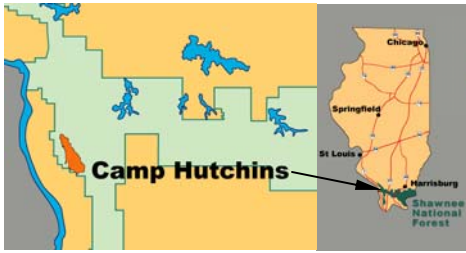


# Proposed Camp Hutchins Complex Wilderness Area

Shawnee National Forest



The proposed **Camp Hutchins Complex Wilderness** area is located south of Murphysboro, IL in the western section of the **Shawnee National Forest**. It adjoins both the Clear Springs and Bald Knob Wilderness Areas, as well as the LaRue-Pine Hills National Natural Landmark. To the South and east is **Trail of Tears State Forest** (5114 acres).

The spring-fed Hutchins Creek runs through the Camp Hutchins Complex. It is one of the highest quality streams in Illinois and is a proposed National Wild and Scenic River. The creek has formed a wide, flat valley bordered by steep slopes, rocky bluffs, and narrow creek drainages.

The **Clear Springs** and **Bald Knob Wilderness** areas were established in 1990 and comprise 4,730 acres and 5,973 acres respectively. Located in the Illinois Ozarks, they are separated by Hutchins Creek Proposed Wild and Scenic River. The area is relatively undisturbed by humans with abandoned roads being the only evidence of past human usage of the land. Considered to be an outstanding example of a mixed mesophytic forest, typical of the Ozarks, this area provides habitat for abundant wildlife including wild turkey, deer, and smaller mammals.

Overall, the wilderness areas have generally rugged topography including narrow ridgetops, steep slopes and narrow creek bottoms. Away from the steep valley walls, the hiking trails are pleasant and easy with many hideaways for camping.

The **LaRue-Pine Hills National Natural Landmark** is comprised of more than 2,500 acres of swamps, limestone bluffs, ponds, springs, and both upland and lowland forest. One of the most biologically diverse areas in the USA, LaRue-Pine Hills is home to many threatened, endangered, and rare species.

A 150 foot high limestone bluff rising from the valley floor offers spectacular views of the Mississippi and Big Muddy Rivers. Looking down from the bluff upon a soaring eagle or buzzard or watching an approaching storm or setting sun from Inspiration Point is marvelous.

**Camp Hutchins Wilderness** has 2,967 forested acres that are similar to the narrow ridgetops and steep slopes of Bald Knob and Clear Springs. Camp Hutchins acquired its name from a former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp that was located where Pine Hills Campground is now situated.

The White Pine Trail descends from Allens Flat on the north and ends at the Pine Hills Campground on the south. The Hutchins Creek Spur Trail departs from the trail and terminates on the east along a road next to Hutchins Creek.

Designation of Camp Hutchins as a part of the National Wilderness System is vital to the eco-system of the area. Together, these four wilderness areas plus the Trail of Tears State Forest form a block of over 21,000 acres of continuous closed tree canopy capable of sustaining a fully functioning natural upland and bottomland ecosystem. Forest interior bird species are particularly vulnerable to competition and nest predation with open land species, as well as nest parasitism by the brown headed cowbird. Therefore, maintaining a closed canopy forest is necessary for maintaining viable populations. This area is also a critical feeding area for migrating songbirds.

The southern tip of Illinois was once a vast expanse of forested wildlands stretching from the Mississippi River to the Ohio River. Early settlers viewed the wilderness as an enemy to be conquered, and industrialists later saw it as an endless supply of resources to be exploited. Today we are left with the remnants of our wilderness heritage.

With the 1990 passage of the Illinois Wilderness Act, Clear Creek Wilderness and Bald Knob Wilderness are now permanently protected by federal law.

## Directions

### LaRue Pine Hills

From Jonesboro: take S.R. 146 west to S.R. 3; turn right/north on S.R. 3; turn right/east on Big Muddy Levee Road to a T-intersection at the base of the Pine Hills bluff.

