

The Visitor



- Wildcat Mountain State Park
- Mill Bluff State Park
- The Elroy-Sparta State Trail
- The "400" State Trail
- The La Crosse River State Trail
- The Kickapoo Valley Reserve



400 TRAIL: CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

It was the final link in what would become more than 100 miles of off-road biking stretching from Reedsburg to north of Trempealeau.

In 1993, the rail line between Reedsburg and Elroy had been abandoned for nearly three decades. Weeds and junk accumulated along a path where once sleek and powerful engines raced passengers between Chicago and Minneapolis.

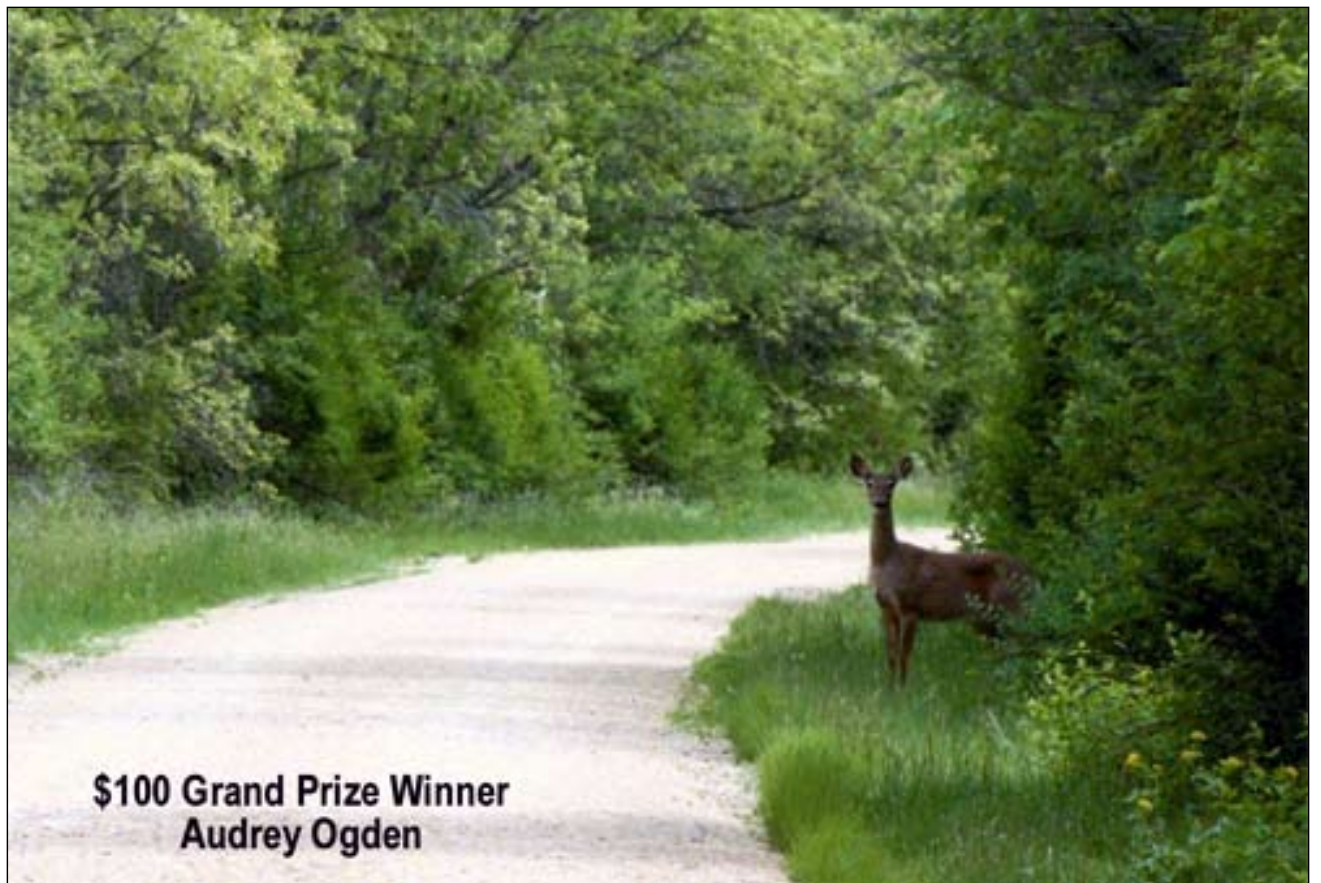
Opened in 1873, the Madison extension, as it was known, was the Chicago and Northwestern railway's rush job to link Chicago to the milling town of Minneapolis and ultimately to the wheat fields of the Plains. Eager to beat its competitors, the company was forced to choose a route through Wisconsin's most difficult topography.

To traverse a section of line between Elroy and Sparta, the Chicago and Northwestern built three tunnels. Later, in 1967, that 32-mile section opened as Wisconsin's first rails-to-trails conversion. Two more sections, the La Crosse River Trail and the Great River Trail, were added later.

The section from Reedsburg to Elroy was far less challenging for the rail builders and was finished in short order, compared with the Elroy-Sparta section. Yet it too was troubled, as tracks that had been installed in winter sank into the spring mush and had to be rebuilt after the seasonal thaw.

Ron Nelson, manager at Wildcat Mountain State Park in the 1990s, saw the potential in adding this section of trail, which would provide a wide array of opportunities for viewing many species unique to wetlands. In June 1993, the 400 State Trail officially opened.

Packed limestone screenings and bridges with planked floors provide a smooth bike-riding surface. Wetlands, sandstone bluffs, rolling croplands and pastures are just a few of the sights that visitors enjoy on the 400 Trail. Characterized by many Baraboo River crossings, the entire length of the trail follows the river valley. Snowmobilers use the trail in the winter months, plus a unique feature of the 400 Trail is a 7-mile horse trail that parallels the bike trail and stretches from Wonewoc to La Valle.



In the Friends of the 400 Trail photography contest, Audrey Ogden received the \$100 grand prize for her photo depicting wildlife on the 400 State Trail.

From the very beginning, Nelson worked with a group of local residents interested in developing the trail. That group ultimately formed the Friends of the 400 Trail. Two representatives from each town on the trail sit on the management board and continue to improve and promote the trail, using funds from the sale of trail passes and souvenirs.



20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION Saturday, June 8

- 10–10:15 a.m. — Reedsburg festivities (those

riding the trail have a 7-mile, approximately 40-minute ride to La Valle)

- 11–11:15 a.m. — La Valle festivities (those riding the trail have a 7-mile, approximately 40-minute ride to Wonewoc)

- 12–12:15 p.m. — Wonewoc festivities (those riding the trail have a 4-mile, approximately 20-minute ride to Union Center)

- 1–1:15 p.m. — Union Center festivities (those riding the trail have a 4-mile, approximately 20-minute ride to Elroy)

- 2–2:15 p.m. — Elroy festivities

A message from Wildcat Mountain State Park Work Unit staff

"The Visitor" you are reading aims to answer your most commonly asked questions about the park and trails. If you have other questions or comments, ask the staff out in the park, on the trail, or at the park office.

"The Visitor" is produced and distributed free of charge through the County Line, a community newspaper serving Norwalk, Ontario, Kendall and Elroy. Please don't throw away "The Visitor"; take it home for future

reference or pass it to a friend.

The State Park & Trails employees are a dedicated bunch! The Wisconsin State Parks' mission is to provide the highest-quality state-park experience, resource stewardship and service. Help us maintain these precious areas for your visits and for the future. Let us know how we're doing by filling out a Guest Comment Card. Your thoughts help us make the most of your experience in state parks!

Wildcat Mountain State Park Work Unit

P.O. Box 99
E13660 State Hwy. 33
Ontario, WI 54651
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/specific/wildcat/>
(608) 337-4775



THE KICKAPOO VALLEY RESERVE is jointly managed by the state Department of Tourism and the Ho-Chunk Nation. To learn more about the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, call (608) 625-2960 or go to <http://kvr.state.wi.us/home/>.

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A BLANKET OF BLUEBELLS



In the spring, expanses of bluebells are a visual treat at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

CULTURAL EVENTS



Ho-Chunk Nation members periodically offer cultural events at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. The State of Wisconsin and Ho-Chunk Nation jointly manage the property.

Kitch Your Wagon In Ontario

We are the Gateway to the Kickapoo Valley

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Wildcat Mountain State Park and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve are in our backyard

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 E-mail: villageofontario@centurytel.net

Wilton
 The of the Trail

Stop at our Caboose Visitor Center on the Trail, and then bike just a few blocks to the Village of Wilton Campground located on the banks of the Kickapoo. Enjoy our swimming pool, volleyball courts and softball field. Restrooms, shower and laundry facilities are available. For more information, contact The Village of Wilton PO Box 70, Wilton, WI 54670 608-435-6666

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Thank you for visiting Wisconsin State Parks!

HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN WISCONSIN STATE PARKS

The Sporting Heritage Act (Act 168) was added in April 2012. It included a variety of measures to encourage more people to become involved with Wisconsin's longstanding traditions of hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Among other things, Act 168 provided first-time hunters, anglers and trappers discounts on licenses; provided incentives for people who recruit others into buying licenses; and increased safety education opportunities. It also expanded hunting opportunities and allowed trapping for the first time on Wisconsin state park system properties.

The act allowed the Department of Natural Resources to prohibit hunting and trapping within 100 yards of designated-use areas, such as picnic areas, camp-

Act 168 encourages involvement with state traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping

grounds, beaches and certain designated trails. The act authorized the State Natural Resources Board to close additional areas for safety reasons or to protect unique ecosystems. The hunting time frame for state parks established by the Natural Resources Board coincides with periods of lower visitor use of state parks.

Maps indicating which areas of each park are open and closed to hunting will be posted at the parks, will be available at the park office, and are available online at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/hunt/>.

The Natural Resources Board restricted hunting and trapping on state park properties from Nov. 15 through Dec. 15 and from April 1 through the Tuesday nearest May 3 for the open seasons established for different game species. In addition, hunting with legal archery methods is allowed from Dec. 15 through the Sunday nearest Jan. 6.

Trapping is allowed in all areas open to hunting, but it is not allowed within 100 yards of any designated trail. Only traps incapable of catching pets or those placed

under water may be used in state parks. Hunters and trappers can enter a state park one hour prior to the daily hunting and trapping starting times.

Before passage of Act 168, many state park properties were already open for deer hunting seasons, and some also were open for spring turkey hunting. The DNR has an extensive hunter safety program, and there has been an excellent safety record for the hunts that have previously taken place on state park properties. During open hunting seasons, all visitors are encouraged to wear blaze orange or other brightly colored clothing.

For more information, visit the DNR website (dnr.wi.gov) and search keywords "hunting state parks."

Wildcat has diverse flora and fauna



A picnic area at Wildcat Mountain's upper park is a relaxing spot to watch wildlife.

Wildcat Mountain State Park provides habitat for a variety of animals, birds and plants. Trails and overlooks give visitors the opportunity to enter their habitat and possibly spot a few.

Mammals

White tail deer, squirrels, raccoons, skunks and opossum are common. You may also see thirteen-lined ground squirrels, red and grey foxes, coyotes and mink. River otters and muskrats make their homes along the river banks.

Amphibians & Reptiles

Northern spring peepers are one of the first frogs to begin singing in spring. Along with chorus and bullfrogs, they put on their annual spring symphony in low-lying areas. All frogs require water for breeding. Other common species are the tree frog, leopard frog, wood frog and American toad.

Reptiles in Wildcat Mountain State Park include eastern hog-nose snakes, five-line skinks and red-bellied snakes, which like moist, grassy areas. The snakes are not poisonous and quickly slink away from people if startled.

Birds

Large birds include wild turkey, bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, turkey vulture, pileated woodpecker, sandhill crane, and barred owl. Kingfishers, little green heron and blue herons are found near the water, where they search for food. Colorful song birds like the indigo bunting, rose-breasted grosbeak and a variety of warblers can be heard. Throughout the park there are

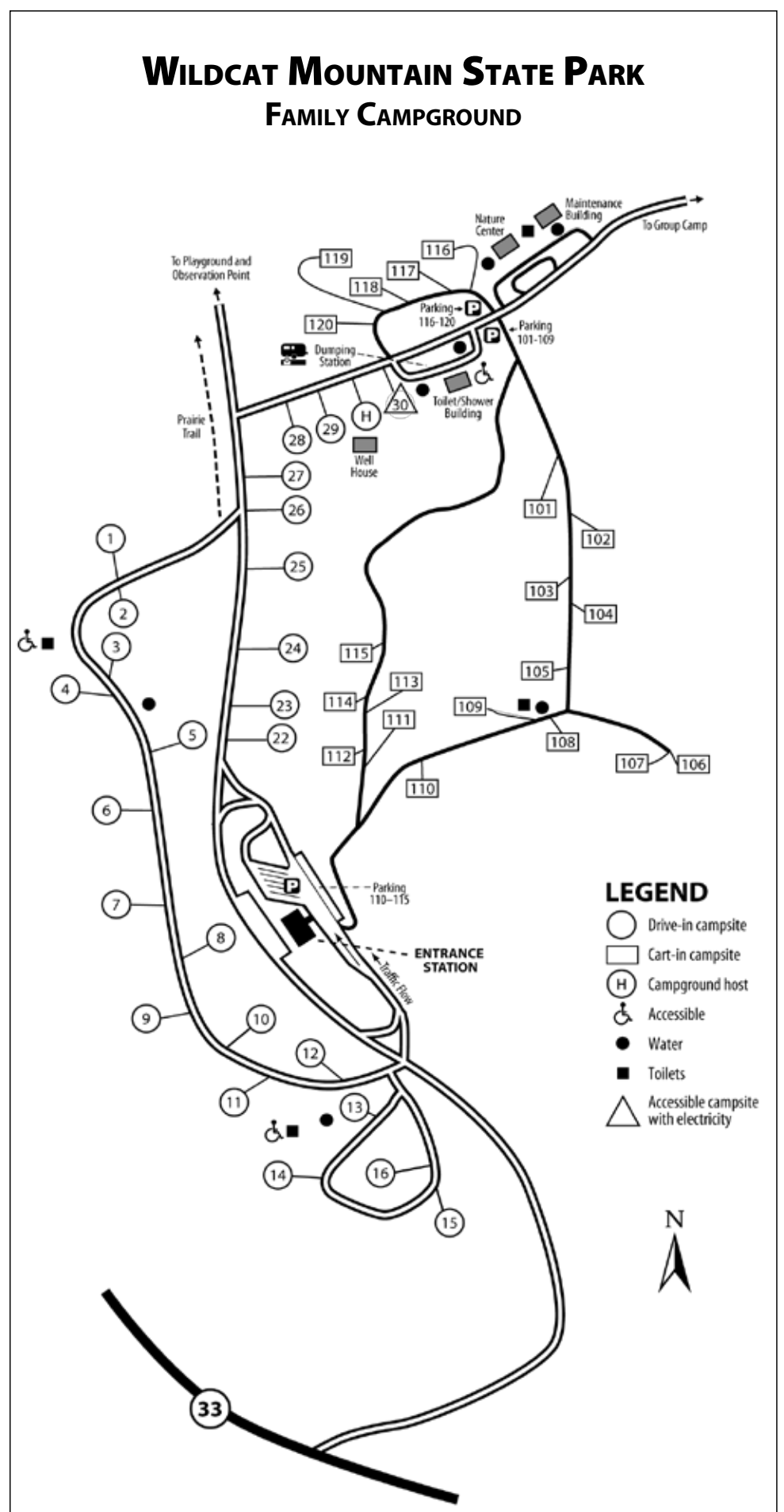
bluebird houses. Bluebirds begin taking residence in March and may raise two sets of young over the summer.

