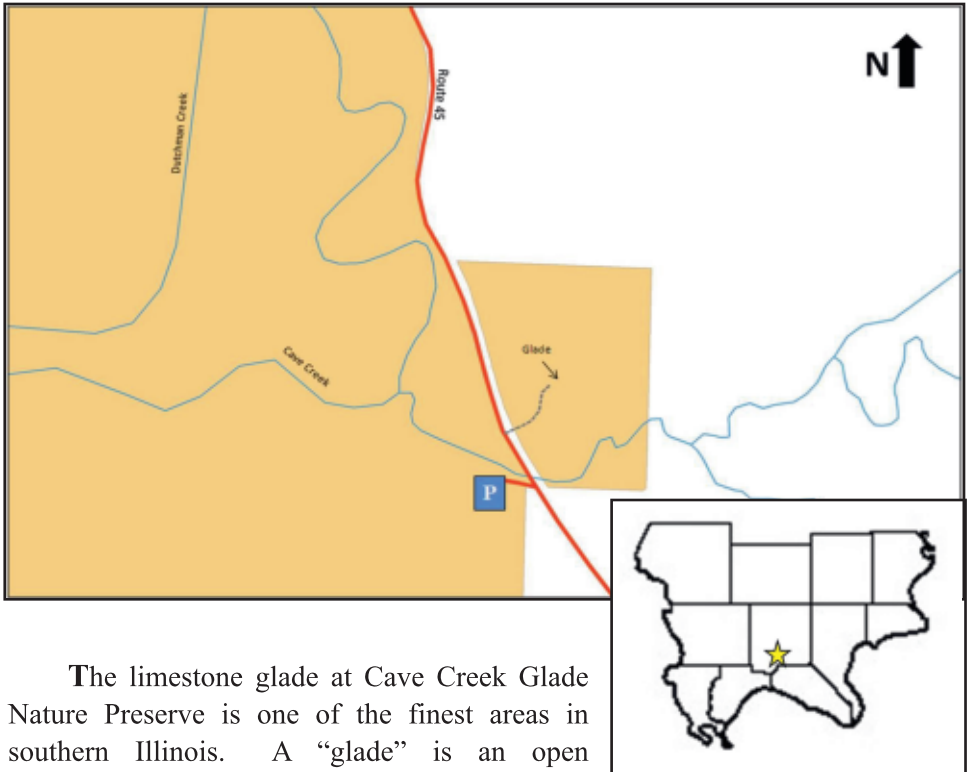
Swimming hole. Cutleaf coneflower (inset)

Cave Creek Glade Trail

Cache River State Natural Area

0.2 mile Round Trip - Difficult Rating

Trailhead: 37.3575, -88.8856



The limestone glade at Cave Creek Glade Nature Preserve is one of the finest areas in southern Illinois. A “glade” is an open community, often devoid of trees, that contains sun-loving perennial plants such as prairie dock, gray-headed coneflower, frostweed, wild petunia, and several species of milkweeds. Scattered chinquapin oaks dot the glade and outstanding views to the west and south can be had from the top of the glade. An abundance of yellow pimpernel grows on the top of the glade along with the uncommon dwarf hackberry. Notable is the state threatened blue sage that can be found mid-slope next to the path. Many limestone obligate plants occur on the glade such as marbleseed, purple cliffbrake fern, and gray-headed coneflower. Other interesting plants include aromatic aster, American agave, spiderwort, obedient plant, and hairy lip fern.

This Illinois Nature Preserve is owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and is part of the Cache River State Natural Area in Johnson County. Natural resources staff and volunteers have performed extensive restoration work at this glade, including frequent prescribed fire. This type of management

keeps the glade clear of shrubs and promotes the growth of herbaceous plants. This is particularly beneficial to pale purple coneflowers, which provide a burst of pink in June. This spectacular wildflower explosion is one of the best nature scenes in southern Illinois.

This site is located south of Vienna along Highway 45. A small parking lot is located on the west side of Highway 45 and south of Cave Creek. Go over the bridge and cross the road to access the glade. There is no trail at this natural area, but a small path leads up to the top. The soil is very loose so use care and stay on the path. The glade can also be very hot and dry in the summer months so be sure to bring some water and a sturdy pair of boots.

