

Piney Creek Ravine

N A T U R E P R E S E R V E



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

Piney Creek Ravine Nature Preserve

West of Du Quoin and south of Steeleville on the Randolph-Jackson County line is a unique 198-acre area known as Piney Creek Ravine Nature Preserve. Purchased in 1972 for its rare plant species and other natural features, it is one of only two locations in the state where short-leaf pines grow naturally.

Hiking

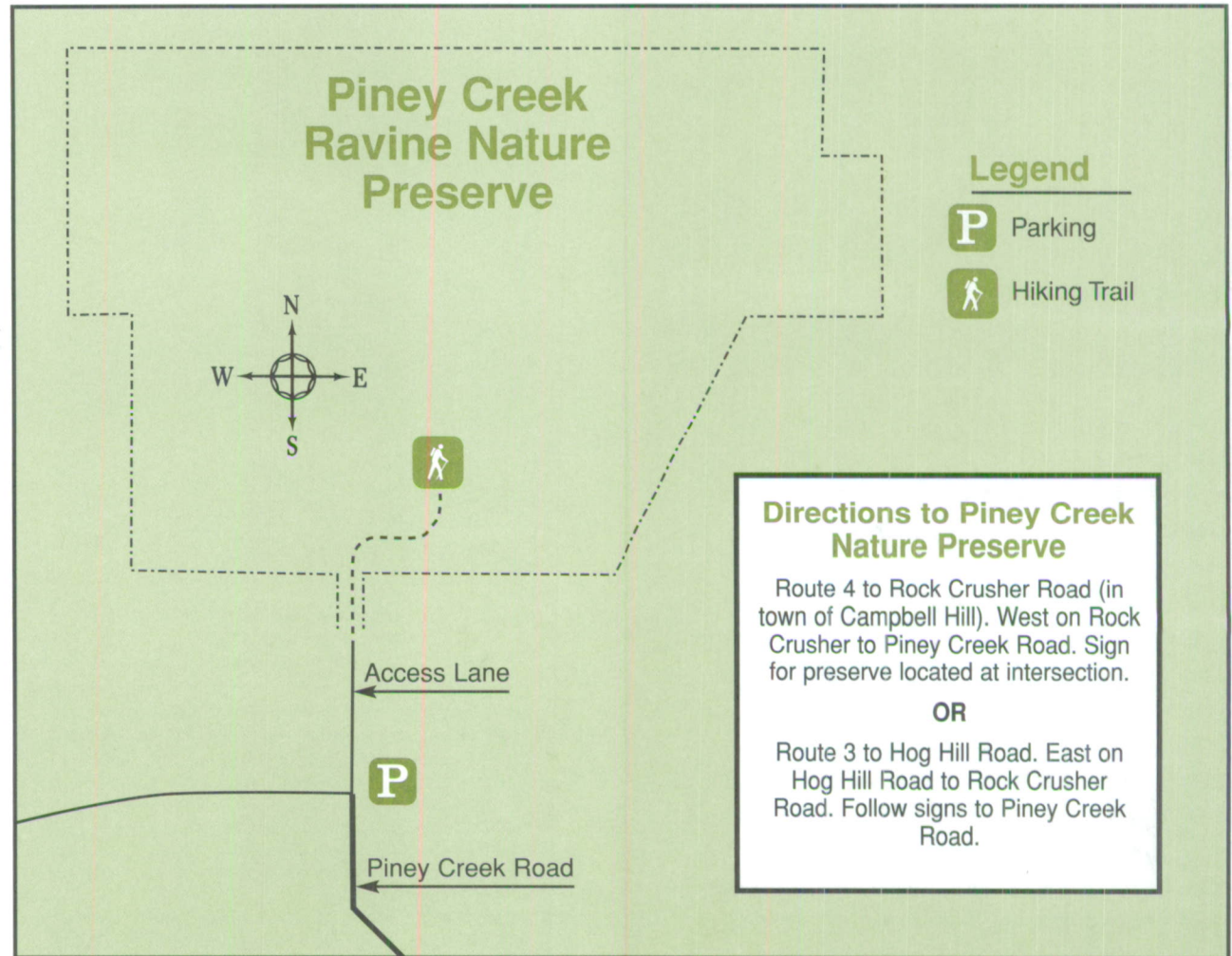
A hiking trail that winds along the top of a bluff overlooking the creek crosses scenic Piney Creek. The trail is especially beautiful in the autumn when fall colors abound, and also in the winter, when the leafless trees allow unobstructed viewing into the ravine below.

Natural Features

Plants at Piney Creek are more typically northern in distribution, as well as Ozarkian southern species. Differing habitat types also contribute to the general diversity of Piney Creek Ravine. Communities range from dry, exposed bluff associations, dominated by post oak, blackjack oak and American agave, to moist ravine forests with splendid spring wildflowers and sandy stream banks with a variety of moisture-loving plants, such as sedges, smartweeds and scouring rushes.