Wildcat Mountain, along with the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, has been recognized as a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area. An Important Bird Area is a site that provides essential habitat to one or more species of breeding or non-breeding birds. The site provides habitat for more than 100 species of breeding birds. Among them are species considered either threatened or endangered, such as the Kentucky warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, acadian flycatcher, wood thrush, cerulean warbler, and the worm-eating warbler. Thousands of landbirds migrate through in both fall and spring, and about 25 percent of the state's over-wintering population of golden eagles is found here.

Plants

Cool water seeps through the porous sandstone cliffs along the river. This provides a microclimate where a few rare plant species, relicts from a cooler climate of the past, can still survive.

Hemlock trees and large pine, native to northern Wisconsin, are also able to thrive on the cool, north-facing cliffs. The upper Kickapoo River valley was once referred to as "the pinery." In the mid-1800s, white pine was logged and floated down the Kickapoo River. On Mount Pisgah, trees were never cut for



See NATURE, page 4

What are hemlock relicts?

At Wildcat Mountain State Park, the Hemlock Trail goes through a State Natural Area called Mount Pisgah Hemlock Hardwoods.

Hemlock relicts are small patches of mesic forest composed mostly of species that are disjunct from and generally far south of their usual Wisconsin ranges.

Most documented relicts occur in southwestern Wisconsin's Driftless Area, within the Western Coulees and Ridges Ecological Landscape. Typical sites are deep, steep-sided, moist ravines, with cool northern or eastern slope exposures.

Exposures of bedrock, most often Cambrian sandstones, are usually present, and contribute to the ability of this community to develop and persist in areas that would otherwise be vegetated with deciduous hardwood forests.

The porous sandstone has a high capacity to hold water, which slowly moves through the rock and keeps conditions humid and cool.

The dominant tree is most frequently eastern hemlock. Eastern white pine, yellow birch, and paper birch are common "northern" canopy associates.

Other trees are usually those that are present in the adjoining hardwood forests.

Shrubs and herbs with northern affinities are important, and may include mountain maple, Canada yew, showy mountain ash, blue-bead lily, rosy twisted-stalk, shining club-moss, and spinulose wood fern.

The dense shade of the hemlock, combined with the northern aspect of many stands, means that very little light reaches the forest floor. The ground layer is often very sparse.

Hemlock relicts are highly localized, and not randomly or widely distributed in southwestern Wisconsin. They are concentrated in a few areas, such as the drainages of the upper Kickapoo and Baraboo Rivers, and in a few of the deep gorges that cut into the flanks of the Baraboo Hills.

Extremely isolated outliers are known from a few sites south of the Wisconsin River.

Unusual plants and animals have been documented in a number of stands. These include "periglacial" relicts, that for various reasons were unable to keep pace with changes to the vegetation as the climate changed following the last glacial advance, and a number of habitat specialists that are rare elsewhere in southern Wisconsin.

banks in spring. jack-in-the-pulpit, Dutchman's britches, trillium, wood phlox, Columbine, wild geranium, and May-apple are just a few of the wildflowers found throughout the park.

One unusual plant you'll find growing among the cliffs is the walking fern. Its long, narrow, arching leaves radiate from the roots. Leaf tips that touch the ground sprout new plants. This is how the plant "walks" and spreads across a cliff. Other ferns have interesting names, too. There are ostrich, cinnamon, lady, wood, interrupted, and maidenhair ferns.

Remember: Take only pictures; leave only footprints.

Nature

(Continued from page 3)

lumber, nor was Mount Pisgah ever grazed. Preservation of this virgin timber is one reason Mount Pisgah was designated a state natural area in 1952. Interpretive labels on the 1.4-mile Hemlock Nature Trail describe some of the plant life found there. Growing in the understory are huckleberry, blueberry, pipsissewa, bunchberry, wintergreen and partridgeberry. Mosses, lichens and liverwort grow on the moist rocky ledges.

Virginia bluebells carpet the river's

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Where did Wildcat get its name?

In the 1800s, local farmers were upset because a bobcat, also called a wildcat, had killed several sheep. The farmers formed a hunting party and tracked and killed the animal to prevent further loss of livestock. The cat was shot near what is now the main overlook of the park. Thereafter, area residents called this spot "wildcat hill," later changed to Wildcat Mountain.

Now, the park has no wildcats, but plenty of other creatures make Wildcat their home, such as raccoons, skunks, fox, coyotes, wild turkey and deer.

Don't be complacent about fire!

Users should not become complacent about fire.

Children should be watched very closely when in the vicinity of fire. When setting up to use an area, become aware of the location of the fire ring. Make sure the fire is out, and the grill or fire ring cool before leaving the area or retiring for the evening.

Watch the wind direction to ensure sparks aren't getting on flammable materials. Put the fire out if wind changes begin to cause concern.

Don't remove hot materials from the fire ring or grill. If using your own grill, place the hot coals in an available park or forest grill, fire ring or at designated disposal sites.

VISIT THE RESERVE VISITOR CENTER

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Wildcat an example of driftless topography

Wildcat Mountain State Park is in the heart of the driftless area of southwest Wisconsin.

Once completely surrounded by glaciers, the driftless area preserves what the northern and eastern United States, including the rest of Wisconsin, were like before the last ice age.

The term "driftless" refers to a lack of glacial drift, the residue left behind by retreating glaciers. In surrounding regions, drift from retreating glaciers buried all former topography, creating features such as moraines, eskers, drumlins and lakes. But the highlands to the north of the driftless area protected it from ice invasion. As the ice sheets receded, streams of glacial-melt water cut deep into the dolomite-capped sandstone, etching out a beautiful landscape of steep, winding valleys and rugged ridges.

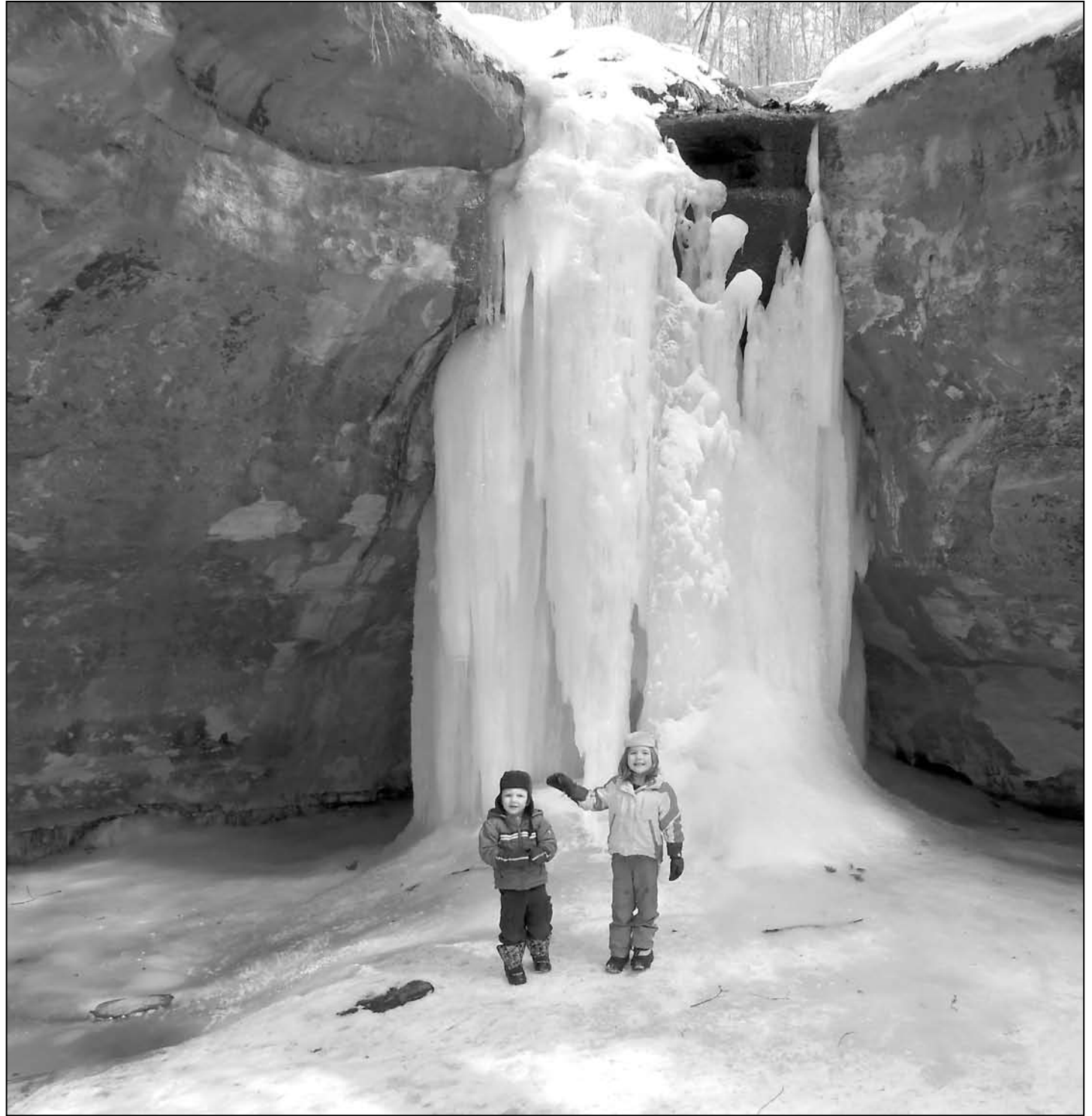
The Kickapoo River and its tributaries lie in the heart of driftless area. The streams flow with the slope of the terrain, forming a dendritic drainage pattern. Looking at the Kickapoo River watershed from above, it resembles branches on a tree.

"Kickapoo" comes from the Algonquin word "Kiwigapawa," meaning "he stands about," or "he moves about, standing now here, now there." The Kickapoo River does just that. It meanders in every direction, traveling more than 125 river miles within a 65-mile distance.

The beauty of the river can be experienced by canoe or kayak. Between the villages of Ontario and La Farge, there are 18 canoe landings on the Kickapoo. Wildcat Mountain's lower picnic area is a popular starting and stopping point. In fact, the park's origins began there, with a 20-acre tract. Amos Theodore Sanders donated it in 1938. He wanted it preserved so that others like himself might know the unspoiled woods of the Upper Kickapoo. Since then, the park has grown to 3,821 acres. Today, along with canoeing, the park offers trails, spectacular views, and camping for families, groups and horseback riders.

Whether you're here for a brief stop at the Observation Point or a leisurely trip on the river or trails, we hope you will explore and enjoy.

GOT ICE?



The ice cave is a shallow "cave" or rock outcropping with a spring above it. Water tumbles over the rock ledge. In summer, it's a cool shady place where marsh marigolds, ferns and spring wildflowers grow. Trees shade the area, keeping it in constant twilight. In late fall, days and nights become colder and the trickling water freezes and gradually builds up. By mid-winter, the trickle of water turns into a huge icefall, reaching from the top of the ledge to the ground below. In its full glory, it can be about 20 feet high and 10 feet thick. The thick ice acts like a filter, absorbing red light, which makes it appear blue. The icefall has been known to stick around through May. It's a winter spectacle you won't want to miss!



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PHONE: (608) 625-4422. ON THE INTERNET: WWW.LAFARGE-WISCONSIN.COM

Wildcat Mountain State Park Horse Trail Campground

The map shows a campground layout with 24 campsites (1e-24e) arranged along a main road. Facilities include a Day Use Parking area, a Corral, a Bulletin Board, a Camp Host, and a Rock Johnson Trail. A legend indicates symbols for Water, Toilet, electricity (e), and Horse Trail Access. A table provides details for each campsite.

Campsite #	Max. Truck and Trailer Length	Campsite #	Max. Truck and Trailer Length
1e	40+	13e	40
2e	40+	14e	40+
3e	40+	15e	35
4e	40+	16e	35
5	30	17e	35
6	35	18e	35
7	35	19e	40
8e	35	20e	40+
9e	40	21e	35
10e	40	22e	40+
11e	40	23e	40+
12e	40	24e	40+

What does garlic mustard look like?

- Garlic mustard grows one to three feet tall, forming dense stands.
- The flower is white, with four petals. It blooms from May through July.
- The leaves are triangular, with toothed edges. When crushed, the leaves and stem smell strongly of onion or garlic.
- Fruit are slender capsules, 1-2 1/2 inches long. They look like long green fingers. Each plant produces 200 or more seeds. Seeds can germinate for up to seven years.
- Report findings and locations of this invasive to the park office.

