

8 Gray Dogwood

The small white fruit of the gray dogwood shrub ripens in fall. It is important in the diets of many bird and insect species.

This native shrub looks very similar to the invasive bush honeysuckle. Here, the two species are found right next to one another.



9 Creek: Frogs & Turtles

In the spring, this small creek flows freely to the lake. Cricket frogs and American toads can be heard during this time.

As you hike along the lake, look for painted turtles and red-eared sliders. They can be found on logs in the water, soaking up the sun.



10 Insect Galls

As you re-enter the prairie, you may notice large insect galls on the goldenrod plants.

The goldenrod gall fly lays its egg in the growing plant. The plant then grows around the egg, forming a protective case for the gall fly larva.

The larva will eventually tunnel a hole to break free—that is, if it's lucky enough to escape woodpeckers and mice!



11 Prescribed Burn Evidence

Prescribed burns are an important management tool in prairies, since fire is a natural part of that ecosystem.

Fires remove dead plant matter and prevent undesirable trees and invasive shrubs, like honeysuckle, from shading out prairie plants.

Evidence of past fires can be seen on the tree trunk to the left—look for blackened areas at the base of the trunk.



What is a Timberdoodle?

Timberdoodle, labrador twister, bogsucker, and mudsnipe are all colorful names for the American Woodcock.

These odd-looking birds are best known for the male's spectacular mating dance, which takes place at dawn and dusk March-April in Illinois.

The male makes 'peenting' calls, then bursts into flight, spiraling up to 250 feet into the sky. He sings to waiting females while his wings whistle as the wind passes through his feathers. He returns to the same spot and then repeats this several times.

The habitat along this trail is perfect for viewing the dance!



American Woodcock

TIMBERDOODLE TRAIL

SELF-GUIDED TRAIL MAP



Timberdoodle Trail Map



Welcome to Homer Lake Forest Preserve!

While hiking on the self-guided trail, look for numbered boulders; these indicate trail stops.

The trail is about 1/2 mile long.



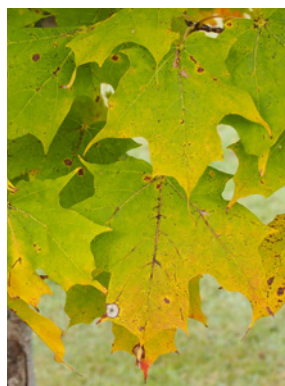
1 White Pine

This species can grow up to 180 feet tall, making it the tallest tree in Eastern North America! They can be identified by their long soft needles in groups of five.



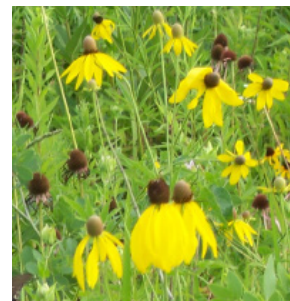
2 Sugar Maple

Sugar maple trees were once one of the only sources of sugar in Illinois. Native Americans and settlers tapped the trees in February and March to collect and boil down the sap to make maple syrup and sugar.



3 Prairie Restoration

This prairie is home to many species of native plants. Flowers like yellow coneflower, goldenrod, and aster bloom in the summer. Grasses like big bluestem and Indian grass can grow over 6 feet tall! Many prairie plants are becoming rare. Today, less than 0.01% of tallgrass prairie is left in Illinois.



4 Mud Dauber Nests

Look up while standing under the Observation Platform. You can see several mud dauber nests. As their name suggests, these wasps use mud to build their nests, also called "organ pipe nests."



5 Multiflora Rose

Mixed into the shrubs growing here are branches of the multiflora rose. Be careful—they are covered with very sharp thorns!

Multiflora rose is an invasive plant. It can cover a forest floor in thorny 3-6 foot tall bushes.



6 Invasive Shrubs

To help preserve healthy forest and prairie habitat for plants and animals, we work to control the very invasive Eurasian honeysuckle.

This invasive shrub can kill native understory forest plants and young trees by blocking sunlight.



7 Homer Lake

Through this gap you can get a view of the natural beauty the lake has to offer.

You may see birds like great blue herons (pictured here), bald eagles, osprey, or kingfishers searching for food.

Homer Lake is a man-made lake. In 1967, a dam was constructed at the south end to hold back water in the existing streambed. The lake is now about 80 acres in size, and is a popular fishing and boating site.