From Murphysboro: take S.R. 149 west to S.R. 3. Turn left/south on S.R. 3. Then turn left/east on Big Muddy Levee Road to a T-intersection at the base of the Pine Hills bluffs. Right at the T leads to **Winters Pond** and **LaRue Swamp**.

Park at **Winters Pond** and explore the gravel road leading to **Otter Pond** (a 6 mile round trip). Going left at the T and taking the next right puts you on **Pine Hills Scenic Drive**, F.R. 236. The drive will take you to the Inspiration Point trail parking lot and several scenic overlooks.

### Clear Springs Wilderness

Follow directions up the Pine Hills Scenic Drive. The **Godwin/River-to-River Trail** west trailhead is located about 1/3 mile south of the Inspiration Point parking area. The **Godwin Trail** extends about 6 miles across the Clear Springs/Bald Knob Wilderness to its east access point on the Bald Knob blacktop road about 3 miles south of Alto Pass. The 12 mile round trip is over rugged terrain. Several other marked trails also exist here, as well as unmarked spurs, making it a good idea to carry a map to avoid getting lost or disoriented.

### Bald Knob Wilderness

From Jonesboro, IL access to the **Godwin/River-to-River Trail** eastern terminus is via S.R. 146 west to S.R. 127. Turn right/north to Alto Pass, IL. Turn west onto Bald Knob Road for about 2.7 miles. The trailhead is on the right. The round trip over rugged terrain is 12 miles.

### Camp Hutchins Proposed Wilderness

Follow the directions above to Clear Springs. Continue south on up Pine Hills Scenic Drive, F.R. 236, approximately 5 miles to the Pine Hills Campground and the trailhead to **White Pine Trail**. You can follow **White Pine Trail** for 3 miles

to its terminus at F.R. 236 just south of Allen's Flat where you can either retrace your steps or follow F.R. 236 back to the campground. The **Hutchins Creek Spur** of the **White Pine Trail** leads down to Hutchins Creek. Be aware that only a small segment of the creek is on public property at this point so be sure to use your maps.

**Please note:** Privately owned land borders many parts of the Wilderness Complex and there are also several private in-holdings within the wilderness. The borders of the wilderness are clearly marked on the maps. Please respect the privacy rights of landowners — do not trespass.

### Where to Stay, What to See and Do

#### **Campsites**

- Pine Hills Campground, SNF, 618-833-8576
- Trail of Tears State Forest, 618-833-4910

#### **Lodging**

- Hidden Lake B&B, Jonesboro, 618-833-5252
- Iron Mountain B&B, Jonesboro, 618-833-5613
- Kite Hill Vineyard B&B, Murphysboro, 618-684-5072
- Lincoln Motel, Jonesboro, 618-833-2181
- Rustic Hideaway Cabins, Jonesboro, 618-833-3386
- Super 8, Anna, 618-833-1888
- Several major chain motels are found in Carbondale

#### **Restaurants**

Numerous restaurants, too many to name, can be found in Anna, Jonesboro, Murphysboro and Carbondale.

#### **Other attractions in the area**

- Alto Pass Root Beer Saloon
- Big Muddy River
- Cave Valley, SNF
- Fountain Bluff, SNF
- Little Grand Canyon, SNF
- Oakwood Bottoms, SNF
- Pomona Natural Bridge
- Trail of Tears State Forest
- Shawnee Hills Wine Trail
- Shawnee Hills Orchards Trail

#### **Closest Medical Facility**

- Union County Hospital  
517 North Main Street  
Anna, IL 62906; 618-833-4511

#### **USFS Ranger Station**

- Jonesboro Ranger District  
521 North Main Street  
Jonesboro, IL 62906; 618-833-8576
- Murphysboro Ranger District  
2221 Walnut  
Murphysboro, IL 62966; 618-687-1731