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Events

Wildcat Mountain State Park Work Unit

• **Prairie Walk Sunday, May 12, 1:30 pm. La Crosse River State Trail Prairie:**

Come and explore this railroad prairie remnant along the bike trail with Jim Rogala of the Prairie Enthusiasts. Early season bloomers include prairie smoke, downy phlox, lupine, bird's-foot violet, and hoary puccoon. This is a leisurely walk on level terrain. Meet in Rockland, WI (near I-90 in eastern La Crosse County) at the railroad crossing on Commercial St. (CTH J). 608-786-1855

• **National Trails Day, June 1:** American Hiking Society's National Trails Day® (NTD) is a celebration of America's magnificent Trail System, occurring annually on the first Saturday in June. All trail fees on all department owned properties are waived in honor of this day. <http://www.americanhiking.org/NTD/info/>

• **State Park Open House Day Sunday, June 2:**

Every year on the first Sunday of the first full weekend in June, Wisconsin State Parks and Trails are open to the public free of charge. Explore new places and enjoy one of the many events! For information on state park special events, visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/getoutdoors/events.html>.

• **Free Fishing Weekend Saturday & Sunday, June 1-2:**

Every year, the first consecutive Saturday and Sunday in June is designated

as Free Fishing Weekend throughout Wisconsin. Residents and nonresidents of all ages can fish without a license (and trout stamps) over these two days. However, all other fishing regulations (length and bag limits, etc.) apply. Many parks sponsor free fishing activities.

• **400 State Trail 20th Anniversary, Saturday, June 8:**

The 20th anniversary of the 400 State Bike Trail will be commemorated with a series of celebrations in the five towns located along its length: Reedsburg, La Valle, Wonewoc, Union Center and Elroy. For more information, call (608) 464-3220.

• **Prairie Walk Sunday, June 30, 1:30 pm. La Crosse River State Trail Prairie:**

Enjoy the afternoon along the bike trail with Jim Rogala of the Prairie Enthusiasts. You'll find cool-season grasses (June grass and porcupine grass), penstemon, spiderwort, goat's rue, coreopsis and other early summer bloomers. This is a leisurely walk on level terrain. Meet in Rockland, WI (near I-90 in eastern La Crosse County) at the railroad crossing on Commercial St. (CTH J). 608-786-1855.

• **Star Party Saturday, August 3, 8 p.m., Wildcat Mountain Amphitheater:**

Join the Northwest Suburban Astronomers for a night under the stars and search for galaxies, star clusters and nebulae with their large array of tele-

scopes. Guest speaker Mark Behrendt will give tips on how to pick out your first telescope. He will explain the different types of telescopes and give you realistic expectations on what you will be able to do and see with it. He will discuss the effects of light pollution and show some photographs taken by NSA club members, showing why they travel to Wildcat Mountain each year for its dark skies!

Afterward there will be deep sky observing for the general public through club members' telescopes. In case of rain, join the group at the Nature Center

• **Meet Mark Twain, Saturday, August 24, 8 p.m., Wildcat Mountain State Park Amphitheater:**

Ever wanted to meet Mark Twain? Well, now you can! Go back in time as Ralph Buchanan impersonates the famous author in a 1905-era lecture about life on the Mississippi.

• **Torchlight Ski/Hike Saturday, January 11, 2014, 5-9 p.m. Wildcat Mountain:**

Come on out for our annual evening of fun in the dark! Ski, hike or snowshoe a gentle 1.5-mile trail through woods and field with torches lighting the way. With astronomers, view the night sky through telescopes. Enjoy hot cocoa, tea and snacks inside the heated building at the trail head. Bonfires and charcoal will be fired up for grilling. Call ahead for weather conditions. 608-337-4775.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

WILDCAT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

Emergencies: 911

Complaints: Park rangers need your help detecting problems. If you observe a violation, please immediately report it to a campground host, a ranger or staff at the park office. Waiting until morning or delaying filing a complaint can make a ranger's ability to take corrective action difficult. Always include key information like vehicle make, license plate number and campsite number.

Fire or Disturbance: Report any fire or disturbance immediately to park office, 608-337-4775.

Hospital: Gundersen Lutheran, Hillsboro, 608-489-8000

Pharmacy: Peterson Pharmacy, Hillsboro, 608-489-3141

Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222.

Local Radio Stations: 102.3 FM Viroqua, 93.3 FM La Crosse, 97.1 Sparta

Sheriff's Department: Vernon County (non-emergencies), 608-637-2123.

Tow Truck: 24-hr., 608-553-6565

Veterinarians: Rolling Hills, Hillsboro, 608-489-3576; Rolling Hills, Wilton, 608-435-6858; Cashton Veterinary Service, 608-654-5284

Wildlife (injured) Rehabilitator: Coulee Region Animal Control, (608) 781-4014

CAMPSITE RESERVATIONS FOR WILDCAT MOUNTAIN AND MILL BLUFF

CALL TOLL FREE 1-888-WIPARKS (947-2757) OR GO TO WWW.WIPARKS.NET.

Visa or Mastercard are accepted. A \$9.70 reservation fee applies. Campsites can be reserved up to 11 months in advance, or pending availability, as late as 2 days prior to arrival.

Reservations are accepted for **Mill Bluff** from Memorial Day weekend through Sept. 28 and for **Wildcat Mountain** from May 1 through Oct. 30.

REGISTRATION, SELF-REGISTRATION: All campers must register when they arrive at the park. If you have a reservation, be prepared to present your confirmation letter at the park office upon check-in. If you arrive and the park office is not open, and you do not have a reservation, use the self-registration station at the office. A list of available sites is posted at the park office.

OCCUPYING THE CAMP-SITE:

A camping unit must occupy

the reserved campsite by 3 p.m. on the second day of the reservation and be present for the duration of the reservation. If you do not check in and occupy your reserved site before 3 p.m. the day after the scheduled arrival date and remain for the duration of the reservation, you will forfeit the site.

Campers on first-come, first-served sites must occupy the site the first night and any consecutive nights for which they have registered.

EXTENDING A STAY: Customers may not extend the departure date of a reservation until they have checked in at the park. Extensions will be made at the park, if the site is available. Campsite extensions must be made through the office no later than the day before your scheduled departure.

LEAVING EARLY: If a camper decides to leave early they may be entitled to a refund. No refund will be given for the current night after

the 3 p.m. checkout time.

CAMPING RULES

• Before setting up camp, register at Park Office and receive a camping permit. Clip the permit to the campsite marker post.

• State parks are closed to non-campers between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. All visitors must leave the park by 11 p.m. During closed hours, campers must be in or be enroute to their registered campsite. No camping party may set up or take down a camping unit between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

• Campers may not switch sites without prior approval.

• Extensions are accepted, if available, prior to the last night of the permit period.

• Campsite check in / check out time is 3 p.m. You may set up earlier if the site was not occupied the night before.

• Motor vehicles are restricted to the designated parking area on each

See RESERVATIONS, page 18



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SAFETY, SERVICES and SUPPLIES | Wildcat Mountain State Park



ACCESSIBILITY

Upper Picnic Area

Overlook: Persons who use wheel chairs or other assistive devices for

mobility can access the upper picnic area overlook from the parking lot via a 300' asphalt paved trail.

Prairie Trail Overlook: Begin near family campsite 1, a 925' packed limestone trail.

Taylor Hollow Overlook (Old Settler's Trail): Begin at the nature building, 3/8 mile packed limestone trail.

Shelters: Both the upper picnic area and lower picnic area have accessible shelters with large grills.

Ice Cave: The beginning portion of this packed limestone trail provides access to a small picnic area and vault toilets. There is also easy access to Billings Creek for fishing.

Camping: Site 30 in the family campground is a level site with electricity. It is located next to the shower building. A key to the accessible shower can be picked up at the park office.



CAMPGROUND SERVICES

Shower facilities are open, weather permitting, from mid-May through

mid-October. The rest of the year, vault toilets are open and water is available at the maintenance building.

The trailer dump station is next to the shower building. Campers may not drain waste water or sewage on the ground.

Propane and ice sources include the Fastrip in Ontario and the Kwik Trip in Hillsboro.

Local church service schedules are available at the park office.

Campground hosts give assistance and information to park visitors and communicate facility needs to park staff. In the family camp, the camp host site is near the shower building. Horse camp hosts (next to site 6) also sell admission stickers, trail passes and register campers.

Lost & Found items are maintained at the park office. 608-337-4775.



PICNICKING

Wildcat Mountain has 3 picnic areas. The upper picnic area has a shelter, playground and

2 observation points. The lower picnic area (off of Hwy 33) has a shelter and canoe launch. The ice cave picnic area is located on Co. F.

Carry in – Carry out: Picnic areas, trails and other day-use areas do not have garbage or recycling bins. When you visit for a few hours or less, you'll need to take your garbage and recyclables home with you. We urge visitors bring reusable items. The more reusable things we pack, the less garbage we'll create.

Help us stay green. It's good for us and for our environment.

SHELTERS

The upper picnic shelter is reservable. It is a 32-foot octagonal shape that can accommodate 40 or more people. There is large picnic grill is just outside the shelter. Drinking fountain, vault toilets, playground equipment and overlook nearby. No electricity. This is a great place for gatherings of all ages. Reservations can be made up to 11 months in advance at the park office, either in person or by mail.

The lower picnic area (canoe launch area) has a 30-by-38-foot open shelter with large picnic grill, picnic tables, drinking fountain and vault toilets. This shelter is first-come-first served. No electricity.



PETS

Pets are welcome in Wisconsin State Parks.

For the protection of visitors and wildlife, pets are NOT allowed in buildings, picnic and beach areas and playgrounds or on the Hemlock Nature Trail.

Rangers enforce pet rules for the safety of visitors and pets themselves. Thank you for being considerate of other campers while vacationing with your pet.

- Clean up after pets.
- Keep pets on a leash, no more than eight feet long, at all times.
- Pets must be kept under control and not interfere with the enjoyment of the park by others.
- Pets may not be left alone or unattended. Barking pets may result in a noise citation.

CANOEING

Bridges on the Kickapoo River are numbered to correlate with the map on page 9. A canoe landing in the lower picnic area is located between bridges 4 and 5. It is approximately 2-3 hours from Ontario to the landing by canoe.

No glass on the river and please leave no trace -Pack it in-pack it out.

All craft must be equipped with a Coast Guard-approved lifesaving device for each person aboard. Don't overload your craft. Should you become capsized in fast water, stay upstream of your craft so you don't get caught between it and a log or rock. Never wade downstream in rivers, as sandbars may drop off abruptly on the downstream side.



HIKING TRAILS

Hiking trails vary in difficulty. Trails are not surfaced and become slippery when wet or leaf covered. Use caution on steep climbs and descents as well as near unprotected bluffs. Stay behind barricades. If you have questions or concerns about trails, talk to staff at the park office.

Old Settler's Trail: This 2.75-mile trail takes about 1.5-2 hours to complete. It can be accessed from either the north end of the upper picnic area or nature center/ amphitheater parking lot.

Hemlock Nature Trail: A 1.4-mile loop trail through Mt. Pisgah Hemlock-Hardwoods State Natural Area. Interpretive stops call attention to the unique plants that live in the cool moist environment of these ancient cliffs. The trail begins and ends at the lower picnic area bulletin board. On top of Mt. Pisgah, the view from 365' above the river is worth the climb.

Ice Cave Trail: This short, easy trail leads to a rock shelter (a shallow cave-like opening at the base of a cliff). A small spring dripping over the edge of the rock freezes into a giant icicle in winter.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

The park has 15 miles of trail and a campground for campers who bring their own horses. The park does not have horses to rent. Trails are open for riding May 1 through Nov. 14. Trail passes are required for riders 16 and older. **STAY ON MARKED TRAILS!**

Red Loop: The Red Loop begins at the horse campground and winds its way through the park's hills and valleys. The green trail marks a short cut through the red loop.

Blue and Yellow Loops: The Blue and Yellow Loops connect to the Red Loop, taking riders farther from the park's main use areas.

Rock Johnson Trail: This short trail begins north of the horse camp and winds its way up onto a high ridge connecting with the Red Loop.

ORIENTEERING COURSE

An approximately 1-mile long orienteering course begins at the amphitheater parking lot. Compasses can be checked out at the park office.

NATURE BUILDING

Located east of the shower building (next to the big yellow barn.)

Open daily Memorial Day through October. Wisconsin Explorer Booklets for ages 3 through 9+.

Exhibits for kids and adults on wildlife, plants, fish, invasive species, and park history. Free publications on a variety of topics. Rainy day coloring activities for kids.

AT THE PARK OFFICE

- Daily Weather Forecast
- Area information
- Information on lodging and services near the La Crosse River, Elroy-Sparta and 400 State Trails
- Night Sky Charts
- Bird Species List
- Nature Journals
- Explorer Booklets
- For check out: Explorer Packs, Camp with Smokey Backpacks and Park Packs.
- Hunting & Fishing regulations
- Firewood
- Merchandise: Topographic map, carabineers, books on Turtles and Lizards, Amphibians, and Snakes of

Wisconsin.

WINTER ACTIVITIES

Cross country skiing: The park's 7-mile-long ridge top ski trail takes you to 7 scenic overlooks. It is groomed for both classic and skate skiing when conditions permit.

There's a rest stop midway where you can continue on or take a short trail turnaround. Easy bypasses around steeper areas make it suitable for beginner and intermediate skiers.

If you have questions about trail difficulty, ask at the office before starting out.

Always follow the proper direction on one-way trails. Leave space between you and other skiers and alert others when passing. Pets are not allowed on ski trails in the winter.

Snowshoeing is allowed on all trails EXCEPT THE SKI TRAIL. The 2 3/4-mile Old Settlers Hiking Trail is marked for snowshoeing.

Ice cave: Take a short easy trail to see the huge ice formation that forms each winter. Trailhead is located on County Road F along Billings Creek.

Winter camping: Campsites 1-4 in the family camp are plowed for vehicle access during the winter months. Drinking water is available at the maintenance building.

FISHING

The Kickapoo and its tributaries in the park are Category 3 trout streams. Fishing licenses and stamps are available at local sports stores or online at dnr.wi.gov. Anglers 16 years and older require a valid Wisconsin fishing license. Those fishing for trout are required to have a Trout Stamp.

ROAD SAFETY

Posted speed limits must be followed. All users must share the roads. Watch for motor vehicles, bicycles and children. Play devices are prohibited on all park roadways.