Notable wildflowers present at site

Blue sage

Salvia azurea var. *grandiflora*

Prairie dock

Silphium terebinthinaceum

Gray-headed coneflower

Ratibida pinnata

Pale purple coneflower

Echinacea simulata

Yellow pimpernel

Taenidia integerrima



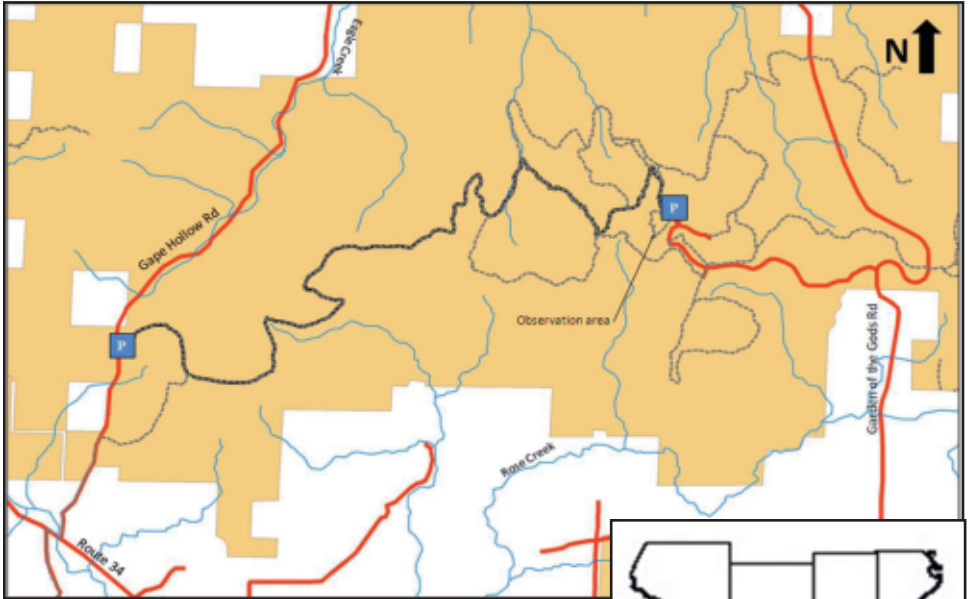
Pale purple coneflower in bloom on the glade. Blue sage (inset)

Garden of the Gods Trail

Shawnee National forest

5.5 mile - Moderate Rating

Trailhead: 37.6049, -88.3846



This large site is one of seven wilderness areas within the Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois. The majority of this area is within Saline County, but also includes Gallatin, Hardin, and Pope counties. This is probably the most visited site within the Shawnee National Forest and the main feature is the observation area called Garden of the Gods. The views of the sandstone outcrops in the observation area are unparalleled in southern Illinois. One can see a rolling terrain of trees stretch for miles in several directions without hardly a sign of manmade structures. The iconic “Camel Rock” is in this area.

While there are numerous trails that penetrate the heart of the wilderness, the must-do hike is the 5.5-mile trail from Herod to the parking lot of the observation area. This trail is not a loop so you will need to leave a vehicle at the end or arrange for a ride back to your vehicle. North of the small town of Herod is a parking lot on the west side of Gape Hollow Road, and the trail starts here. Cross the road and shortly after you will enter the wilderness area. There are many beautiful cliffs and scenic views along this trail, and all the trail intersections are marked. At the first juncture follow the River-to-River trail to the left (east). After a long climb uphill, the trail follows an escarpment where several great picnic spots are available, providing expansive views to the east. The trail descends and at the next juncture the River-to-River trail goes right,

but for the more scenic route take a left. Walk through the bottom of the canyon and admire the tall cliffs on both sides. At the next juncture, take the trail right. Just before ascending another hill, look up to the left for “H-Rock,” another well-known feature in this area. The sandstone arch is quite remarkable. Four trails come together at the next intersection. Follow the trail left to the observation parking lot and follow the remaining trails to the right. One more climb takes hikers past “Anvil Rock” and back to the parking lot at the observation area. No matter which trail you hike, be sure to leave the observation area and explore the wilderness.

