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# A Guide To Illinois Nature Centers & Interpretive Trails: 132 Family-Friendly And Accessible Nature Sites In Illinois



## Synopsis

Following the success of their previous collaborations, Illinois Hiking and Backpacking Trails, Revised Edition and A Guide to Mountain Bike Trails in Illinois, Walter and George Zyznieuski offer this concise and handy resource for all outdoor enthusiasts interested in the outstanding nature centers and interpretive trails throughout Illinois. The 135 sites detailed in this illustrated guide are located in municipal and county parks, forest preserves, state parks, wildlife refuges, and the Shawnee National Forest. Sites range from the Apple River Canyon State Park in northwest Illinois to the Cache River State Natural Area in southern Illinois. This guide will assist individuals and groups in successfully planning visits to these areas by clearly identifying trails that are fairly short and well suited for families and those nature centers that provide hands-on experiences viewing wildlife and nature exhibits and participating in a nature program or activity. Also, those trails that are accessible to families with strollers, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly are identified with symbols and described throughout the book. Detailed descriptions of each center and trail are included along with directions, some maps and photographs, hours of operation, and contact information, including web sites, where available. Sixty-seven nature centers and interpretive trails are featured for northern Illinois, including Chicago Botanic Garden, Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary and Volkering Heritage Farm, The Morton Arboretum, the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, and the Black Hawk State Historic Site. For those interested in central Illinois, forty-one nature centers and trails are listed, including Kickapoo Creek Park, Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, Valentine Park, Salt Fork River Forest Preserve, Merwin Nature Preserve, Forest Park Nature Center and Adams Wildlife Sanctuary. Twenty-seven nature centers and trails are described for southern Illinois. Among these are Lusk Creek Canyon, Giant City State Park, Cache River State Natural Area, Ferne Clyffe State Park, Rim Rock, and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Following the success of their previous collaborations, Illinois Hiking and Backpacking Trails and A Guide to Mountain Bike Trails in Illinois, Walter and George Zyznieuski offer this concise and handy resource for all outdoor enthusiasts interested in the outstanding nature centers and interpretive trails throughout Illinois. The 135 sites detailed in this illustrated guide are located in municipal and county parks, forest preserves, state parks, wildlife refuges, the Shawnee National Forest, as well as non-for-profit and private properties. Detailed descriptions of each center and trail are included along with directions, some maps and photographs, hours of operation, and contact information-including web sites, where available. This guide will assist individuals and groups in successfully planning visits to these areas by clearly identifying trails that are fairly short and well suited for families, and those nature centers that provide hands-on experiences viewing wildlife and nature exhibits and participating in a nature program or activity. Also, those trails that are accessible to families with strollers, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly are identified with symbols and described throughout the book. Sixty-seven nature centers and interpretive trails are featured for northern Illinois, including Chicago Botanic Garden, Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary and Volkening Heritage Farm, The Morton Arboretum, the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, and the Black Hawk State Historic Site. For those interested in central Illinois, forty-one nature centers and trails are listed, including Kickapoo Creek Park, Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, Valentine Park, Salt Fork River Forest Preserve, Merwin Nature Preserve, Forest Park Nature Center and Adams Wildlife Sanctuary. Twenty-seven nature centers and trails are described for southern Illinois. Among these are Lusk Creek Canyon, Giant City State Park, Cache River State Natural Area, Ferne Clyffe State Park, Rim Rock, and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge.

Walter G. Zyznieuski has been employed with state and local governments in the environmental field for the past twenty-two years. As a past board member of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Illinois Chapter, he has been a part of the statewide trail planning activities. George S. Zyznieuski pursues both career and outdoor recreational opportunities in Denver, Colorado. An avid outdoorsman, he continues to visit his home state of Illinois.

...since the subtitle of this book is "132 Family-Friendly and Accessible Nature Sites in Illinois." What the Zyznieuskis have done is compiled information about these wild areas with total disregard for differences in site administration. Thus, the book includes state parks, county forest preserve centers, and sites owned by private organizations. No other source I'm familiar with has done that for the Prairie State. Even spots like the Chicago Botanic Gardens, the Brookfield Zoo, and the Cahokia Mounds are listed here. Each entry includes a general description, a list of programs and events, regulations, hours, directions, contact information (formal address, phone number, and often web site), and begins with the highlights and what makes the place special. I've been to 18 of the 132 -- I've got some traveling to do, I guess -- and can verify that the details seem to be correct, as far as I know. I'm giving the book just four stars for two reasons: (a) the authors didn't include any sites managed by the McHenry County Conservation District and (b) the b&w photos are muddy at times and not necessarily indicative of the uniqueness of the sites. (A photo of a trail sign next to a path could probably be taken anywhere.) Still, this volume is a wonderful guidebook for any Illinoisan to own. Let's hope its publicity will help Prairie Staters to understand that Nature *\*is\** alive and well here, and they don't have to go to Wisconsin or Michigan to see it. Now, how can we get the authors to do the same research for all the other states in the Union??? [This reviewer was an Illinois resident when these comments were written.]

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