

= White Pines Forest State Park =

White Pines Forest State Park , more commonly referred to as White Pines State Park , is an Illinois state park in Ogle County , Illinois . It is located near the communities of Polo , Mount Morris and Oregon . The 385 @-@ acre (156 ha) park contains the southernmost remaining stand of native white pine trees in the state of Illinois , and that area , 43 acres (17 ha) , was designated an Illinois Nature Preserve in 2001 .

The area was poised to become a state park in 1903 , but a veto by Governor Richard Yates prevented that from occurring . Supporters continued to press for the White Pines Woods , as it was once known , to receive state park designation throughout the period 1903 @-@ 1927 . In 1927 the park was established with help from supporters in the Chicago media . The park contains two freshwater streams , dolomite rock formations , and a variety of activities generally associated with Illinois state parks . Along Pine Creek , one of the park 's two streams , fords were constructed instead of bridges allowing visitors to drive through the creek .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

White Pines Forest State Park is located in what was once a part of the Sauk leader Black Hawk 's territory and encompasses an area once known as White Pines Woods . White Pines State Park nearly became an Illinois State Park as early as 1903 , when the state established its first state park at Fort Massac . Members of the Oregon , Illinois Woman 's Council started the process by lobbying the Illinois legislature to set aside White Pines Woods as a state park . In 1903 the Illinois legislature appropriated US \$ 30 @,@ 000 for the purchase of White Pines Woods , the southernmost stand of virgin , native white pine trees in the state . The move was stalled when then @-@ Illinois Governor Richard Yates vetoed the measure , citing costs . After 1903 and before 1927 (when the state park was established) , the " Pines Woods Bill " was introduced several times without success . The designation of Starved Rock State Park in 1912 reportedly frustrated the supporters of White Pines Woods ' designation as a state park .

The influential Friends of Our Native Landscape included the area around the Rock River between Dixon and Oregon on a list of 20 places in Illinois that should be designated state parks . Located in " Rock River country , " along an old Indian trail , was White Pines Woods covering 500 acres (200 ha) in a canyon of dolomite rock carved by Pine Creek . At the time , within White Pines Woods , the tallest trees stood 90 feet (27 m) in height . The area was noted by Elia W. Peattie , a poet and member of the Eagle 's Nest Art Colony (located at present @-@ day Lowden State Park) , who expressed the need for preservation of the White Pines Woods in one of her poems .

The Illinois Board of State Park Advisers was established under a 1925 state law . The law , which was amended in 1931 , gave the director of the Illinois Department of Public Works jurisdiction over the state parks . The Public Works position was a result of 1917 reforms by Governor Frank Lowden . The law also mandated a system of state parks , under the Illinois Department of Conservation , later renamed the Illinois Department of Natural Resources . Per the 1925 mandate , White Pines Forest became a state park in 1927 after its proponents enlisted the support of the Chicago Tribune and WGN Radio . That year , Governor Len Small moved to purchase White Pines for \$ 63 @,@ 949 .

= = = Lodge and cabins = = =

In 1933 , with the Great Depression in full swing , the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) sought to relieve the work needs of unemployed Americans . The National Park Service sought to work with state governments in an effort to meet those ends . Many of the projects the CCC was involved with were construction projects . The project at White Pines was originally meant to be the construction

of a lodge building . From 1933 to 1939 , two hundred men , many of them World War I veterans , worked on the State Park construction project .

After the lodge was completed , it was decided to build a restaurant and breezeway onto the lodge building . Logs for most of the project were shipped via railroad from as far away as Oregon and Washington state , unloaded in Stratford , Illinois and dragged to the construction site by teams of horses . The CCC project also completed sixteen one @-@ room log cabins and three four @-@ bedroom cabins . The work crews also built picnic shelters , trail shelters , and foot bridges . Only the logs for the cabins came from another source . They were purchased from a salvage company that had purchased utility poles from a defunct utility company at the price of 30 cents a piece .

= = = Nature Preserve designation = = =

In September 2001 the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission dedicated a 43 @-@ acre (17 ha) section of the state park at White Pines Forest as Illinois ' 300th nature preserve . Nature preserve designation gave the stand of white pine trees in the park the highest form of legal protection in the state . The designation restricts activities to those that do not impact the area 's natural features such as hiking and birdwatching . Activities such as logging , farming , hunting , and fishing are all prohibited within Illinois Nature Preserves , though in some cases there are exceptions for hunting and fishing .

= = Description = =

White Pines State Park is a 385 @-@ acre (156 ha) state park located in the heart of the Rock River Valley in Ogle County . The park represents the southernmost remaining stand of virgin white pine forest in the state . The state park , like all Illinois state parks , is operated and maintained by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) . White Pines Forest State Park provides habitat for a variety of plant and animal life and has two freshwater streams within its boundaries .

Among the park 's most distinctive and well @-@ known features are the vehicular river crossings . At three places , crossing Pine Creek , fords were constructed instead of bridges . The fords offer visitors a chance to actually drive through the creek , though high water frequently closes the crossings . Hikers are relegated to pedestrian bridges or stepping stones in the creek to cross the stream . Floods are frequent enough on Pine Creek , a large watershed to the north of the park , that there is an emergency exit from the campground . When high water closes the fords , the campground is cut off and the emergency exit is the only way out .

= = Wildlife = =

The banks of Pine Creek and Spring Creek are lined with large rock and cliff formations that provide habitat to plants ranging from large trees to moss to hanging vines . The cliffs harbor plants rare in the state of Illinois such as Canada yew and sullivantia (family Saxifragaceae) , an Illinois state @-@ threatened species . When in season , the park 's many species of wildflowers bloom , some of the flowers found in the park include : trout lily , Solomon 's seal , bloodroot , blue @-@ eyed grass , spring beauty , and hepatica . The forest undergrowth provides small mammal habitat and among the mammals that can be seen in the park are : red squirrels , raccoons , deer , and chipmunks . Birds include , the pine thrush , warblers , wild turkey , and winter @-@ migratory birds . The creeks are populated with smallmouth bass , rock bass , channel catfish and , when they are stocked by the IDNR , rainbow trout .

= = Activities = =

The park , Illinois ' third oldest , has become one of the state 's most visited parks , hosting over 350 @,@ 000 visitors each year . It was visited by 10 @,@ 000 people on given weekends during the 1930s , and the 1958 record @-@ setting attendance mark was documented at 874 @,@ 000 .

The park is a public area and has a variety of activities that are typically associated with protected areas meant to be visited by the public . During the warmer months , picnicking , camping , lodging , hiking , and fishing are available . During the winter , cross @-@ country skiing trails open , and other activities such as camping remain available as well . The lodge and cabins are listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places . The 25 cabins are operated by a privately owned entity , the White Pines Inn , and the lodge features a popular private restaurant .

White Pines has 103 campsites all accessible by vehicle ; the campgrounds are sometimes closed because of high water or soft ground . Seven hiking trails wind a total of five miles (8 km) through the park ; three of the seven trails are less than one mile (1 @.@ 6 km) in length . The two cross @-@ country ski trails total 4 @.@ 5 miles (7 @.@ 2 km) in length and are open as winter weather permits . The park 's lodge and cabins consist of 13 one @-@ room cabins and 3 four @-@ room cabins ; all cabins have a shower and other modern amenities . The lodge , though renovated , maintains its historic integrity , and new features were blended with the old . The lounge , in the lodge , is filled with crafts and artwork .