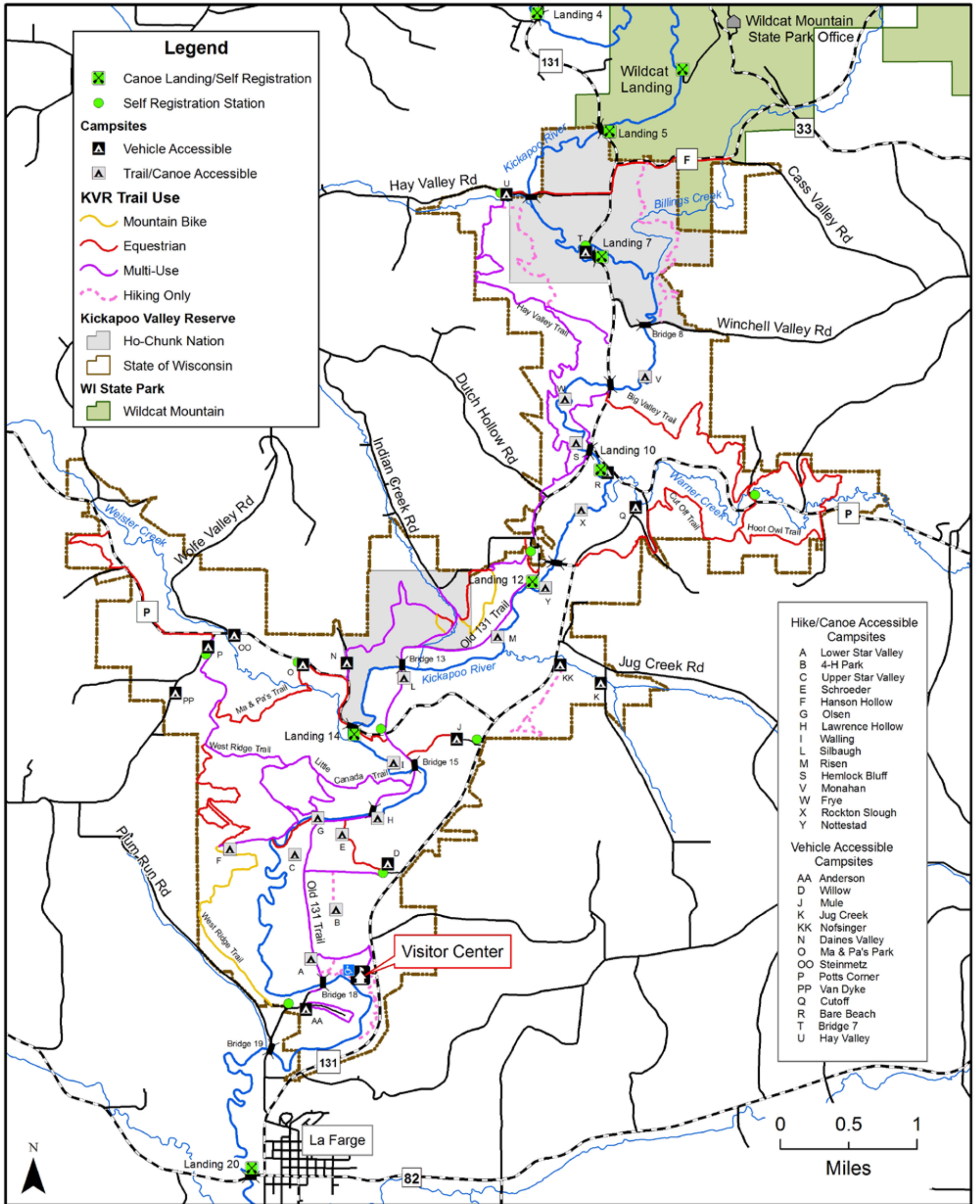
Park roads are narrow and heavily traveled. Always be alert to traffic.

Roads follow the terrain and often have steep grades, corners, and intersections. Go down these hills slowly, under full control, and be prepared to stop quickly at any time.

SAFETY TIPS FOR CYCLISTS

Though most accidents are not serious, they do happen. Wear a helmet. Ride single file on the right. Warn others when passing. Be wary of loose gravel or sand, especially after rain. Pull completely off the road to view wildlife or scenery. Teach your children to follow these tips and to be courteous cyclists.

DESIGNATED USE AREAS such as trails, picnic areas, or campgrounds are inspected or maintained by the Department of Natural Resources and shown on the official property map. All other areas are considered undesignated and are not maintained or inspected. Users are encouraged to limit activities to these areas.

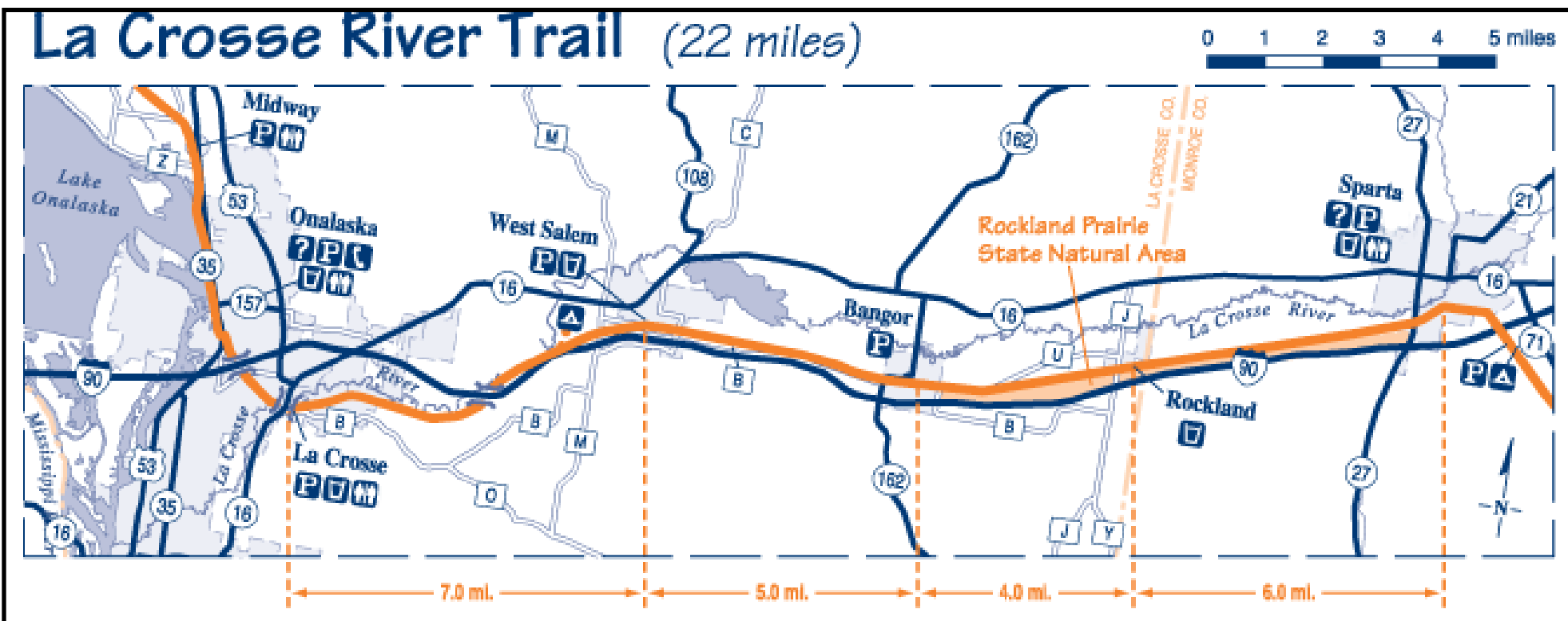
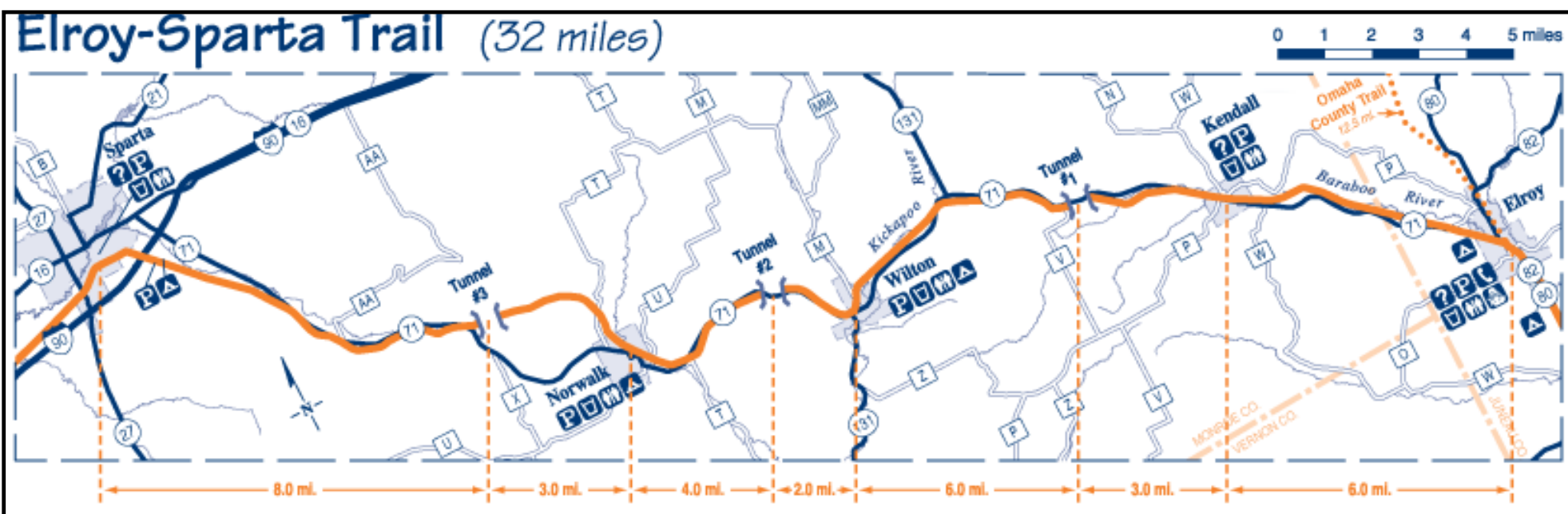
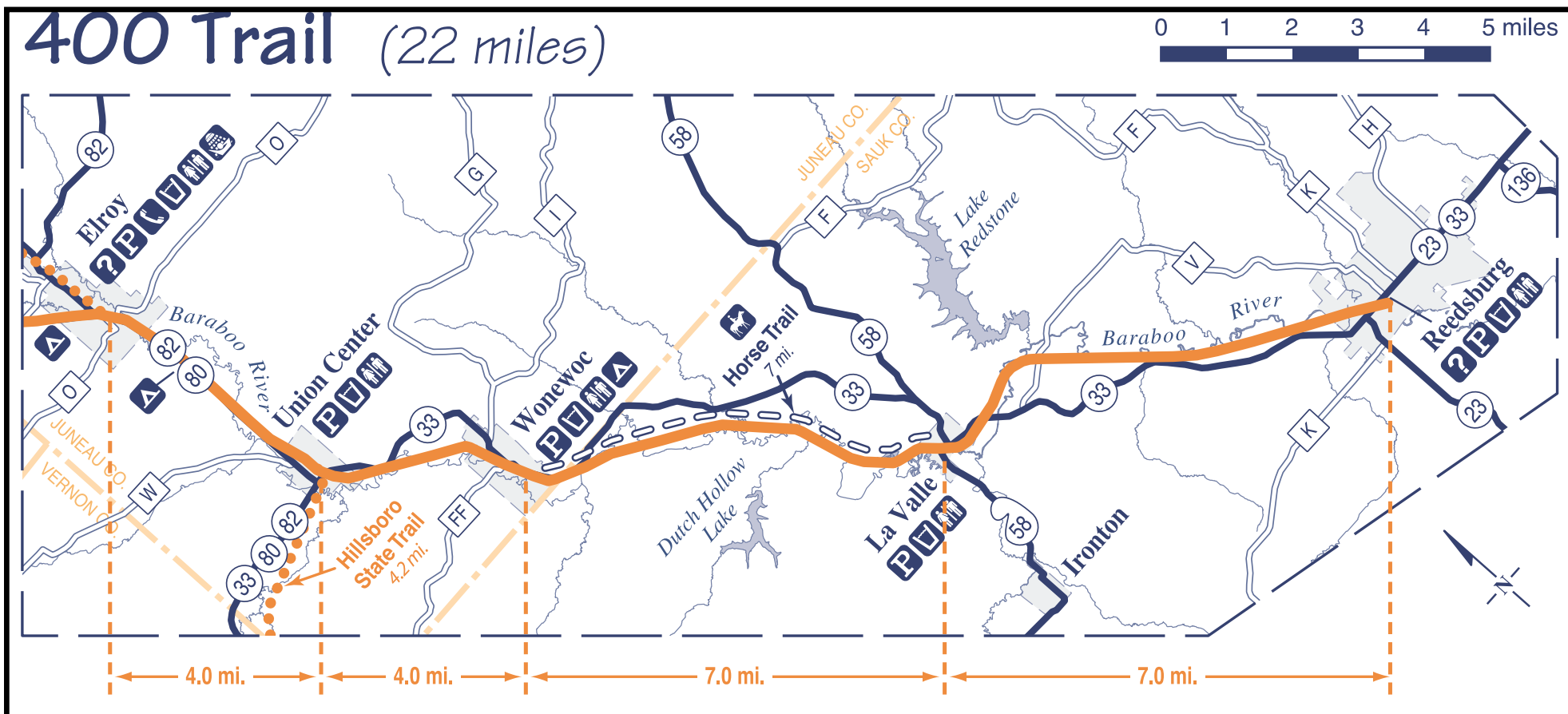