Several rare plant species, including a fern, sedge and buttercup, as well as the native short-leaved pine, occur within the preserve. The ravine provides moist, shaded habitat that is well suited for a variety of non-flowering plants such as mosses and liverworts. One of the most interesting is sphagnum moss, which forms spongy, layered mats and is more characteristic of northern Illinois. A very common plant is poison ivy, which can be recognized by three leaves, and can cause a rash on most people exposed to the plant.

Piney Creek Ravine Nature Preserve provides year-round bird watching opportunities, especially during spring migration and throughout the summer. A variety of reptiles and amphibians, including American toad, box turtle, fence lizard, rough green snake, garter snake and blue racer have been recorded from the area. Copperheads are the only venomous snakes reported here, but timber rattlesnakes may be present.



Common mammals of the preserve include opossum, cottontail, chipmunk, grey and fox squirrel, raccoon and white-tailed deer.

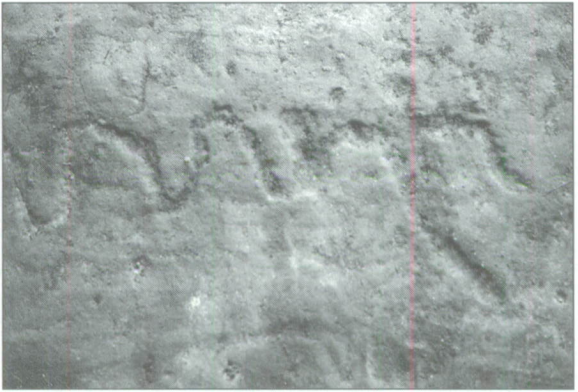
Because Piney Creek Ravine is a nature preserve, no hunting or consumptive use is allowed. Camping is prohibited. Hiking, sightseeing and bird watching are permissible. Please leave the area litter free when you leave and enjoy this unique state site.

Rock Art

Piney Creek Ravine contains the largest body of prehistoric rock art in Illinois. Almost 200 designs believed to date to the

Late Woodland (A.D. 500-1000) and Mississippian (A.D. 1000-1550) periods occur within the ravine. Prehistoric rock art was created by either pecking and grinding (petroglyphs) or painting (pictographs) designs on rock surfaces. Petroglyphs were created by using a small hard rock as a hammer to peck a design into a softer rock such as sandstone. Paintings were created by grinding minerals such as limestone into a yellow or red powder, which when mixed with animal fat, adheres to rock surfaces.

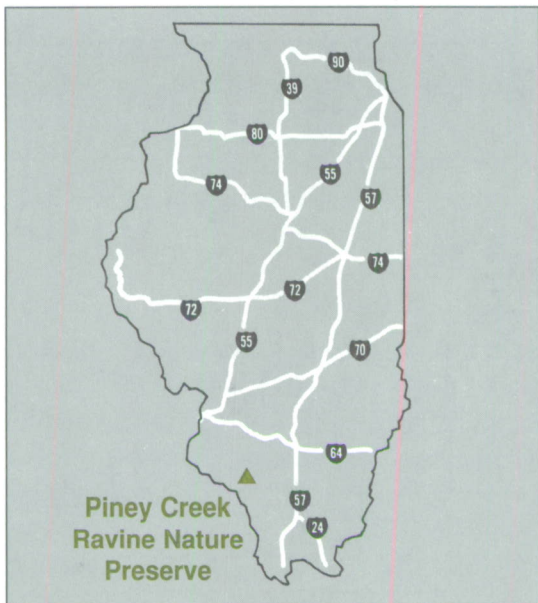
Pecked designs (petroglyphs) that can be seen within Piney Creek Ravine include human figures, deer, serpents and crosses. Painted designs (pictographs) within the



ravine include human figures, deer, birds, human hands and a canoe.

A commonly asked question is “Why was rock art created?” Many of the designs within Piney Creek Ravine appear to have been created as part of religious ceremonies. These include pecked human-like figures with wings instead of arms, a common method in Native American religious art of portraying beings with spiritual power. Other human-like figures appear to be wearing horned head dresses, again an indication of spiritual power. The deer and bird images found within the ravine also may represent spirits rather than actual animals.

The rock art within Piney Creek Ravine represents a legacy left to us by the prehistoric Native Americans who once lived within the area. It can be easily damaged or degraded. Any chalking, painting, drawing, carving or other disturbance to the rock art or any rock surface within the ravine is forbidden under state law and is punishable by fines. Please limit your interaction with rock art to taking photographs. Help protect and preserve this unique gift left to us by the earliest inhabitants of this area. Please report any disturbance or vandalism to the rock art to Site Superintendent, Randolph County Conversation Area, (618) 826-2706 or the Department’s Cultural Resource Coordinator, (217) 782-3715.



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4301 South Lake Drive
Chester, IL 62233, (618) 826-2706

- 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 Public Services, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-6302 or visit our website at <http://dnr.state.il.us>.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' 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 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.