

Hawthorne Hill Woods, Woodridge



Hawthorne Hill Woods (called Hawthorne Hill Park by eBird and Google Maps) is a wild place hidden in a well-groomed suburb. This little visited 71-acre municipal park is dominated by its woodpecker-rich woods. It attracts a wide variety of resident, breeding, and migratory birds, including spring warblers.

The park is located in south central DuPage County, northeast of the intersection of Rt. 53 and 75th St., just east of the Greene Valley Forest Preserve. Its eastern border is Woodridge Dr. Its northeast corner connects to Lake Harriet Park, the source of water running in Hawthorne Hill's creek.

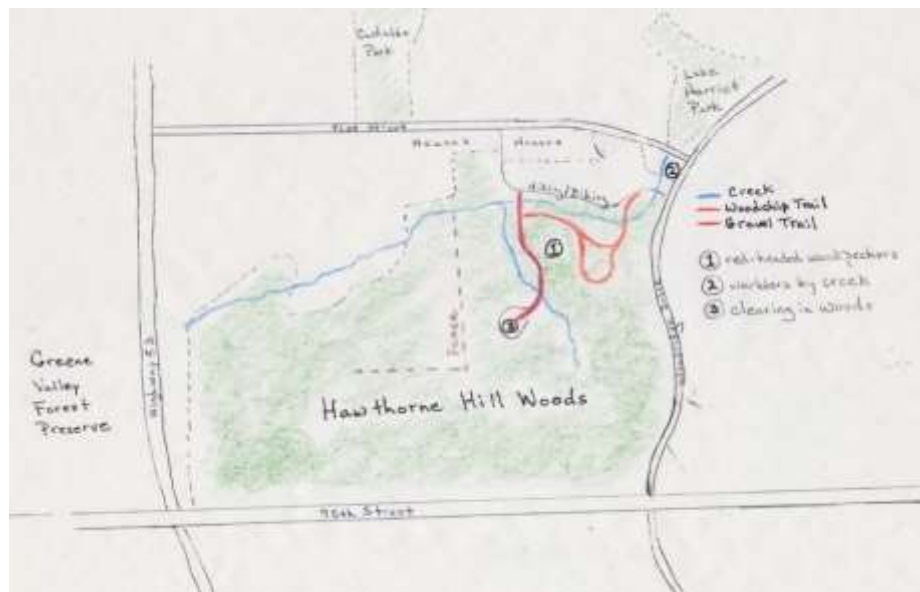
Habitat type/site overview

From the grassy clearing inside Hawthorne Hill Woods, surrounded by trees, you may imagine you are away from civilization. Only you, birds, and deer. The heavily shaded creek and its tributary cut through the mature deciduous woods. When wet, the woods can be difficult to cross off trail. When dry, the understory is mostly open to wandering. North and west of the hiking/biking trail that passes through the park are a grassy field, a small savannah, and a small wooded hill.



Topography

Besides the paved hiking/biking trail that can be busy on weekends, there are two connected trails inside the woods. Both trails start from the hiking/biking trail. One is covered with woodchips; on this trail, a rickety old wooden bridge crosses the creek. The other trail is gravel, and its bridge across the creek collapsed in May 2020. So, you must use the woodchip trail to reach the gravel trail and from there reach the clearing. The best woodland bird viewing is along these trails and in the clearing. Most of the northern section of the park can be viewed from the hiking/biking trail.



DBC Hotspot

Birds

A visit to Hawthorne Hill Woods offers a pleasant surprise with its many uncommon birds. Red-headed Woodpeckers, a Blue-headed Vireo, a Northern Waterthrush, and an Ovenbird were among the birds encountered on a first visit. Within a week, spring warblers arrived—Black-and-white, Nashville, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Yellow, Canada, and Wilson’s warblers flitted along the creek from 71st St. to the hiking/biking trail.

A good variety of breeding birds stay throughout the summer, including House Wrens, Eastern Phoebes, Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Bluebirds, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Red-headed Woodpeckers may be seen along the gravel trail with regularity.

Warblers and thrushes are among the birds that pass through Hawthorne Hill Woods again in fall. Winter is quieter, but some woodland birds common to the region are always around, especially Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy woodpeckers.



Best time to go

May and June are the most exciting months to visit Hawthorne Hill Woods, but every season brings new birds to join the year-round residents. Because few people get off the hiking/biking path, you may often enjoy near solitude on the trails, especially in the early morning. Hawthorne Hill is a good choice if you have only a short time free to bird. In just an hour, you can easily walk all the trails and wander in the woods.

Amenities

Hawthorne Hill Woods is small and offers no amenities. Picnic tables and portable toilets, however, can be found at nearby Castaldo Park.

Access

Finding Hawthorne Hill Woods is the biggest challenge. The only sign for the park is on Woodridge Drive, far from the hiking/biking trail that offers access to the park. The closest parking is along 71st Street, with more parking at nearby Castaldo Park. The park is also an easy walk from Lakes Harriet and Carleton.

Site contributor

Content and photography by Rick Roche.