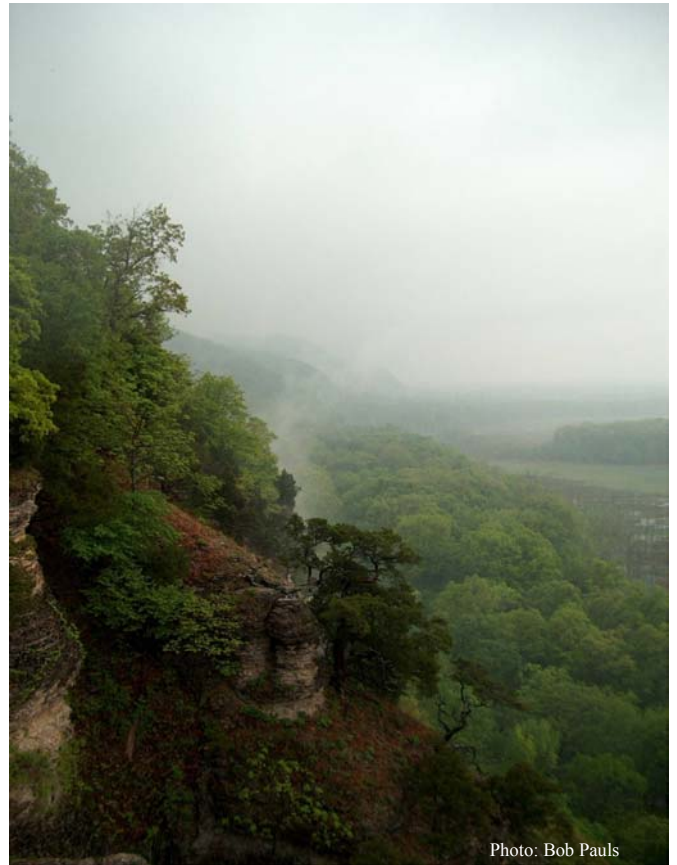


Photo: Bob Pauls

*South View from Inspiration Point*

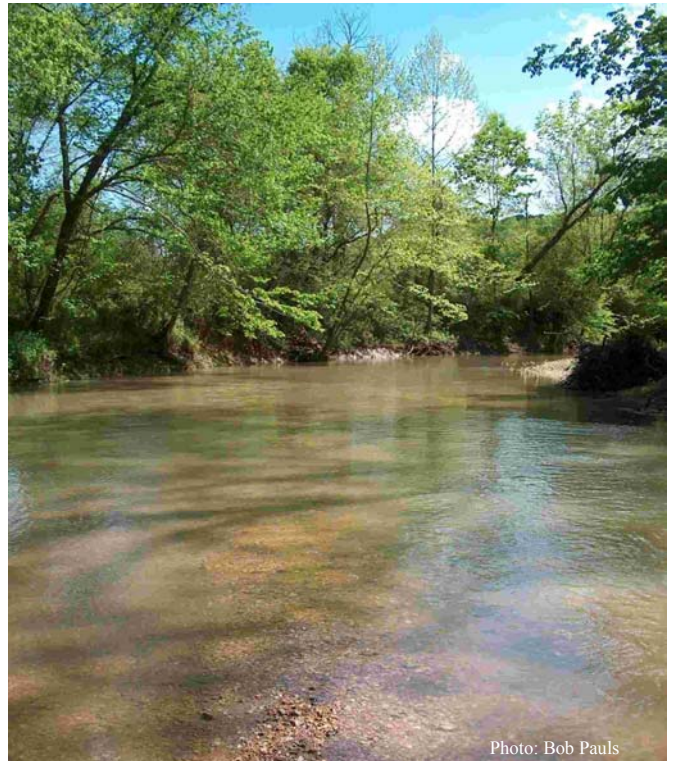


Photo: Bob Pauls

*Hutchins Creek*

#### **For more information, contact**

**Illinois Wilderness Action Network (IWAN)**

P. O. Box 117

Carbondale, IL 62903

<http://www.illinoiswilderness.org>



Wilderness users should use good outdoor ethics and follow the Leave No Trace Principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

*"Wilderness to the people of America is a spiritual necessity ... a means of regaining serenity and equilibrium."*

~ Sigurd Olson