Another notable hike in this area is the Indian Point Trail. This starts at the backpacker’s parking lot which is the first area encountered on the entrance road. The 2-mile loop trail takes the traveler along the base of the cliffs and along the top of the bluff, providing outstanding views along the way. Nearby in the seep springs, green fringed orchids can be found.

Notable wildflowers present at site

Pencil flower
Stylosanthes biflora

Slender bush clover
Lespedeza virginica

Spider lily
Hymenocallis caroliniana

Wild hydrangea
Hydrangea arborescens

Wild rose
Rosa carolina



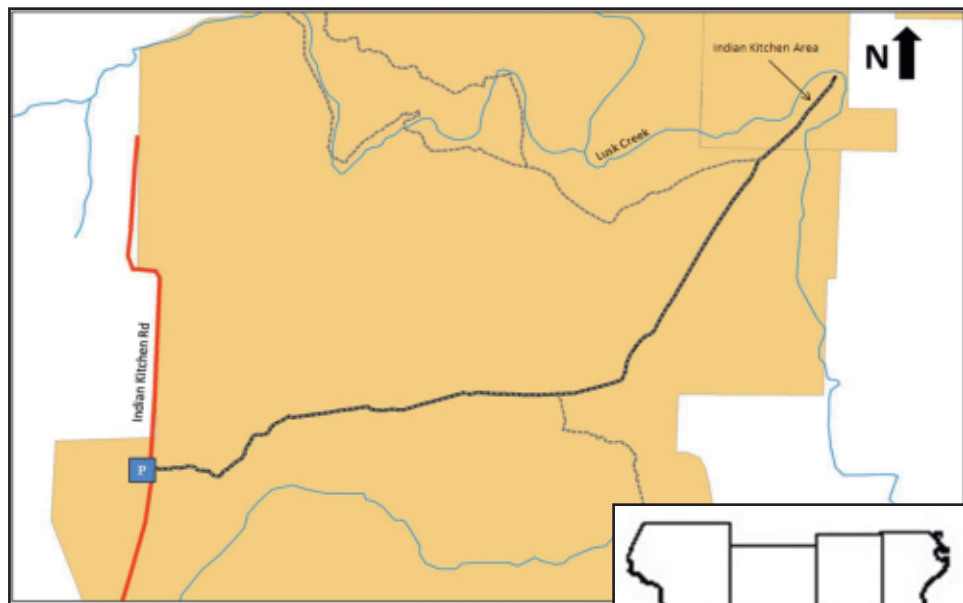
Camel rock. Wilderness sign (right inset)
H-rock (left inset)