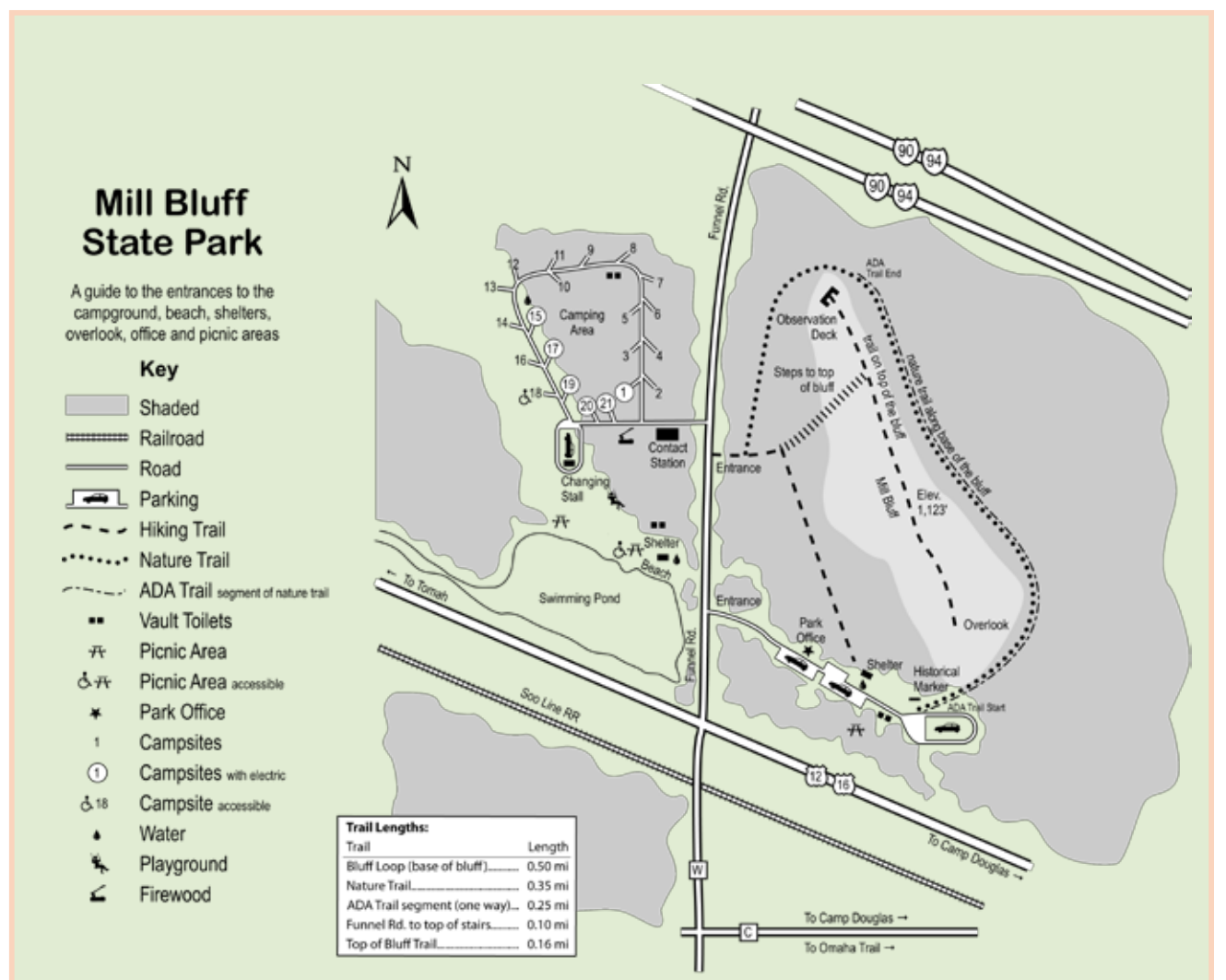
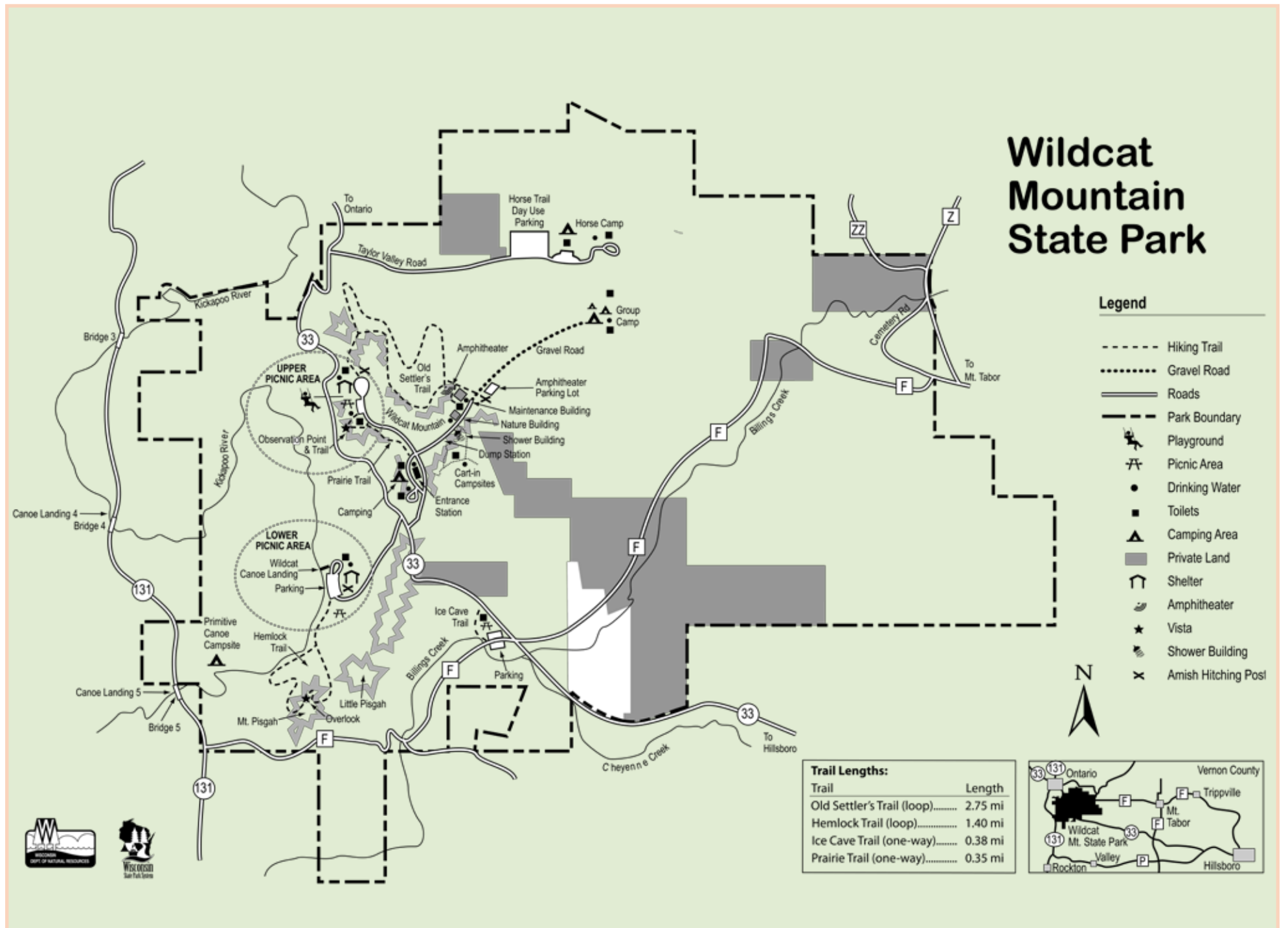
Note: The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is not part of WI DNR Park System. DNR Park vehicle stickers and trail passes do not apply for KVR use.

Kickapoo Valley Reserve
 S3661 State Hwy 131
 La Farge, WI 54639
 608 625 2960
<http://kvr.state.wi.us>



Kickapoo Valley Reserve horse and mountain bike trails will close during wet conditions. Campsites are primitive, and first come-first served. Contact KVR office for more information.





"The privilege of possessing the earth entails the responsibility of passing it on, the better for our use, not only to immediate posterity, but to the Unknown Future." — Aldo Leopold

ALDO LEOPOLD LEGACY STATE TRAIL SYSTEM

Ecologist Aldo Leopold is one of the most influential figures in Wisconsin's rich conservation history. In honor of his many contributions to Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Trail System was named the "Aldo Leopold Legacy Trail System" in 2007.

Totalling more than 1,700 miles, Wisconsin's 42 state trails continue Leopold's legacy by allowing residents and visitors of all ages to experience Wisconsin's diverse natural beauty and observe for themselves the value of conservation and land ethic.

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Please carry in and carry out your garbage

Welcome to your state parks! You'll notice there are no garbage or recycling bins in the picnic areas, shelters, beaches, and other day-use areas.

When you visit Wisconsin state parks, forests, and recreation areas, you'll need to take your garbage and recyclables home with you.

• **Home away from home:** The parks belong to all of us, and just like at home, we need to care for them and

keep them clean.

• **Less mess:** Removal of the garbage and recycling containers eliminates the smells and mess they create. It also cuts down on yellow jackets and other pests.

• **Reduce, reuse, recycle:** Wisconsin state law requires us to recycle many materials we formerly threw away. The more reusable things we pack, the less garbage we'll create. It's good for us and for our earth.



Fall foliage makes for an impressive display at Wildcat Mountain.

Have A Wild Day!

KICKAPOO WILD ADVENTURES LLC

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Kickapoo Wild Adventures
www.kickapoowild.com

30352 State Highway 131 • Norwalk • WI • 54648
1/2 mile north of Ontario on Highway 131 • 608-337-4522

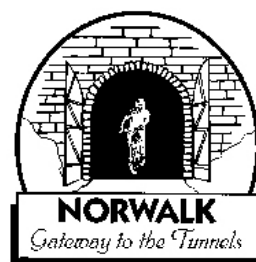


Between the tunnels, Norwalk extends a warm welcome

Wireless Internet @ Village Hall & Library

Visit our new campground!
Electric • picnic shelters • showers

- May 19: Village Wide Rummage Sale
- Aug. 9-11: Lions Tractor Pull, Chicken Q and Flower Show
- Nov. 3: Rails-to-Trails Marathon



Village of Norwalk
P.O. Box 230
Norwalk, WI 54648
Phone-608-823-7760, Ext. 21
FAX-608-823-7293
villageofnorwalk@centurytel.net

Share nature with your children!

Make tracks to the park office for a free Wisconsin Explorer booklet

Today, many children are growing up in structured environments that don't allow much time or freedom to play outdoors. By helping them connect to things they discover in nature, you nurture values of good stewardship and build strong bonds that will last for a lifetime.

With Wisconsin State Park Explorer booklets, you can discover amazing things together. Activities in the booklets include scavenger hunts, games, hikes, crafts, and other nature-based activities. Families can borrow Explorer Packs that contain crayons, magnifying lenses, bug boxes, and other materials needed to complete the activities in the booklets.

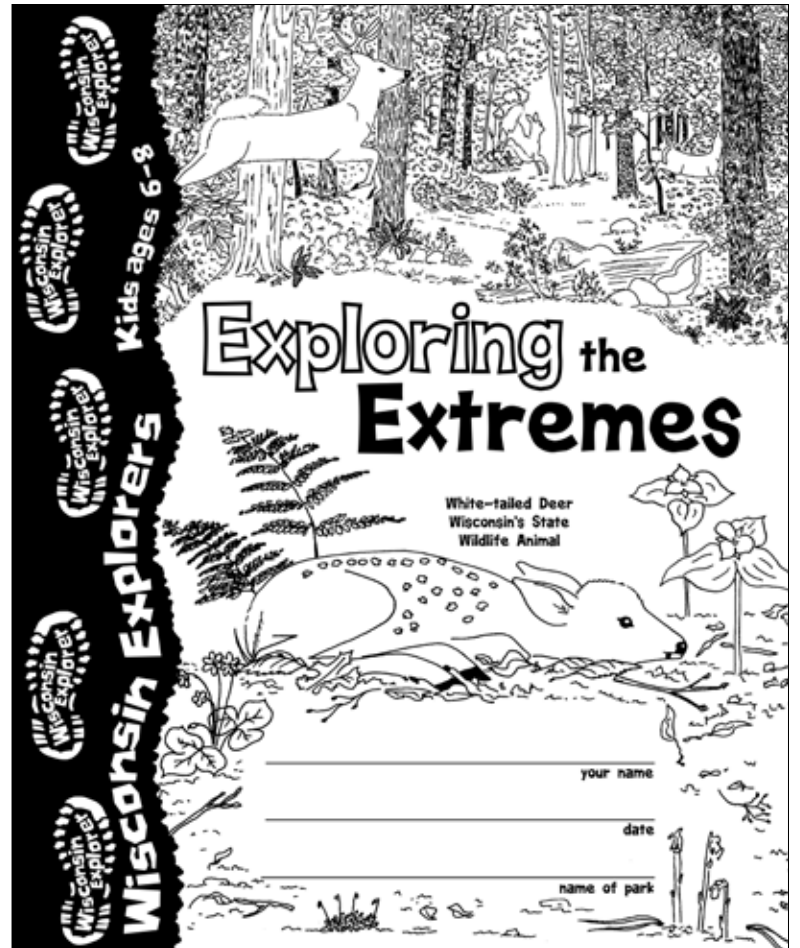
The Wisconsin Explorer program grows with kids. There are three age levels in the Wisconsin Explorer program (3-5 years, 6-8 years, and 9 years and up). Three themes help kids explore different parts of the great outdoors. With nine

different booklets, a three-year-old can begin the program this year and participate until age 11 without repeating a booklet. When Explorers complete the activities, they earn collectable state symbol patches. Kids who start the program at age 3 can collect all nine state symbol patches! To encourage families to explore together, the first four activities in each booklet share common themes.

The program is designed for individual children visiting state properties with family members or adult friends. Educators and youth groups may use Wisconsin Explorer booklets and activities with children in a class or group. However, children in these groups cannot earn patches.

Educators and youth leaders can download PDF files from the WI Parks website (wiparks.net) or request one hard copy of each booklet. Permission is granted to copy individual activities, journal pages, or entire booklets as long as copyright information remains on each page.

By presenting information to kids in a fun and interactive manner, the Wisconsin Explorer program enhances their understanding and appreciation of the bounties of nature and their State Park, encouraging them to help protect and preserve them.



