

Greene Valley Forest Preserve, Naperville

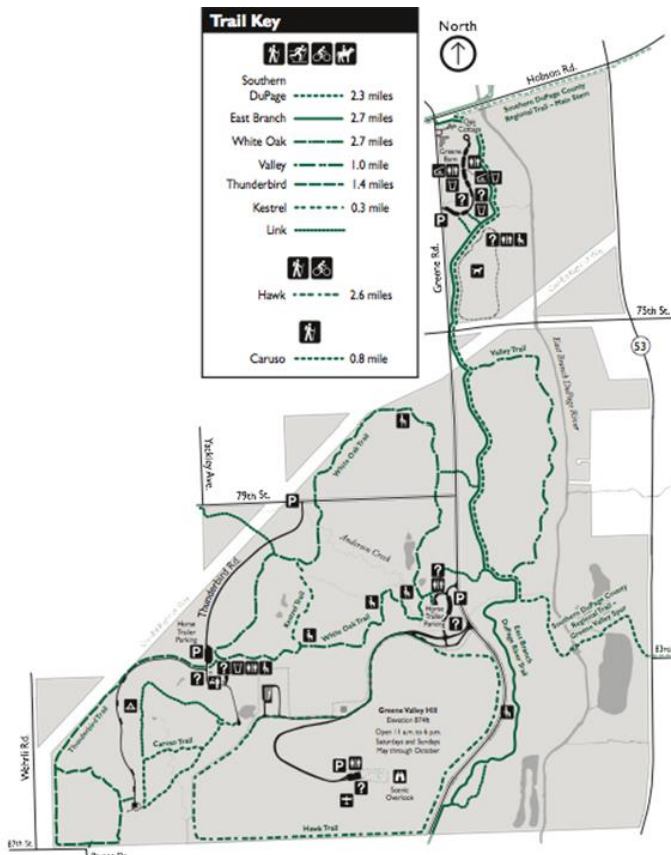
The 1,300-acre Greene Valley Forest Preserve is located in south central DuPage between Woodridge and Naperville. It is bordered on the North by Hobson Rd., on the East by Rt. 53, and on the south by the Will/DuPage County line. The west border is irregularly shaped. Greene Rd., 75th Street, and 79th Street all cross through the preserve.

Habitat type/site overview

Greene Valley offers a variety of habitats with shrubland and deciduous forest covering the largest portions. The east branch of the DuPage River runs north to south along the eastern side of the preserve. Much of the land along the river is floodplain. The east side of the river is unimproved except for the portion of Southern DuPage Trail which runs from Rt.53 over the river. The “83rd Street Fluddle” is on the east side of the river and is the largest of the few ponds on the property and one of the better spots for shorebirds in DuPage County. The landfill hill contains over 200 acres of low-quality grassland. Future restorations are planned to improve the quality with better diversity of plants. Its peak offers prime hawk watching territory during spring and fall migration.



Topography



There are 12 miles of limestone/gravel multiuse trails and another 3 miles of grass/dirt foot paths. The limestone trails are usually in good shape except may get muddied by spring thaws. Expect foot paths to be muddy except during extended periods of dry weather. Topography is generally flat unless you plan to hike the road to the top of the landfill when it is open to the public.

The Valley/East Branch trail combo loops two miles through mainly shrub habitat. Both Cuckoos, Bell’s Vireo, and Yellow-breasted Chat have been seen along this trail.

Heading south on the East Branch Trail leads to a smaller wood lot and if you go off trail a couple of wetland ponds. Orchard Oriole, Field Sparrow, and Eastern Bluebirds can be found along the trail. Rails and shorebirds have been seen in the wetland area. A recently added connector trail leads south to Will County’s Whalon Lake Forest Preserve (1.25 miles). Visit www.dupageforest.org for an enlarged view of this map.

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The 2.7-mile White Oak Trail loops through woodland, shrub and oak savanna areas. The woodlands host both Tanagers, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, and an occasional Wood Thrush. You may find Blue-winged Warbler in the shrub areas.



