

Salt Creek Park, Wood Dale

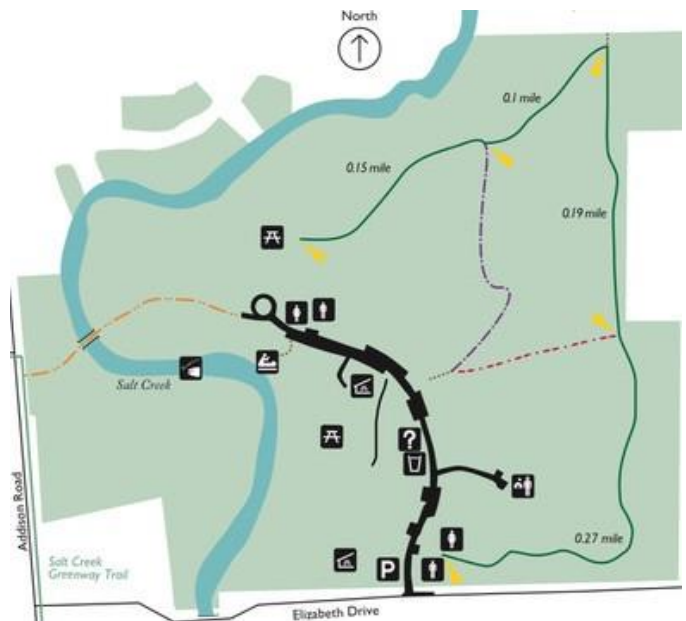
Salt Creek Park Forest Preserve is across the street from the northern boundary of The Preserve at Oak Meadows. The entrance is on Elizabeth Drive between Addison and Wood Dale roads.

Over 140 species have been recorded at Salt Creek Park. There are few preserves in the northeast quadrant of DuPage County with opportunities to see as many migratory bird species as Salt Creek Park.

Habitat type/site overview.

Salt Creek Park is a small 98-acre preserve among the DuPage Forest Preserves, but it is an important link in the Salt Creek greenway chain that extends from Busse Woods in Cook County to Fullersburg Woods Forest Preserve further south. The preserve is secondary growth woodland that is dominated by oaks and hickories with a small, open meadow near the northern edge of the property. The DuPage Forest Preserve District has done considerable work in reducing the nonnative flora to open up the understory. This will benefit birds that breed here and migratory species passing through. Salt Creek skirts the boundary of the preserve, which draws many migratory species as well.

For an enlarged view of this map, visit the DuPage Forest Preserve site at www.dupageforest.org.



Topography

There are close to two miles of mown turf trails with the longest trail less than 3/4 of a mile. You won't encounter any steep inclines, but the trail surfaces can be uneven although fairly easy to navigate. There are no paved or limestone trails anywhere in the preserve so sturdy shoes are advised. The preserve serves as a floodplain when excessive spring and fall rains flood areas along the creek. **Knee-high, waterproof boots are recommended when birding the preserve in spring and after extensive rainfall in fall.**

The best opportunities for warblers in spring are along the northern section of the preserve following the short section of the green trail as it connects to the purple trail (see map). Unfortunately, when Salt Creek floods, this trail may have standing water. Although it may be inconvenient to traverse, this section is a definite hotspot in spring. As you head south along the green trail, you may find multiple woodpecker species, Indigo Buntings, White-breasted Nuthatches, Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos



DBC Hotspot

and occasional Cooper's Hawks. From the bridge that crosses Salt Creek, one often encounters Wood Ducks, Great Blue Herons and Eastern Phoebe.

Insect repellent is strongly advised once mosquitos have hatched.

Birds

As previously mentioned, over 140 species have been recorded at Salt Creek Park. During spring migration over a dozen species of warblers can be found usually on the green trail near Salt Creek and the wooded area near the CCC stone picnic shelter just as you enter the preserve parking lot to your left. Practicing patience here often pays dividends with a number of species in the towering trees. Eastern Bluebirds breed here and take advantage of the bluebird nest boxes maintained by District volunteers. The bluebirds are usually found near the preserve entrance west of the roadway. It is not uncommon to see/hear several species of woodpeckers including Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied and Northern Flicker. Great-crested and Willow Flycatchers can be found here during breeding season. Gray Catbirds and other summer residents are abundant.

Best time to go

Spring and fall migration are the best seasons for birding at Salt Creek Park. Although the preserve offers very good habitat, its size limits the number of nesting pairs during breeding season.

Amenities

A latrine-type bathroom is located near the traffic circle. There is no running water. There are a few picnic tables near the picnic shelters.



Access

The only vehicle access is via the main entrance off of Elizabeth Drive. Bicyclists and walkers can enter the preserve from a trail off of Addison Road near Forest Preserve Drive.

Site contributor

Content and photography by Ron Skleney.