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Open at 4 p.m. Monday
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Downtown Wilton

Rockton Bar

Located on Scenic Hwy 131 between Ontario and LaFarge

- Friday Night Fish • Saturday Prime Rib
- Tuesdays - 1/4 pound burger for \$1.50 and Domestic beer \$1.50 (5 - 10 p.m.)
- Wednesdays: Mexican, Night
- Thursdays: Wings - 45¢ or a dozen for \$4.50

Open Mondays: 11 am - 3 p.m. for lunch
Kickapoo Yacht Club Canoe Rental Located Here!

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Holiday Fair: November 1-2
For More Info: 608-463-7124

REMEMBER: CARRY IN, CARRY OUT!

Run, bike and canoe at the Dam Challenge triathlon



The Kickapoo Valley Reserve Dam Challenge triathlon, an annual event, is slated for Saturday, Oct. 5, 2013. With rugged Wisconsin hills as its setting, the race consists of a 7-mile canoe trip, and 14-mile bike ride and a 3-mile cross-country run. Proceeds benefit the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Education Program. For more information or a registration form, go to <http://kvr.state.wi.us> or call (608) 625-2960.



Expand your horizons at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve

More than 40 years ago, the federal government began a flood-control project on the Kickapoo River; 140 farms were purchased to make way for a dam and reservoir. The landowners were removed, the farm buildings were destroyed and the first phase of construction was started.

After several starts and stops, however, the project was halted in 1973 for environmental and economic reasons. A controversial project from the start, people in the area were understandably outraged that they had sacrificed so much and saw no benefit.

In 1996, federal legislation directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) to transfer up to 1,200 acres to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in trust for the Ho-Chunk Nation and the remaining 7,369 acres to the State of Wisconsin. That ownership transfer was completed Dec. 28, 2000.

The portion of the Upper Kickapoo River Valley between Wildcat Mountain State Park and La Farge, Wis., is rich with more than 450 prehistoric archeological sites. These sites represent the day-to-day life and expressions of people dating back as far as 12,000 years ago, when mastodons roamed this valley.

The Upper Kickapoo Valley

The Upper Kickapoo Valley Prehistoric Archeological District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is between Wildcat Mountain State Park and the village of La Farge in parts of Stark and Whitestown townships. The district covers 8,569 acres along a 10-mile stretch of the Kickapoo River and several of its tributary creeks: Weister, Indian, Jug, Warner and Billings.

The district is in the "driftless area" of

Archeological sites represent most of Wisconsin's prehistorical periods

southwestern Wisconsin. Evidence suggests that during the last ice age, which ended approximately 10,000 years ago, this area was neither scoured by glacial ice nor blanketed by thick glacial deposits known as glacial drift. As a result of the area's long exposure, wind and water erosion have cut deeply into the land surface, creating an intricate system of steep-sided stream valleys with numerous sandstone and limestone outcrops that form the cliffs, overhangs, and caves of the Upper Kickapoo River Valley.

More than 450 prehistoric archaeological sites dating between 10,000 B.C. and A.D. 1150 have been identified by archeological surveys within the district. Most of the surveys were conducted between 1960 and 1974 by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Survey methods ranged from surface collection and shovel testing to interviews with local collectors. The surveys were performed in connection with plans for a proposed dam, reservoir, and recreational area to be constructed within this portion of the Kickapoo Valley. Because of possible environmental impacts, however, together with the project's rising costs, the work was stopped when the dam was only partly completed.

Archeological-site types

The Upper Kickapoo Valley Prehistoric Archeological District contains archeological sites representing most of the major periods in Wisconsin prehistory. These sites include rock-shelters, burial mounds, petroglyphs, and open-air camp and village sites.

Rock-shelters are primarily overhangs formed in the soft sandstone in the cliffs along stream and river edges. Some of these rock-shelters contain ancient fire hearths and refuse pits, which are buried beneath 1 to 15 feet of stratified (layered) sandy soils and rocky, roof-fall debris on the shelter floor. Radiocarbon dating of plant and animal remains, as well as the style of artifacts found in these shelters, provides the basis for dating the occupation strata, or layers, of the shelter. The dates and artifact styles also suggest the shelter's relationship to other sites in the district and in southwestern Wisconsin. Generally, preservation in rock-shelters is better than in open-air sites because of greater protection from wind and rain. Carbonized (charred) plant remains and animal bones from rock-shelters provide information about the diet and the seasonal movements of the people who occupied them.

In the district's Bard Lawrence Rock-shelter, for example, stratified deposits representing many episodes of occupation were dated by artifact style and radiocarbon analysis of charcoal from fire hearths. The remains of deer, elk, bear, puma, and wolf, as well as smaller animals such as fox, fisher, raccoon, muskrat, and beaver, were discovered in this rock-shelter. Evidence of birds, such as turkey, sharp-tailed grouse, and robin, in addition to turtle and fish, was also present. The animal bones from the shelter suggest that it was used primarily during the winter. For example, the frontal bones of deer skulls suggest they were killed during the antlerless period

between January and the first of May.

Burial mounds in the district are conical, oval, or linear. They are commonly thought to be affiliated with the Woodland Tradition (500 B.C. to A.D. 1000). Generally, they are situated on prominent areas of high ground, often 100 to 200 feet above the valley floor. Some mounds were ritually constructed over a long period of time with different burial episodes adding to the size and shape of the mound. Oval and linear mounds were often formed when burials were placed next to each other, or the mound was expanded horizontally. Conical mounds were built up vertically. Burial mounds are sacred features on this cultural landscape and should be treated with the respect afforded any cemetery.

Petroglyphs are images etched into rock. Typically, petroglyphs in the Upper Kickapoo Valley Prehistoric Archeological District were formed by carving grooves into soft sandstone outcrops to form images. Often, more than one image may be found at a site, comprising a rock art or petroglyph panel.

Prior to 1997, only one petroglyph site, the Hanson petroglyphs, had been identified within the district, and only three other sites were reported for the Upper Kickapoo Valley Area. The Hanson petroglyphs were known to local residents and reported to archeologists in 1960 during the first archeological survey of the proposed reservoir. This site is a panel of three complete bird figures and the wing of a fourth bird, suggesting that more figures were present in the past.

During the 1997 and 1998 archeological surveys, more than six additional sites were identified. All of the newly identified sites consist of abstract combinations of lines carved in the soft sandstone.

Kickapoo Valley Reserve is horseback-riding destination

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve has long been regarded among horse-riding enthusiasts as one of the most beautiful destinations in the Midwest. The Reserve offers approximately 37 miles of riding trails. The Reserve shares a border with Wildcat Mountain State Park to the north with its 15 miles of horse trails.

Between La Farge and Ontario in southwestern Wisconsin, the Reserve is in the heart of the driftless region, an area that is unique because it was untouched by glacial drift.

The trails that wind their way through the Reserve pass beneath towering limestone-capped sandstone rock outcroppings that overlook the Kickapoo River Valley and its tributaries. Ascents and descents are numerous as the trail takes you over the valley's deeply carved terrain. Opportunities to observe wildlife abound along the trail as it stretches from the lush valley floor to the high ridges with their awe-inspiring vistas. Old-growth pine, short-grass prairie remnants, and Cambrian era plant relics are just a few of the unique features to be found in the Reserve.

Some primitive campsites are accessible to vehicles with horse trailers. Willow and Mule campsites, which are north of La Farge off of State Highway 131, are traditional favorites for horse and mule riders. Camping is on a first-come, first-serve basis. All visitors are required to obtain a camping and visitor's permit. Permits are available at the Reserve office and seven self-registration stations on the Reserve.

Wildcat Mountain State Park offers 24 campsites that accommodate horse trailers with campers. Reservations are required. Additional trail passes are required for riders entering the state-park trail system. Numerous accommodations can be found in the neighboring villages of La Farge and Ontario, as well as the popular community of Rockton, a longtime favorite destination among trail riders.

When planning your visit to the Reserve, please consider the following:

- The trail season runs from May 1 to November 15.
- All visitors are required to obtain a visitor's permit for the Kickapoo Valley Reserve and Wildcat Mountain State

Park. Please keep horses on marked trails.

- Trails are subject to closure due to wet conditions. Call ahead about current conditions — (608) 625-2960.

- Remember that the terrain is challenging, so plan your route accordingly to avoid overworking your mount or yourself.

- Highways and roads run in and along the Reserve. Be cautious and courteous. Maintain a single file-line and watch for oncoming traffic. When crossing bridges, it is usually safest to dismount and lead your horse.

- Pack it in; pack it out! Leaving litter or trash in or around the Reserve is unacceptable.

Regardless of the time of year, the Reserve is one of the most beautiful tracts of land in all of the Midwest. Starting with the color displays of spring wildflowers through the dense green, almost tropical growth of mid-summer and culminating with the brilliant autumn hues of hardwood timber, the scenery of the Reserve is compelling enough to find you wanting to return to the valley time and time again.

Elroy is at an elevation of 972 feet; Sparta is at an elevation of 800 feet. The E-S trail has a mostly moderate downhill slope (grade) from Elroy to Sparta. The slope (grade) is no more than 3%.

Dolly's Pedaler's Rest

A spacious vacation home directly on the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail
Reservations: 608-462-4211



SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY

BE PREPARED

Discuss safety plans ahead of time. Have a flashlight with extra batteries and a first aid kit handy. At your site, note any tree limbs that could fall from strong winds. Securely fasten down all camping gear, including sleeping and kitchen tents. Know the location of campground buildings and the campground host site. Make sure that children know your campsite number. The park office posts daily weather forecasts.

STAY TUNED AND ALERT

Keep an eye on the sky. If severe weather approaches, tune to a local radio station:

- **Wildcat Mountain** — 102.3 FM, Viroqua; 93.3 FM, La Crosse; and 97.1, Sparta
- **Mill Bluff** — 92.1, Mauston; and 94.5, Tomah
- **400 Trail** — WNFM 104.9 FM and WRDB 1400 AM, Reedsburg
- **Elroy-Sparta Trail** — 97.1 FM, Sparta
- **La Crosse River Trail** — 93.3 FM, La Crosse; and 97.1, Sparta

Static may indicate nearby lightning.

A warning means that a severe thunderstorm or tornado has been sighted in

the area.

A watch means conditions are favorable for severe weather. Pass along information to your neighbors.

SEEK SHELTER

Our parks cannot provide a storm shelter to accommodate hundreds of campers. There are no approved, storm-proof buildings in any campground.

If you are canoeing or swimming, get to land and find shelter immediately. If you can hear thunder, the storm is close enough for you to be struck by lightning. If you are in the woods, take shelter under the shortest trees, away from power lines. Squat low to the ground to make yourself a small target; do not lie down. Avoid areas that may flood.

TORNADO TIPS

If a tornado approaches while you are outdoors, find a low spot or embankment which might shelter you from wind and blowing debris. Stay low.

REMEMBER

Camping has inherent risks. Unlike in the city, shelter and communication may not be readily available. However, campers who know what to watch for and what to do are in the best position to minimize risks and stay safe.



CALL FOR RESERVATIONS
608-632-1686

OPEN DAILY



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ONTARIO
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Fri: Fish
EVERY DAY
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Ribeye Dinner

Proud Sponsor of Monroe County Safe Ride Program



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823-7708
Carry Outs Available



PLEASE SHARE 'THE VISITOR' WITH A FRIEND

Four trails in one

Great River, La Crosse River, Elroy-Sparta and '400' trails connect, resulting in 100-mile network.

Before jet airliners and divided highways, riding the 400 was the fastest way from Chicago to the Twin Cities. The streamlined train made the 400-mile trip in under 400 minutes, at times hitting 100 miles per hour.

Today, the 400 is one of four interconnected rail bed trails that form a virtually continuous route more than 100 miles in length. From the 400 trailhead in Reedsburg, you can connect with the Elroy-Sparta, the La Crosse River and the Great River State Trails, ending near Marshland on the Mississippi River.

The four west-central Wisconsin rail trails, known collectively as "Bike 4 Trails," going from southeast to northwest are the following:

- **The 400 Trail (22 mi/35 km)**
- **The Elroy-Sparta Trail (32 mi/51 km)**
- **The La Crosse River Trail (22 mi/35 km)**
- **The Great River Trail (25 mi/40 km)**

The 400 State Trail is a beautiful 22-mile ride along the Baraboo River. It connects to the Elroy-Sparta, Hillsboro and Omaha Trails.

Headquarters: Reedsburg Depot 800-844-3507 (open year round)

Friends group: www.400statetrail.org.
□ □ □

The Elroy-Sparta Trail is considered to be the first "rail trail" in the nation. Three tunnels are part of the trails appeal. The longest, between Sparta and Norwalk, is three-quarters of a mile long. Walking through the tunnels (all bikes must be walked) is an adventure in itself. Bring a flashlight. The Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail connects to the 400 Trail in Elroy and the La Crosse River Trail in Sparta. DNR-maintained walk-in campsites in Sparta and Elroy are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Headquarters: Kendall Depot, (608) 463-7109 (open May through October)

Friends group: www.elroy-sparta-trail.com
□ □ □

The La Crosse River Trail lies in the La Crosse River valley and parallels an active rail line to the north. A bridge over Interstate 90 in Sparta connects the La Crosse River State Trail to the Elroy-Sparta State Trail on the east end, and the Great River State Trail connects to the trail in La Crosse on the west end.

Headquarters: Sparta Depot 888-540-8434 (open year round)

Friends group: www.lacrosseriverstatetrail.org
□ □ □

The Great River Trail runs 24 miles through prairies and backwaters of the upper Mississippi River valley from Onalaska to Marshland.

Perrot State Park (608-534-6409) manages the trail. For more information, call 800-873-1901

ON THE TRAIL



The La Crosse River Trail

Railroad-grade trails not for high speed

Railroad-grade trails are surfaced with fine limestone or similar materials. They are not designed for high-speed travel. They can become soft and wet, can erode quickly during heavy rains and are subject to animal damage.

How can you be a better biker?

- Keep your bike under full control at all times.
- Keep at least two bike lengths between riders.
- Keep right and allow room for oncoming traffic to pass.
- Slow down and use voice or bell to warn others as you pass.
- Helmet, shoes and pant leg clips recommended.
- Wear bright clothing by day, reflective clothing by night.
- Use a light and reflectors at night.

