

Forest Glen Preserve is a 2,000-acre natural area in east central Illinois. A vast expanse of the park is mature beech/maple forest, a rare forest type in Illinois; also prairies, fallow fields, secondary growth forests, oak/hickory forest, wetlands, seeps, bogs, ponds, streams and 3 miles of frontage along the Vermilion River, a tributary of the Wabash in Indiana.

Illinois, being influenced by large ecological regions of the east, south, west, and north, is high in biodiversity. Some great examples of this diversity are found at Forest Glen Preserve.

In the early 60's, when the state created the Conservation District Act, the people of Vermilion County took the initiative and created the Vermilion County Conservation District to establish county parks to help protect and preserve the unique natural areas in the county. Forest Glen became the first of several county parks.

Managing the parks to maintain these natural areas has been of the highest priority from the beginning of the District. Most of the management in early years has been to establish rules to protect the areas from overuse. No hunting of any kind has occurred at Forest Glen since it opened in 1968 and deer hunting has never occurred in modern times!

Today, many problems face the nature preserves in the county. Exotic invasive species are one example. Unfortunately, there are many, and more seem to be arriving each year. Some animals have responded quite well from total protection and have healthy populations within the parks.

The Whitetail Deer at Forest Glen has done so well that it is now considered over-populated and may very well be doing damage to the ecosystems that we are trying to care for. Studies on the decline of some animal species that live in the browse zone are being done throughout the Midwest. As deer numbers have increased, some species have decreased. Deer browse may also be changing the plant species composition. Some plants are favored over others by the deer, thus reducing the favorable ones and allowing the unfavorable to become more abundant. This can (over time) change the complete makeup of the forest and other habitats.

Beginning in the fall of 2013, the Conservation District will initiate a very limited control archery deer hunt to reduce the deer populations at Forest Glen Preserve. Two types of hunts are planned: a *Lottery Hunt* (see flyer) and an *Auction Hunt* (see flyer). Through these tightly controlled archery hunts, we hope to reduce the deer

populations by 35%. Most deer biologists consider deer populations should be somewhere between 15 and 30 deer per square mile with a buck/doe ratio of 1 to 1. Forest Glen is approximately 3 square miles, so deer numbers should be around 100 total for the park. You can drive through the park in late winter and count over 100 deer just in the picnic areas alone and the majority will be antler less deer (does and the young).

Our goal is certainly not to remove all the deer in the park, but just to bring the numbers into a more manageable level so that the ecosystem that has existed for years and the diversity of life can continue for future generations. If you have any questions or concerns, give me a call at 260-4637 and I would be glad to discuss them with you.

Gary Wilford  
Naturalist  
Forest Glen Preserve