

# McDowell Grove Forest Preserve, Naperville

McDowell Grove forest Preserve is nestled in the wildlife corridor created along the West Branch of the DuPage River. The entrance is located just south of Diehl Rd. on Raymond Dr. at McDowell Rd., where there is a stop light. The preserve extends from Diehl Rd. on the north end all the way down to Ogden Ave. to the south.

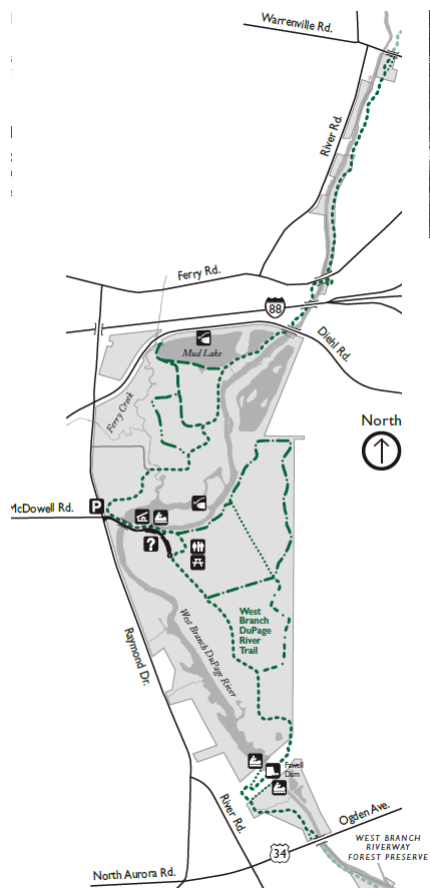


## Habitat type/site overview

Within the 465-acre preserve, you will find a mosaic of rich habitats including mature woodlands, open fields with patches of scrub, and floodplain forest. Besides the West Branch of the DuPage River flowing through the length of the preserve, there are also large ponds at the north end of the preserve.

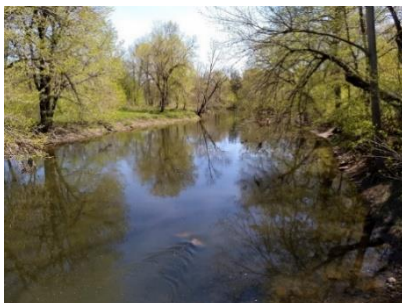
## Topography

McDowell Grove has seven miles of multipurpose trails. The gravel trails are the busiest, but during prime early-morning birding time there is not too much traffic. The trail system is easy to follow although there is no directional signage. Grab a map at the kiosk near the parking lot. The trail system includes a portion of the West Branch DuPage River Regional Trail, which connects to other preserves in the area. There is minimal elevation change within the preserve. Most trails are well maintained, but during very wet periods you will encounter some muddy stretches on the nongravel trails. An enlarged map is available at the DuPage County Forest Preserve website, [www.dupageforest.org](http://www.dupageforest.org).



## Birds

McDowell Grove is primarily a passerine migrant stop. Running into migrants is possible anywhere within the preserve. The trails that



run along the river are probably the most productive in the early morning. As it gets later into the morning a good place to check for active migrants would be the floodplain woods directly to the south of the first parking lot. This stretch is good for both waterthrushes and Prothonotary Warbler. Cold mornings can be productive if you start your birding by concentrating on tree edges that have an eastern exposure such as those bordering the second parking lot. These areas will warm up more quickly and provide more insect activity for warblers, vireos and flycatchers.

## DBC Hotspot

Of the 35 species of warblers that can be found in DuPage County, all have made appearances at preserve.

All of the thrushes can be found during both spring and fall migration. In the fall, concentrate on areas with fruiting trees or shrubs. There are many hawthorns and crabapples in the picnic areas and along the stretch of river that runs east to west which will provide fruit.



All seven species of woodpecker found in the county utilize McDowell Grove. Several nest within the preserve. Both species of cuckoos have been found within the preserve and have nested. Along the river is a good spot for finding Olive-sided Flycatchers using snags on both sides of the river.



The ponds in the north will attract waterfowl and most any of the regularly occurring species can be found, most notably during early spring migration.

### Best time to go

McDowell Grove is an ideal site to visit during both spring and fall migration. Early morning is the best time for a birding visit if you plan to utilize the main gravel trails. The grass trails will see less traffic and can be birded later in the morning. During migration if the morning was exceptional, it

is worth a return trip in the later part of the afternoon when migrants become more active for a second feeding.

### Amenities

There is an information kiosk adjacent to the parking lots. There are picnic tables in the areas surrounding the parking lots including a small shelter. A boat launch is adjacent to the first parking lot. Nearby are portable toilet-type facilities and a hand pump for water.

## ***DBC Hotspot***

### Access

The parking lot is located east of the intersection of Raymond Dr. and McDowell Rd., which has a stoplight, and is about half a mile south of Diehl Rd. This is a gated parking lot that opens an hour after sunrise and closes an hour after sunset.

### Site contributor

Content and photography by Denis Kania.