Use trails for winter fun, too

The bike trails are open for snowmobiling during the winter. For up-to-date snowmobile trail information including trail openings and closings call:

- Sauk County Hotline: (608) 985-4766
- Juneau County Hotline: (608) 562-5737
- Monroe County Hotline: (608) 269-3375 or (608) 372-9050
- La Crosse County Hotline: (608) 782-4500
- Vernon County Hotline: (608) 637-5481

Or visit <http://www.travelwisconsin.com/snow-conditions-report/snowmobile>

The 400 Trail is named for the passenger train, which traveled 400 miles from Chicago to Minneapolis/St. Paul in 400 minutes.

Tunnels are critical bat habitat

Tunnels aren't just for trains and bikes: they provide critical habitat for threatened bat species

Have you visited the tunnels on the Elroy-Sparta State Trail? Did you know that each year they serve as important bat hibernacula for all four of our state's cave bat species? Historic wooden doors are closed at the ends of the former railway tunnels each winter, buffering temperatures enough to provide suitable hibernation conditions for large numbers of bats. The cool, humid, and dark tunnels provide a safe place for bats to sleep away the long months when their insect diet is not available.

Worldwide, bats are a vital part of many ecosystems. They help control pests and are pollinators and seed-dispersers for countless plants. Here in Wisconsin bats are predators of biting insects and may play an important role in reducing risk of insect-borne diseases, such as the West-Nile Virus. Our insectivorous bats also consume large numbers of agricultural pests. A recent study calculated the value of bats to Wisconsin agriculture as \$158 million to \$1.6 billion annually.

Four of Wisconsin's eight known bat species hibernate in the trail tunnels each winter--Big brown, Little brown, Northern long-eared, Eastern pipistrelle. These bats can live up to 30 years in the wild and return to the same cave, mine, or tunnel to hibernate each fall, year after year. Banding studies show Little brown bats travel as far as 280 miles between their winter hibernacula and summer roosts and foraging areas. For now, Wisconsin's bat population is stable. But a deadly fungus is racing

The scenic 400 Trail is sprinkled with small town hospitality. If you like to camp, you'll find public campsites at Baker's Field and Legion Park in Wonewoc, and at Schultz Park south of Elroy.

400 Trail Mix

- 3 cups nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans)
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup coconut flakes
- 1 cup raisins or currants
- ½ cup dried cherries
- 1 cup chocolate chips

1. Mix together the nuts, sunflower seeds, coconut flakes, raisins, and dried cherries. Spread the mixture on a baking sheet lined with waxed paper.

2. Melt the chocolate chips in a microwave. Pour the chocolate over the baking sheet in ribbons. Stir to coat everything. Let the chocolate cool, then break the mix into pieces. Store in a cool dry place.

Change the ingredients to suit your taste.

If you have a favorite trail mix recipe to share, we'd like to know!

*Friends of the 400 Trail,
P.O. Box 400,
Wonewoc, WI 53968*

Unusual bluffs survived glacial Lake Wisconsin's ravages

Mill Bluff's geological features represent last Wisconsin stage of glaciation

The land comprising Mill Bluff State Park doesn't have the typical rolling hills of the unglaciated areas that are found just to the south and west of the park. The topography of Mill Bluff is relatively flat with little relief, with the exception of the bluffs that rise abruptly from the plains.

Even though this park is within the Driftless Area, the geologic features are partially the result of the last, or Wisconsin stage, of glaciation.

During the Wisconsin glacial advance, the Wisconsin River was plugged near Wisconsin Dells, forming Glacial Lake Wisconsin, which covered portions of what today are Adams, Juneau, Wood, Jackson, Monroe and Sauk counties, including the Mill Bluff area.

During this time, some of the mesas and buttes stood as islands in the glacial lake while others were submerged. Erosion of the sides of the rock forms was hastened by wave action. Large bluffs, such as Mill Bluff, are called buttes, and the slenderer, abrupt bluffs, such as Devil's Needle, are called pinnacles.

The unique flat-topped, cliff-sided rock structures are capped by a strata of somewhat more resistant sandstone, and weathering tends to break the rock off in vertical fragments. They are remnants of the Dresbach Group, Upper Cambrian sandstones.

The heights of the bluffs range from 80 feet to more than 120 feet. The underlying soft sandstone built up until the weight of the overhanging cap rock caused it to shatter and fall. The mounds decrease in size until all the capping is removed. Then the mound becomes a conical hill, gradually blending into the plain.

The park has a trail leading to the

top of Mill Bluff, where other bluffs can be seen. Travelers passing through Mill Bluff State Park via Interstate 90-94 are intrigued by the unusual, tall bluffs rising abruptly from the flat plains. The beautiful scenery arouses travelers' curiosity to stop in for a closer look.

Mill Bluff State Park is very popular for swimming and camping. The park is open from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

A small pond with 250 feet of beach front picnic area is very inviting on hot summer days. The park has another picnic area with a shelter that can be a great place for a family reunion or company picnic.

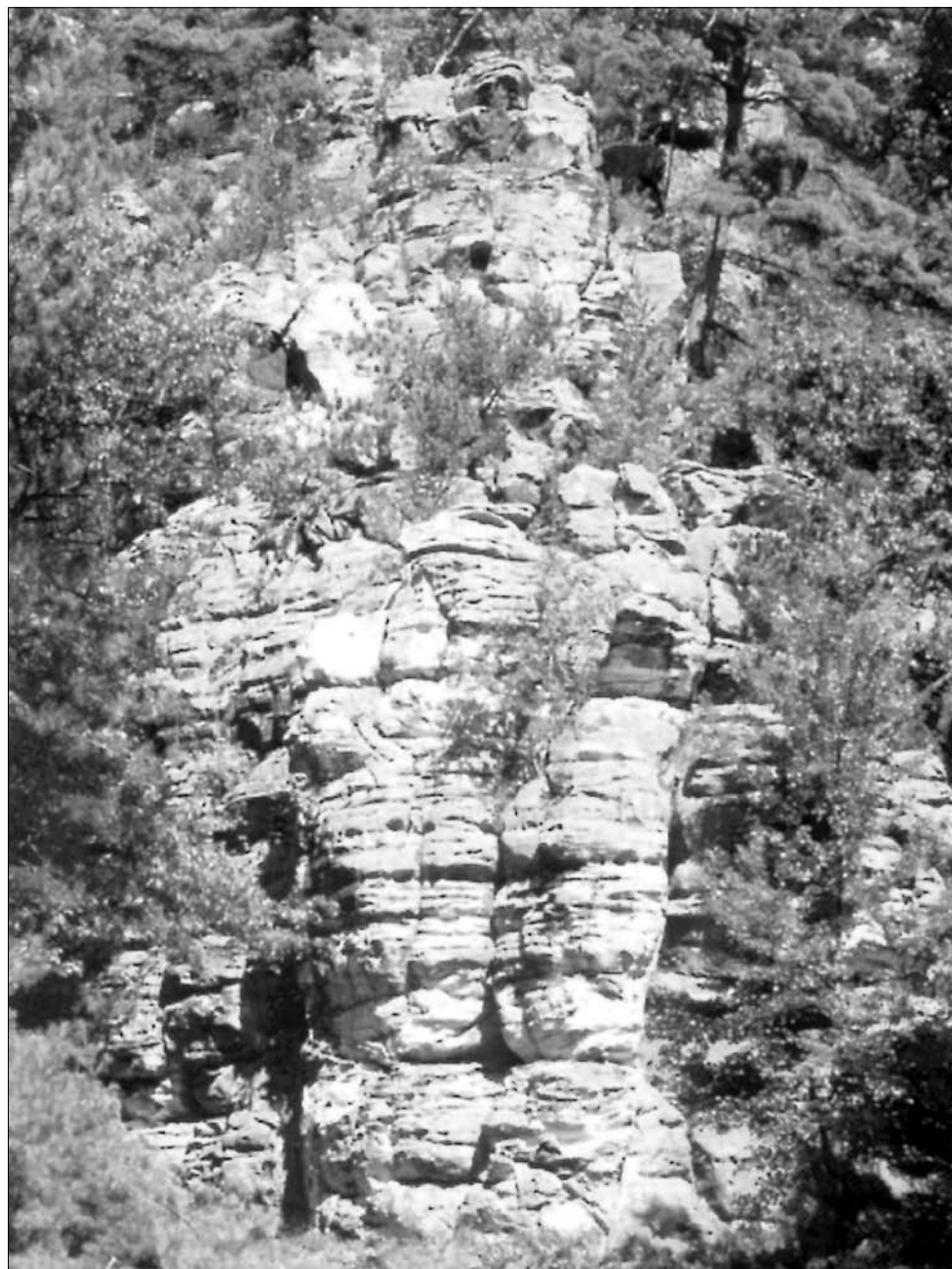
Interested in hiking? The Mill Bluff Nature Trail is an easy trail to walk, as it follows the base of Mill Bluff.

For those wanting a longer hike, the Camel Bluff Trail is located north of Interstate 90-94 and along Funnel Road. This 1.25 mile loop trail begins on the east side of the road and winds among the buttes, climbing to the top of Mill Bluff.

In the mid-1930s, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed 223 stone steps leading to the top of Mill Bluff. An observation deck on the north end of the bluff offers an excellent view of the park.

Mill Bluff State Park has many geologic features, tall buttes and glacial lake bed. This park is part of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve. It is often mentioned in the journals and diaries of early travelers. Some other features of the park include prairie remnants and scrub oak/jack pine forests.

Mill Bluff straddles the north-south boundaries of Monroe and Juneau counties near Camp Douglas, Wisconsin.



Many spectacular bluffs enhance the scenery at Mill Bluff State Park.

Mill Bluff State Park in detail

- **Swimming:** A public beach is along a 2.5-acre ground water pond and includes 250 feet of water frontage. **SWIMMING SAFETY MESSAGES:** Don't swim alone, at night or in unfamiliar places. Don't dive from bridges, high banks or into water of unknown depth. Never wade downstream in rivers, as sand bars drop off abruptly on the downstream side. Small children should be watched closely when near the water. Wear a lifesaving device when using an inner tube, air mattress or other floating device. Use caution when wading in unknown waters, as water depth may change abruptly. Swim at designated beaches, where available. Lifeguards are not usually provided at DNR beaches.
- **Picnic areas:** Mill Bluff has two picnic areas, one east and west of Funnel Road. Both areas provide picnic tables, grills, drinking water, shelter, toilets and parking.
- **Shelter reservations:** The shelter in the east picnic area is available on a first-come, first-served basis or by reservation. For reservation information, contact the park staff.
- **Hiking trails:** The Mill Bluff Nature Trail begins at the far end of the east picnic area. This .4 mile long trail is self-guided. Hikers will learn about area wildlife, trees, wildflowers, and geology. The Camel Bluff Trail is a 1.25 mile loop trail north of Interstate 90-94. The parking lot for the trailhead can be reached off Funnel Road. Hikers will be able to enjoy these unique bluffs close up. Wildlife and signs of wildlife is more plentiful here.
- **Historical marker:** An historical marker has been erected in the east picnic area. This marker describes the geological features of the area.
- **Camping:** The park has 21 wooded or partially wooded campsites available. Six electrical hook-ups are available. All sites are reservable.
- **Fires:** Fire must be contained within the fire rings and grills. Firewood can be purchased at the park office. Wood may be picked up from the ground. Cutting of trees is not permitted.
- **Church schedules:** A list of the area churches and their schedules is posted on the bulletin board.
- **Playground:** Check out the new playground equipment, which was purchased with a grant and a Friends of Mill Bluff donation.

MILL BLUFF 2013 EVENTS

● **Art in the Park: Arts of Our Ancestors (State Parks Open House Day)** — Sunday, June 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free admission. Sponsored by the Friends of Mill Bluff State Park, Inc.

Our goal is to present quality, original, handmade arts and crafts. Demonstrations of arts forms that have sustained and entertained us through the centuries will be on display: basketry, wood carving, fur trapping, leatherwork, etc. The ever-popular plant and book sales will be back as well! Music will be provided by songwriter/guitarist Scott Wilcox and others.

A youth art contest will be held. Ribbons will be awarded to the first three winners in each grade and certificates will be awarded to all participants.

There is a children's playground close to the event location. If it is warm, the swimming pond may invite folks to take a dip. Food will be sold by the Oakdale Lions Club. It will be a fun family Sunday!

If you would like to demonstrate an art, skill or craft, if a youth wishes to enter the contest please contact Wildcat Mountain State Park at (608) 337-4775 two to three weeks before the event.

● **Universe in the Park — Saturday, July 13, at 8:30 p.m. at Mill Bluff** Universe in the Park, established in 1996, is an extremely popular outreach program of the department of astronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. UitP is predicated on a very simple idea: The best environment in which to introduce the general public to astronomy is outside under dark skies. UitP provides talks and slideshows, answers questions, and lets the general public view astronomical objects through one of the UitP telescopes. Sessions run as long as there are people interested in looking through the telescope

Protect the trees where you live, work and play!

The threat

Your campfire wood could be hiding insects or diseases that can kill Wisconsin's trees. Gypsy moth, emerald ash borer, oak wilt and others spread easily when hidden in firewood.

Your role

"Campers value the places where they camp, so it makes sense that more and more, they are doing the right thing. Instead of bringing their own firewood from home, they are getting it at or near their camping destination, or buying certified firewood," said Andrea Diss-Torrance, forest pest expert with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "That is good, healthy news for Wisconsin's forests."

Nurseries, loggers, mills and other industries are doing their part — they are strictly regulated when forests are threatened. Firewood is more difficult to keep track of, so it is the last easy ride for invasive hitchhikers — unless you do your part too. It is safest and easiest to

Do your part to prevent hitchhiking pests and diseases

leave firewood at home, purchase wood at your destination, or purchase only wood certified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, which has been specially treated to kill hitchhiking tree pests and diseases.

Firewood basics

Firewood movement onto all DNR-managed lands is restricted. Soon, all firewood for sale at the property will either be Wisconsin certified or from the property itself. All non-Wisconsin certified firewood brought into a Wisconsin state park or forest must be:

- 1) cut within 25 miles of the state park or forest campground, AND
- 2) cut within the boundaries of the State of Wisconsin, AND
- 3) NOT cut or stored in a pest quarantined area (unless the property is also in the same or a connected quarantined area). Visit dnr.wi.gov and search the

keyword "firewood" for details

In Wisconsin, you may not move firewood from a quarantined area to a non-quarantined area unless it is Wisconsin certified. Enforcement can include fines and jail time. Quarantine maps are online at <http://emeraldashborer.wi.gov> and <http://gypsymoth.wi.gov>.

