

Churchill Woods Forest Preserve, Glen Ellyn

Churchill Woods Forest Preserve is located along St. Charles and Swift Roads in Glen Ellyn, just east of I-355.

Habitat type/site overview

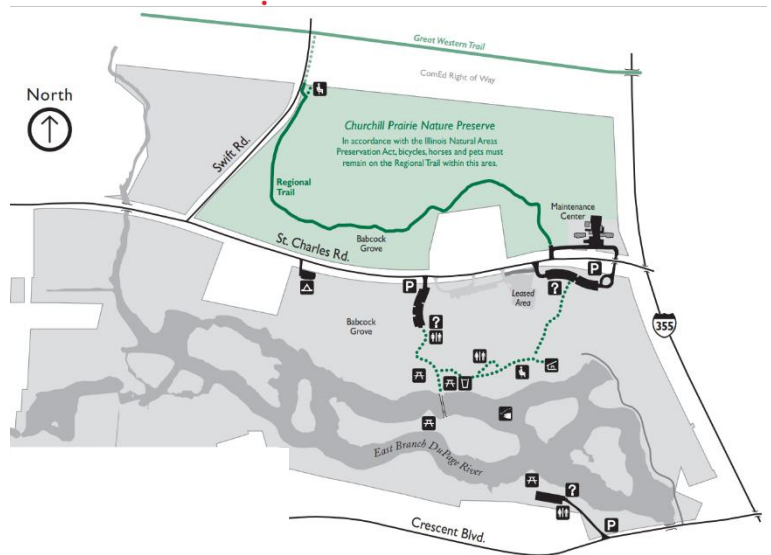
Churchill Woods is the site of Babcock's Grove, an early settlement, as well as a Pottawatomi village. There are three main areas to the preserve: the smallest is located off Crescent Blvd. and is largely a picnic area. The main section is off St. Charles Rd. The area along the East Branch of the DuPage River is mown; there is a hardwood forest leading down to the river; upstream along the river is an extensive marsh.

North of St. Charles on the east side of Swift Road is Churchill Prairie Nature Preserve, an Illinois Nature Preserve recognized as an Area of Special Importance by the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission because of its rare plants; a restored savannah is on its west and south sides.

Visit the DuPage Forest Preserve website for an enlarged view of this map www.dupageforest.org.

Topography

With the exception of the gravel trails leading from the parking lots to the river, there are few trails per se in Churchill Woods. However, the grassy areas are mown, so it is possible to walk along the river for quite a distance. There is a gravel trail on the west and south side of the preserve area connecting Swift Road to St. Charles Road. The Great Western Trail borders the north side of the prairie and the small northwestern section of the preserve. The prairie itself has a few trails leading into it, but by the end of summer these may be obscure because of the vegetation.



DBC Hotspot

Birds

Birders have reported 167 species from the preserve, and a 124 from the prairie preserve (these appear as separate sites on eBird.org). The Monk Parakeet is perhaps the most unusual bird seen: There is a



colony located in the towers of the Commonwealth-Edison facility to the north, and the birds often forage at the edge of the prairie; these can be seen (and more often heard!) year-round. Perhaps because of its small size, many birds associated with grassland habitat (e.g., Bobolink) have not yet been reported from the prairie. Up until the 1980s, there was a colony of Red-headed Woodpeckers on the islands in the river; although sometimes seen, they no longer appear to nest here. Similarly, there was a colony of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets

nesting on the islands, but a storm in the early 2000's destroyed the nests. Pairs of herons, however, are still seen nesting, and herons are seen year-round as long as the river remains open, as have Belted Kingfishers. A variety of birds with an affinity for riparian sites (e.g., Eastern Phoebe and Baltimore Oriole) breed along the river.

Best time to go

Late winter/early spring is the best time to observe a variety of waterfowl; July and early August are good times to look for migrating shorebirds. Otherwise, the spring and fall migrations result in seeing the largest variety of birds. The prairie is interesting to bird during the summer, if only because a number of species from the adjoining savannah are present.

Amenities

There are several picnic areas in the preserve, including a shelter. There are also several outhouses.

Access

There are two parking lots located along the south side of St. Charles Road; the eastern-most one is suggested. There is a parking lot along Crescent Blvd., but that is closed during the winter. There is parking on the east side of Swift Road for those wishing to visit the Churchill Prairie Nature Preserve.

Site contributor

Content and photography by John Cebula.