The Hawk Trail loops around the base of the landfill and is only open to the public weekends May through October 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Grassland and woodland edge habitats are found along the trail. Blue Grosbeaks have recently been spotted near the power plant. Henslow's Sparrow and Sedge Wren are possible on the hill side of the trail.

Birds

Over 275 species of birds have been recorded from this site (80+ breeding).

Woodland birds. In the woodlands and along the river, a good variety of warblers may be found during migration along with thrushes, vireos, etc. During the breeding season one can see the local woodpeckers, both Summer and Scarlet Tanager, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and more. (See link to eBird Checklist below for timing).

Shrubland birds. Shrubland areas have hosted Black-billed Cuckoo, Bell's and White-eyed Vireos, and Yellow-breasted Chat as well as the more common shrubland species such as Willow Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, and Gray Catbird. After sunset American Woodcocks can be seen performing their display flights from mid-March through early May (best viewing from Thunderbird area). Northern Shrike is a yearly winter visitor.



Shorebirds and the Fluddle. The Fluddle is one of the better shorebird sites in the area. Birders have recorded 26 species including the rare Curlew Sandpiper and Red Phalarope. This isn't true every year as water levels fluctuate and heavy rains north of here can cause mudflats to disappear overnight. Many swallows, ducks, cormorants, herons and egrets use the Fluddle as well.

Raptors and more at the Landfill Area. The Landfill Area is only open to the public on weekends May through October, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. One can visit the Scenic Overlook on top of the hill or hike/bike the 2.6-mile Hawk Trail that loops around the base of the hill. The sides of the hill are off limits due to liability and safety concerns. Grassland



birds including Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark



are numerous. Occasionally Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows can be found. From the top of the hill you not only can get a 360-degree view of the

DBC Hotspot

surrounding area (seven counties can be seen), but you can watch hawks flying at eye level as they hunt the hillside.

Members of the DuPage Bird Club have operated a fall Hawkwatch here since 2006. Twenty-one species of migrating raptors have been seen including such rarities as Mississippi Kite, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Gyrfalcon, and Prairie Falcon. Many nonraptor rarities have also been recorded on the hill including Loggerhead Shrike, Say's Phoebe, and Sprague's Pipit. Hawkwatch results can be found at the following link:

<http://hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?r=on&rsite=660&go=Go+To+Hawkwatch+Profile>

Best time to go

You can find birds year around but of course spring and fall migration can produce greater variety. Early morning is best as most birds are active and singing. The following link is to eBird's illustrated checklist for Greene Valley. It shows monthly occurrences of each of the species recorded:

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L152646/media?yr=all&m=>

Amenities

Port-a-potties are available at parking areas. Latrines are available at the picnic shelters at the north lot. Picnic tables are available at the north lot and on top of the hill. There are water spigots at the Thunderbird lot, the dog park area and the picnic shelter lot (shut off during the winter). The youth camp woods has a Tricky Tree Trail showing examples of the various trees found in the preserve. New educational signage has been installed along the trails.

Access

There are three main parking lots for Greene Valley. The **north lot on Greene Rd.** serves the picnic grove and dog park areas. This area does not get birded much but can produce some good birds. The East Branch/Southern DuPage Regional Trail runs north and south through this area. A small stream that runs east to the river can attract warblers in migration. Other common birds can be seen along the trail. The **south lot on Greene Rd.** is central to the main birding areas. From here it is 0.75 mile walk to the Fluddle and connections to the main trails. This is the best access point for birding activity. The **Thunderbird lot off 79th Street** provides access to the southwest portion of the preserve. The youth camp woods is the best area for warblers and other spring migrants. There are several trails running throughout. Most can be wet and muddy. Old bridges were recently removed and replaced with flat rocks at creek crossings. It can be a challenge for some to cross. The trail connecting campsites is limestone/woodchips making for easier walking. The Thunderbird Trail is grass and often muddy. It loops through more shrub and hedge habitat.

Parking is also available on top of the hill when open. You can also access the Fluddle by parking on Carolwood Ln. off 83rd. Street and walking the bike trail to the preserve.

Site contributors

Content and photography by Jeff Smith and Mike Madsen.

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