What you can do

In Wisconsin, campers can take simple steps to help protect the state's healthy forests. These tips and more helpful information are online at dnr.wi.gov. Search "firewood":

1. Leave firewood at home. Purchase firewood certified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture or within 25 miles of your campsite. Also, many properties offer firewood for sale, or private sellers have it available near the park.
2. Burn your firewood at your campsite; do not take it with you to another

destination.

3. Cook over gas or charcoal. Instead of a campfire, explore new night-time activities like star-gazing.

4. Stay updated and follow firewood rules and restrictions.

Campfires are an important part of the outdoor experience in Wisconsin, but we must all take a few precautions to keep our forested areas and campgrounds — and our city parks and yards — safe from invasive insects and diseases.

Campers will find reasonably-priced firewood within or nearby all state parks and forests. Wood from unapproved sources may be confiscated and destroyed.

"We are counting on campers," said property manager Joe Fieweger, "to help us protect the quality of our forest by complying with the rules."

Firewood is available to purchase at the park office. Ask a ranger or campground host about firewood rules, or visit online: dnr.wi.gov, keyword "firewood."

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

MILL BLUFF STATE PARK

Emergencies 911

Park Office 608-427-6692 (seasonal)

Hospital Tomah Memorial, 608-372-2181

Pharmacy Phillips Tomah Pharmacy, 608-372-4115

Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222

Sheriff's Departments (non-emergencies) Monroe County non-emergencies, 608-269-2117; Juneau County non-emergencies, 608-847-5649

Local Radio Stations 92.1 Mauston, 94.5 Tomah



1-800-TIP-WDNR or 1-800-847-9367: Confidentially report suspected wildlife, recreational, and environmental violations.

Friends groups need you!

Most state parks and trails and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve have a group of volunteers who promote and support their property.

They volunteer for special events, help with special projects such as invasive-plant control, update Web sites, and apply for grant funding, among other tasks.

To join a Friends group, contact your local park or trail office or the Kickapoo Valley Reserve office.

Reservations

(Continued from page 7)

campsite. No more than two motor vehicles or six motorcycles are allowed per site.

- No more than one recreation trailer, pickup truck camper or motor home may occupy a campsite. Pickup campers or motor homes pulling a trailer are treated as a single unit.

- Camping is permitted only on designated campsites, on the tent pad/gravel drive provided, and not on native vegetation.

- A single campsite may be occupied by six people or one family and two guests. Group sites accommodate more people.

- Do not wash dishes in sinks or at water fountains. Only small amounts of dish water, free of food residue, may be scattered away from campsites.

GROUP CAMPING: Wildcat Mountain has three rustic group camp sites with a central water source and shelter, pit toilets, picnic tables and fire rings. Showers are located in the family camp (1/2 mile away).

Group site 1 (wooded) accommodates 25 people camping in tents.

Group site 2 (partially wooded) accommodates 25 people. Not recommended for large, wheeled camping units.

Group site 3 (open/grass with some shade) accommodates 75 people and most types of camping units.

24-HOUR QUIET HOURS

Please be courteous to your camping neighbors.

Campers are required to be reasonably quiet (sounds from your campsite should not be heard in adjacent sites) at all times so neighboring campers are not disturbed. Loud radios and music are prohibited.

Generators and noise-producing devices are not allowed.

Enjoy yourself, but respect the rights of others!

RECYCLING AND REFUSE:

Plan your camping to produce as little trash as possible. Mill Bluff has trash and recycling stations for glass, plastic and aluminum throughout the campground and picnic areas.

Wildcat has a dumpster near the shower building for trash. Next to the trash dumpster are bins for empty small LP canisters, recyclable items of glass, plastic, and aluminum.

FIRES: Fires must be carefully attended in a designated fire ring. When setting up camp, consider the location of the fire ring and wind direction. Never move the fire ring. Be sure sparks can't get on flammable materials. Watch children carefully. Put the fire out if wind changes cause concern.

Trash and recyclables don't belong in a fire; they won't burn and only leave a mess for later campers.

Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving.

Never cut limbs or remove any part of a standing tree, alive or dead. Campers are allowed to gather wood in the park, but it must be both dead and on the ground.

Bats

(Continued from page 16)

through cave bat populations in eastern states causing extensive mortality, and it's headed this way.

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a devastating disease of hibernating bats that has caused the most precipitous decline of North American wildlife in recorded history. It is caused by the fungus *Geomyces destructans*, and is rapidly spreading through cave bat populations across the country causing unprecedented mortality. WNS has infected multiple species of insect-eating bats in the eastern part of the U.S., causing declines approaching 100 percent in some populations. While it isn't in Wisconsin yet, estimated losses in other states have exceeded six million bats since the discovery of the disease in 2007. This syndrome poses a severe threat to all four of Wisconsin's cave bat species, now listed as threatened; four other migratory species are found in the state on our "watch" list.

The loss or significant reduction of bat populations could have cascading effects that impact our lives as a result of increased pesticide application and increased food costs.

You can help protect our bats. Leave bats alone — especially between October 1 and May 15. Waking up a hibernating bat can cost it 30-60 days' worth of precious energy reserves needed to see it through the winter. Never transfer clothing or gear between underground sites (caves, mines, tunnels) — you might be unknowingly transporting the WNS fungus (even if your clothing has been washed). The three trail tunnels are considered one site. Keep the tunnels safe for bats: do not use clothing or gear that has been in other caves or mines when visiting the trail tunnels.

Visit the DNR's Wisconsin Bat Program website for more information: <http://wiatri.net/inventory/bats/>.

LITTER PATROL: You can help us stay green. Pitch in to keep our parks and trails clean.

PLEASE RECYCLE!

2013 STATE PARK FEES

User fees and state taxes provide most of the money for operating Wisconsin state parks, forests, and trails. The fees include vehicle admission stickers, state trail passes, and camping fees. An additional \$5 will be charged for anyone who fails to pay the fee before using a park, trail, or campsite where a self-registration station available.

Vehicle Admission Stickers provide access to more than 60 state parks, forests and recreation areas across Wisconsin. The annual sticker allows admission to all state parks and forests for the calendar year. A daily sticker is valid on the date of issue or for each night of camping. If you have only a little time to visit, a one-hour sticker is available.

State Trail Passes are required for all people age 16 or older when biking or horseback riding on trails. Fees are the same for residents and non-residents. The annual state trail pass is good for the calendar year (January 1 to December 31.) Trail fee revenues help offset the cost of such things as dealing with erosion, maintaining safe surfaces and facilities, trimming brush, removing fallen trees and law enforce-

ment. A state trail pass is not required for walking or hiking.

For camping reservations, call 1-888-WI-PARKS (1-888-947-2757) or visit <http://wisconsinstateparks.reserveamerica.com/>.

Wildcat Mountain is proud to be Travel Green Wisconsin certified. Travel Green Wisconsin is a Department of Tourism program that certifies tourism businesses who have taken steps to invest in sustainability. Please help us stay green.

Camping Fees	Resident	Non-resident
	\$12	\$14
Horse camp sites with electric outlet add \$5		

State Trail Pass Fees	Annual	Daily
Wisconsin resident or non-resident	\$20	\$4

Sticker Fees	Annual	Half-price *	Daily	One-hour
Vehicle with WI license plates	\$25	\$12.50	\$7	\$5
Vehicle with WI plates, resident age 65 and older	\$10	N/A	\$3	N/A
Vehicle with out-of-state plates	\$35	\$17.50	\$10	\$5

* Half-price annual stickers are available for additional vehicles registered to the same household address.

Outdoor Group Camp Fees					
Number in group	1-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
	\$40	\$60	\$80	\$100	\$120

CANOEING!

Canoe for a few hours or for the entire day. Call for reservations -- shuttle service, car spotting, group rates available. Great fun for young and old.



UNDER THE RED ROOF
WHERE HWY 33 CROSSES THE KICKAPOO

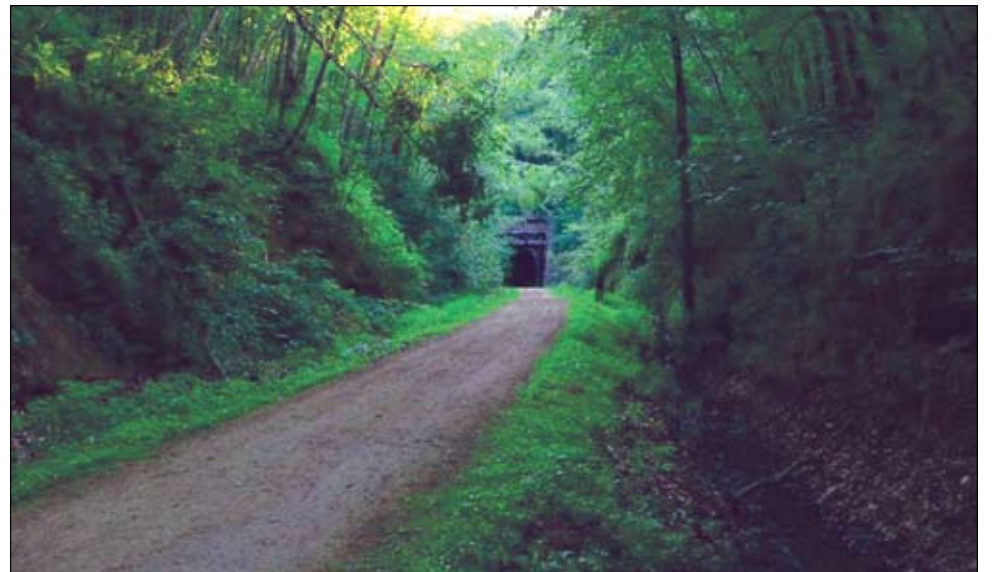
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Kickapoo Paddle Inn

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- Ontario -

After your canoeing adventure, join us in the KPI restaurant for a burger, salad or one of our delicious ice cream treats.

Shuttle & canoes complete

ENJOY THE TUNNELS



Three train tunnels cut through the rolling hills along the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail, which was a Chicago & North Western Railroad bed.



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Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail doors close in early November

During railroad days, workers kept watch at each end of three tunnels

An annual task for DNR employees is closing the doors to the three tunnels along the Elroy-Sparta Trail. Usually done early in November, the closed doors then protect the tunnels from the freezing and thawing that occurs during the winter months.

When the Chicago and Northwestern used the trail, tunnel watchers were stationed at each end of the three tunnels. Their accommodations were small shacks heated with wood and coal and a cot where they could rest between trains.

Initially, they were alerted to oncoming trains by telegraph; and, later, by telephone. Occasionally they slept through the alerts; even though the trains were required to slow to 15 mph for the tunnel, the locomotives efficiently reduced the wooden doors to splinters.

Tunnel watchers were often local farmers who supplemented their income during winter or were members of the section crews that maintained the tracks during summer season. It was lonely and dangerous work, and some tunnel watchers lost their lives when they fell under trains or were victims of other mishaps.

The tunnel doors are opened again in April, before the trail officially opens May 1.

Consider donating to state parks

Birthdays, graduations, anniversaries — any holiday is a great time to give the gift of a state-park annual vehicle-admission sticker or trail annual pass.

Some of the best recreational opportunities and most scenic areas in Wisconsin can be found in our state parks and forests. When you consider the access the admission sticker provides to scenic beauty and tranquility as well as to outdoor recreation, it is really one of the best bargains for your money.

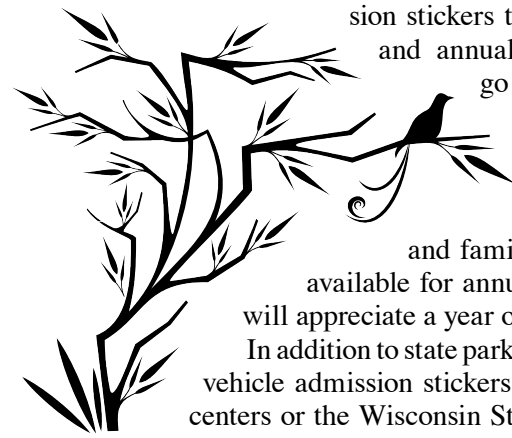
Every year in December, the next year's annual admission stickers to Wisconsin State Parks and Forests and annual passes for Wisconsin State Trails go on sale at state park and trail offices and at Department of Natural Resources service centers throughout Wisconsin. Stop by or contact us to buy gifts for your friends and family. Free gift-cards and envelopes are available for annual stickers purchased for gifts. They will appreciate a year of outdoor fun!

In addition to state park and trail offices, people may purchase vehicle admission stickers or state trail passes at DNR service centers or the Wisconsin State Park System office using a credit card by calling (608) 266-2181. More information about Wisconsin State Parks and Trails can be found at <http://www.wiparks.net>.

If you enjoy your Wisconsin State Parks and Trails, you may want to express your appreciation through a gift of money, materials or equipment, or volunteer services. Gifts help Wisconsin state parks and trails by providing facilities and services that otherwise would not be possible. Money may be placed in a donation box; checks can be mailed to your park or trail or to the Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

If you enjoy camping and meeting people from all over the country, you may wish to become a volunteer campground host.

Check out one of the many Friends Groups statewide at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/voljobs/friends.html>. Consider joining to help make a difference and make friends who have common interests and goals.



Save our trees. Recycle this publication.



ALL ABOARD!

Bikers & railroad fans! Learn the unique history of the Elroy-Sparta State Trail.

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Indomitable Pluck is the first complete history of Wisconsin's premier bike trail, from the earliest days of the railroad through its evolution as America's first rails-to-trails conversion. Hundreds of thousands have ridden the Elroy-Sparta State Trail, but few know the history behind it or why it is one of Wisconsin's most treasured resources. The book includes dozens of illustrations and photos, many of which never before have been available to the public.

About the author: Karen Parker is the editor and publisher of the County Line, a weekly community newspaper located in Ontario, Wis., and serving southern Monroe County. Over her 30-year career, she has won dozens of awards in the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest, and she is also the author of

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