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

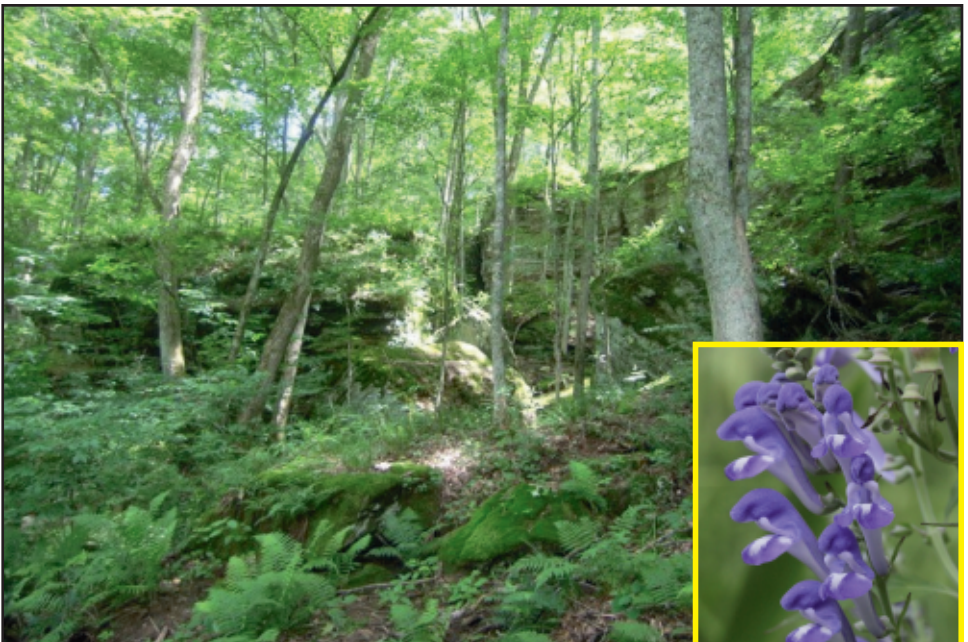
Downy skullcap
Scutellaria incana

Partridgeberry
Mitchella repens

Prickly pear
Opuntia humifusa

Shrubby St. Johnswort
Hypericum prolificum

Water willow
Justicia americana



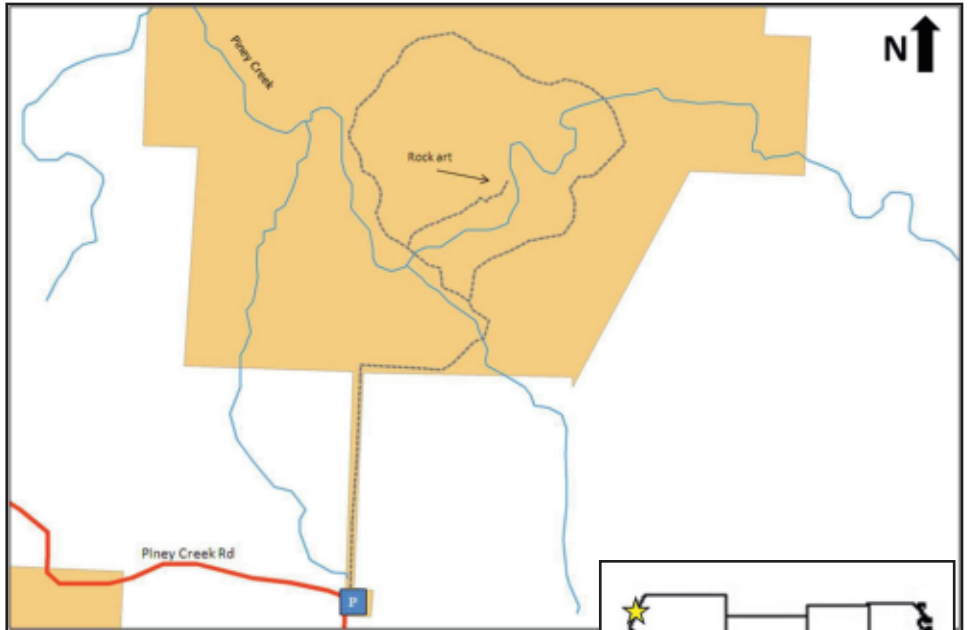
Forested bluffs along Lusk Creek. Downy skullcap (inset)

Piney Creek Ravine Trail

Piney Creek Ravine Nature Preserve

1.2 mile Round Trip - Moderate Rating

Trailhead: 37.8904, -89.6382



Piney Creek Ravine Nature Preserve is a beautiful sandstone canyon located in Randolph County. It is an Illinois Nature Preserve owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. This site is distinct in that it is one of only two sites in southern Illinois

with naturally occurring stands of the state endangered shortleaf pine. All other pine trees found in southern Illinois have been planted or escaped from a nearby plantation. Piney Creek Ravine is also interesting because it contains Native American rock art. A majority of the rock art has been defaced, much of it by early settlers, but some of the artwork is still intact. An interpretative sign near the area explains its history and significance.

