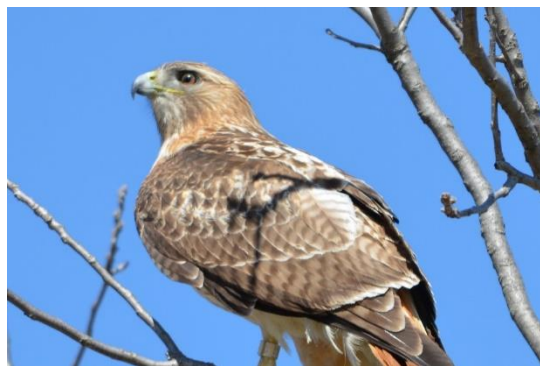


Hidden Lake Forest Preserve, Downers Grove

Hidden Lake Forest Preserve is located at the southeast corner of IL-56 (Butterfield Road) and IL-53. It abuts portions of The Morton Arboretum to its south.

Habitat type/site overview

Hidden Lake is dominated by water features: Round Meadow Lake upon entering, the East Branch of the DuPage River and adjacent marshes, and Eagle Lake, a long quarry lake parallel to IL-53. The actual “hidden lake” is a pond located in the wooded eastern section of the preserve and is no longer accessible without “bushwhacking” through the habitat.



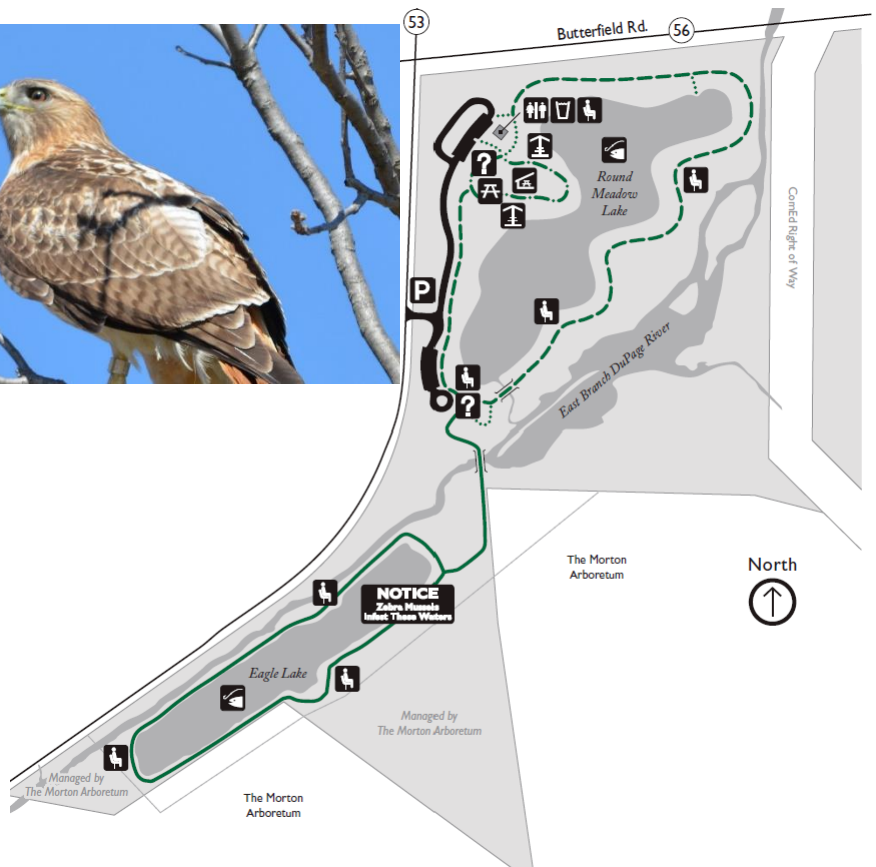
Topography

Limestone paths encircle Round Meadow Lake and Eagle Lake. Two foot bridges cross a stream and the river. Several low points in the trail may be flooded following periods of heavy rain, but this is rare. For an enlarged view of the adjacent map, visit the DuPage Forest Preserve site at www.dupageforest.org.

Birds

Birders have reported 226 species of birds from Hidden Lake. The DuPage River bridge offers views of the marsh, and this is a good site to scan the edge of the marsh for wading birds, dabbling ducks, and other species associated with shallow water (the downstream side of the bridge also often has a variety of insect-eating birds hunting for insects).

Next, circle Eagle Lake, which passes through a woodland that the district is restoring. A variety of woodland species can be seen and heard. The section of the trail paralleling the DuPage River often has a great variety of migratory birds in season, as well as orioles and flycatchers during the summer.



DBC Hotspot

Finally, circle Round Meadow Lake. Diving ducks, and species such as loons, grebes, and coots are often seen during migration. The trail also allows views of the river. The eastern woodland often has Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and other forest birds during the breeding season.

Best time to go

The spring and fall migrations are the best times to see a large variety of birds. For example, large flocks of Caspian Terns are regularly seen during migration. Because the river often remains ice-free well into winter, a visit then can be worthwhile. The preserve is popular with bikers, joggers, and dog walkers, so usually the earlier one can go, the better, if only to avoid the “traffic.” The marsh is a good area to watch just before sunset, when a variety of long-legged waders often appear.



Amenities

There are washrooms and a picnic area at the north end of the parking lot. There are benches placed at intervals around the lakes.

Access

The entrance to the preserve is on IL-53 (across from Walmart). Once you enter, there is a parking area to the north adjacent to a picnic shelter and washrooms; there is also a parking area to the south. NOTE: There is a district access road along IL-56 that is closed off. It leads to a barn site that was removed during the construction of I-355. It is the easiest way to explore the eastern, wooded section of the preserve where the “hidden lake” is, but parking along the highway is problematic.

Site contributor

Content and photography by John Cebula.