

## = Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area =

Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area is an Illinois state park on 1 @, @ 350 acres ( 550 ha ) in Kendall County , Illinois , United States . The park was established in the late 1960s and is named for the natural spring within its boundaries . The park has two artificial lakes and the Fox River flows through the northern end of the park . Silver Springs hosts a variety of activities including fishing , hunting , boating and hiking . The park has areas of native prairie restoration , a sledding hill and a seven mile ( 11 km ) equestrian trail . The prairie restoration areas hold many species of plants including lead plant , and purple coneflower .

## = = Location = =

The Park is divided by the Fox River , with the northern area situated next to the Farnsworth House , designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe . The property that Mrs. Farnsworth bought frames part of the western side of the Park . One of the main access points to the park is a bridge that takes Fox River Drive ( Ben Street in Plano ) , over the river , and to an adjoining road ( Fox Road ) that runs past the entrance to the park . In the 1960s when the current bridge was being constructed , Mrs. Farnsworth appealed to the Kendall County Board , suggesting a block to the bridge , citing ecological concerns among other things .

## = = History = =

There is evidence that the Fox River valley near Silver Springs was populated by indigenous people near the end of the last Ice Age , 10 ? 14 @, @ 000 years ago . The original 1 @, @ 250 acres ( 510 ha ) tract of land that became Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area was purchased by the state of Illinois in 1969 , and has been open since January of that year . The park is located in Kendall County , Illinois , five miles ( 8 km ) west of the city of Yorkville . Since the original acquisition in 1969 , 100 acres ( 40 ha ) have been added to the park

Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area was one of five new state parks opened in northern Illinois from 1969 ? 1971 . As part of more than 20 @, @ 000 acres ( 8 @, @ 100 ha ) added to the Illinois state park system during this period , Silver Springs opened to alleviate traffic at other state parks in the area . At the time , the Illinois Department of Natural Resources ( IDNR ) , which oversees the state park system , was attempting to provide the Chicago area with the most state park facilities in Illinois .

The park had nine extant wells tapping the Galena ? Platteville Aquifer when the state purchased the property . By 1973 a modern well was drilled , reaching a depth of 120 feet ( 37 m ) . The well , located near the park entrance , was drilled by K & K Well Drilling Co. of Mokena , Illinois through black dirt , gravel , clay , and limestone . Upon completion , the well produced about 500 US gallons ( 1 @, @ 900 l ) per day during the summer . The well provides the park with water , but the other nine wells remained in use following its completion .

A prairie restoration project began on 30 acres ( 12 ha ) within Silver Springs in 1980 ; 15 acres ( 6 @. @ 1 ha ) was added to the restoration project in 1991 . The IDNR undertook another prairie restoration in an area within the park , on the north side of the Fox River , in 2002 . For the 2002 project , the IDNR removed numerous invasive species from the area including : basswood , ash , maple , and exotic honeysuckle . The non @-@ native exotic honeysuckle species had thrived in the absence of fire through human intervention . These actions were meant to allow native burr and black oak , and shagbark hickory a chance to reproduce .

## = = Bodies of water = =

Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area covers 1 @, @ 350 acres ( 550 ha ) and includes four distinct bodies of water , two artificial lakes , the Fox River , and Silver Springs . The larger of the two lakes , Loon Lake , covers 21 acres ( 8 @. @ 5 ha ) and has 0 @. @ 9 miles ( 1 @. @ 4 km ) of

shoreline . Loon Lake 's maximum depth is 20 feet ( 6 @. @ 1 m ) and it has an average depth of 11 @. @ 8 feet ( 3 @. @ 6 m ) . Loon Lake , sometimes known as Silver Spring Lake , was constructed in 1960 when a lowland area was excavated . The lake 's water level is maintained through a small 20 @- @ acre ( 8 @. @ 1 ha ) watershed and groundwater seepage . Water quality at Loon Lake was identified as " good " in 1996 by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency . Beaver Lake , north of Loon Lake , is smaller , covering 4 @. @ 5 acres ( 1 @. @ 8 ha ) . It has almost a half mile ( 800 m ) of shoreline and a maximum depth of 14 feet ( 4 @. @ 3 m ) ; Beaver Lake 's average depth is 8 feet ( 2 @. @ 4 m ) .

The park 's name comes from a natural spring located along a trail on the south end of the park . The spring 's name is derived from the effect of sunlight on its surface , which makes the pool appear to shimmer like silver . Even through the winter , the bubbling spring never freezes , and plants often poke through snow surrounding the watercress @- @ bordered pool in the coldest months . Three miles of the Fox River , which Silver Springs empties into , flows through the park 's north end .

= = Wildlife = =

Plant species native to Illinois prairies prior to European settlement are found within the park 's 45 @- @ acre ( 18 ha ) prairie restoration . While the plant life varies by season , species observed in the park include : lead plant , purple coneflower , wild bergamot , and purple prairie clover , black @- @ eyed susan , tall coreopsis , compass plant , wild quinine , rattlesnake master , New Jersey tea , big bluestem , switch grass , and Indian grass . Along the park 's four mile ( 6 km ) trail , several species of trees are found . Six species of oak , three species of ash , and basswood , cottonwood , pawpaw , Kentucky coffeetree and hackberry are among the tree species living within the boundaries of Silver Springs .

The Fox River at Silver Springs has numerous species of freshwater fish including , bluegill , crappie , channel catfish , bullhead , carp , muskie and northern pike . The Loon and Beaver Lake fish population is maintained through human stocking . Channel catfish , bass , bluegill and crappie are stocked in both lakes .

Besides its prairie restorations and bodies of water , Silver Springs has areas of deciduous forests , and wetlands , both of which are populated with species of mammals , birds and insects . Bird life observed in the park includes : osprey , great horned owl , eastern screech owl and long @- @ eared owl ; bald eagle have been sighted further upstream along the Fox . Reptiles and amphibians are present in the park but are more elusive than other types of animal life .

= = Activities = =

When in season , hunting and fishing are two of the park 's primary activities ; during the fall and winter over 1 @, @ 300 acres ( 530 ha ) are opened to the public for hunting . Pheasant hunting , through a park operated controlled hunting program , is popular at the park . Dove hunting , squirrel hunting , and bow hunting for deer are also permitted with some restrictions . The park has areas set aside for trap shooting , and archery , participants are required to bring their own equipment and restrictions apply . For anglers , Loon Lake is stocked in the spring and fall with rainbow trout and a small one @- @ half acre pond to the east of the lake is stocked annually for children during the National Hunting and Fishing Days , which is marked yearly by events at Silver Springs . The Fox River is open for fishing from both the bank and boats . There are no motor restrictions and a boat launch is available at the park . The Fox River is shallow near the park and boaters are advised to use caution .

Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area has trails for hiking and horseback riding . A short , half mile ( 800 m ) trail leads to Silver Springs near the park 's east entrance . A longer , four mile ( 6 @. @ 4 km ) trail follows the course of the Fox River through the park 's wooded areas . The equestrian trail is located in the wildlife management area of the park and stretches seven miles ( 11 km ) . A one mile ( 1 @. @ 6 km ) path travels through the prairie restoration area as well . During

the winter , much of the park 's trail system is open to cross @-@ country skiing , and a four mile ( 6 km ) trail is open to snowmobiling , weather permitting . When ice thickness permits , the lakes are opened to ice skating and ice fishing . Sledding is another popular activity ; Toboggan Hill is located inside the park 's east entrance .