The diversity of natural communities here provides habitat for the over 400 species of plants that are known from the area. For some species, this is the only place they occur in Randolph County. The trail starts as an access lane that leads north from the parking lot. Turn right to find a boot brush station and sign where the trail enters the forest and leads into the ravine. Heading down the trail, it is best to follow it to the left at the first juncture and then cross the creek. Shortly after turn right to go to the area with the cliff



drawings. This is a dead end so go back once you have thoroughly appreciated the beautiful prehistoric art. As you head back, take the trail to the right, which will loop around back to the first trail juncture. This route will take you through the remnant stand of naturally occurring shortleaf pine. There is a dead end trail that is not on the map that is easy to accidentally follow, so be sure to pay attention to the trail signs.

To get to this area, follow the brown signs from Highway 3 near Rockwood, Illinois. Hog Hill Road will lead to Piney Creek Road and the nature preserve parking lot is on the right.

Notable wildflowers present at site

American agave
Manfreda virginica

Blue-stem goldernrod
Solidago caesia

Monkeyflower
Mimulus alatus

Orange jewelweed
Impatiens capensis

Seedbox
Ludwigia alternifolia



Piney Creek. Rock art (upper inset) Monkeyflower (left inset)

Simpson Township Barrens Area

Shawnee National Forest

No defined trails - Easy Rating

Parking: 37.4797, -88.7394



Near the small town of Simpson in Johnson County, Simpson Township Barrens features high quality woodlands and limestone glades. A diversity of prairie and woodland plant species abound in these communities. Shrubby sundrops and quillwort grow in the small ephemeral drainages, the prairie-like openings called glades contain rattlesnake master and blazing stars, and the woodlands in between are loaded with interesting wildflowers like indian physic, Sampson's snakeroot, butterfly pea, wild petunia, New Jersey tea, goat's rue, and several species of milkweeds. This site is among the most botanically rich natural areas in southern Illinois. It is the most frequently burned site within the Shawnee National Forest and it shows.

To access this area, it is best to park in the small pulloff on the east side of Trigg Tower Road and cross the road to hike in the woodlands on the west side. There are no trails in this area, but the woodlands are generally open and easy to walk through. The ease of cross country travel depends on how much time has passed since the last prescribed burn. Small oak trees can occur in moderate density, discouraging hikers, but there is usually an easy way around. In general, the woodlands occur on a moderate south-facing slope, with numerous glade openings scattered throughout, just look for the patches of prairie grasses like big

bluestem, and the tall spikes of blazing stars. On the east side of the road is another large limestone glade. This area is much more open and contains prairie species like butterfly milkweed, rosinweed, and prairie indian plantain.

To get to the site, take Highway 147 north from Highway 146 in Vienna. Shortly after the highway turns to the east, turn north (left) on Trigg Tower Road and follow until you reach a small pulloff next to a sign and a wooden fence. While in the area, you may wish to visit Trigg Tower, an old fire tower along Trigg Tower Road at the top of the hill, north of Simpson Township Barrens. A portion of the fire tower remains and it provides stunning views of the Shawnee National Forest from the top.

Notable wildflowers present at site

Butterfly pea
Clitoria mariana

Indian physic
Porteranthus stipulatus

Rattlesnake master
Eryngium yuccifolium

Variiegated milkweed
Asclepias variegata

Wild petunia
Ruellia humilis



Barrens. Gray-headed coneflower (inset)

Stoneface Trail

Shawnee National Forest

2 mile - Moderate Rating

Trailhead: 37.6612, -88.4381



Stoneface Research Natural Area is named after a prominent rock feature that looks like the head of an old man. Within the Shawnee National Forest in Saline County, this site is easy to access and close to Harrisburg, Illinois. It is one of ten Research Natural Areas in the Shawnee National Forest. This special designation means this area contains one of the finest examples of natural ecosystems and is set aside for the purposes of scientific study and education and for maintenance of biological diversity.

Stoneface is located in the Eagle Mountains, which is an escarpment created by the Shawneetown Fault system. The escarpment is a prominent feature because it rises abruptly from the flat valley, which was a large lake during post-glacial times. In addition to Stoneface, two other natural areas occur along this escarpment; north of Stoneface is Cave Hill Ecological Area and south of Stoneface is Dennison Hollow Research Natural Area.

From Harrisburg, take Highway 145 south. Turn left (east) on Whitesville Road (Route 5) and follow to Stoneface Road. The entrance road to the small parking lot is on the right. Follow the trail from the parking lot to the cliff edge. At the trail split, follow the trail to the left which will lead north along

the base of the escarpment. In less than a half mile the trail continues up the rock face to the top of the bluff. This climb can be challenging for some, but the views from the top are rewarding. Be sure to notice the succulent plant along the cliffs; it is a rare kind of Sedum called American orpine.

Once on top of the bluff, go right and follow the trail south. Many species of dry-adapted plants grow on the sandstone such as pencil flower, blazing star, and wild quinine. Upon reaching the powerline cut, you can turn around and go back the way you came or continue across the clearing. The trail will descend the bluff and turn to the right (north) to take you back to the parking lot.

Notable wildflowers present at site

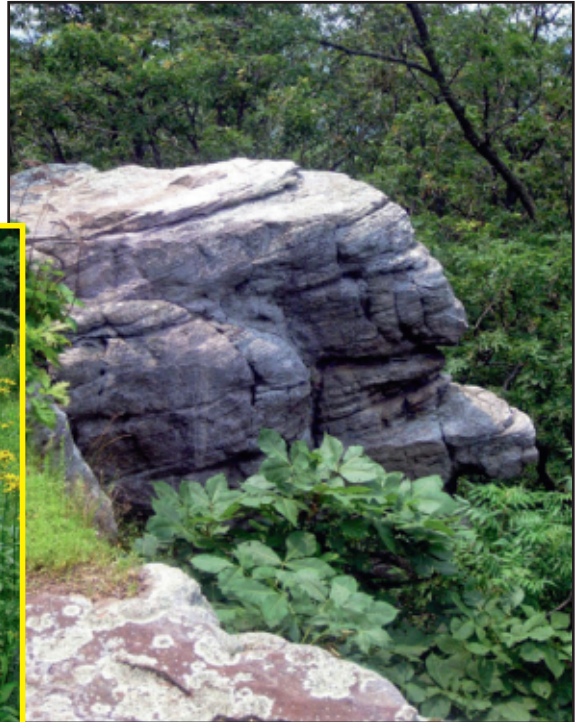
Blazing star
Liatris squarrosa

Goat's rue
Tephrosia virginiana

Indian pink
Spigelia marilandica

Starry campion
Silene stellata

Wild quinine
Parthenium integrifolium



Stonface (above). Yellow wingstem (left)

Common Summer Wildflowers in Southern Illinois

Many species of wildflowers can be found blooming in the summertime in southern Illinois. Some are rare and not often seen or restricted to a very specific type of habitat. Others are common and can be found in many different locations. Here are fifteen wildflower species that you are likely to encounter in southern Illinois.



Common milkweed
Asclepias syriaca



Butterfly milkweed
Asclepias tuberosa



Pale purple coneflower
Echinacea simulata



Woodland sunflower
Helianthus divaricata



Orange jewelweed
Impatiens capensis



Rough blazingstar
Liatris aspera



Cardinal flower
Lobelia cardinalis



Bee balm
Monarda bradburiana



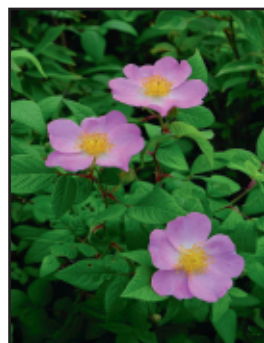
Garden phlox
Phlox paniculata



Indian physic
Porteranthus stipulatus



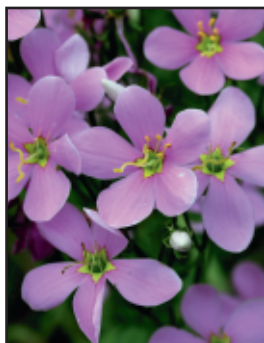
Gray-headed coneflower
Ratibida pinnata



Prairie rose
Rosa setigera



Wild petunia
Ruellia humilis



Common rose pink
Sabatia angularis



Indian pink
Spigelia marilandica



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