

Forest Preserves of Cook County, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve: A Visitor's Guide

Onomi Alabi¹, Markiesha Bell², Cheryl Johnson³, Lorena Lopez², Deloris Lucas⁴, Donisha Reed⁵ & Laura Milkert²
¹Carver Military Academy, ²Field Museum, ³People for Community Recovery, ⁴We Keep You Rollin', ⁵TCA Health

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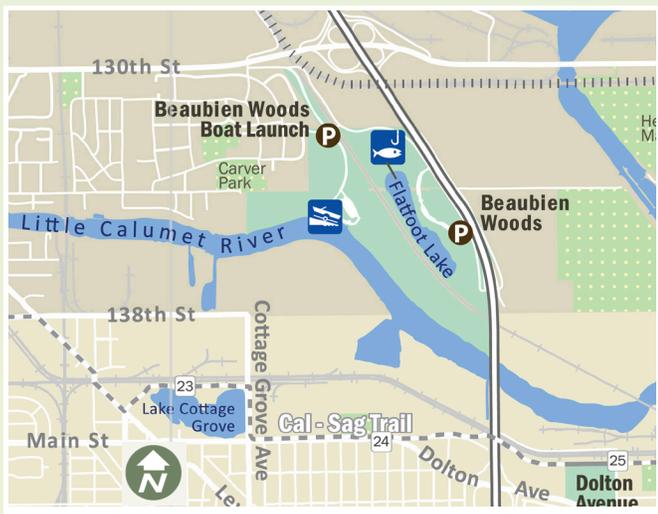
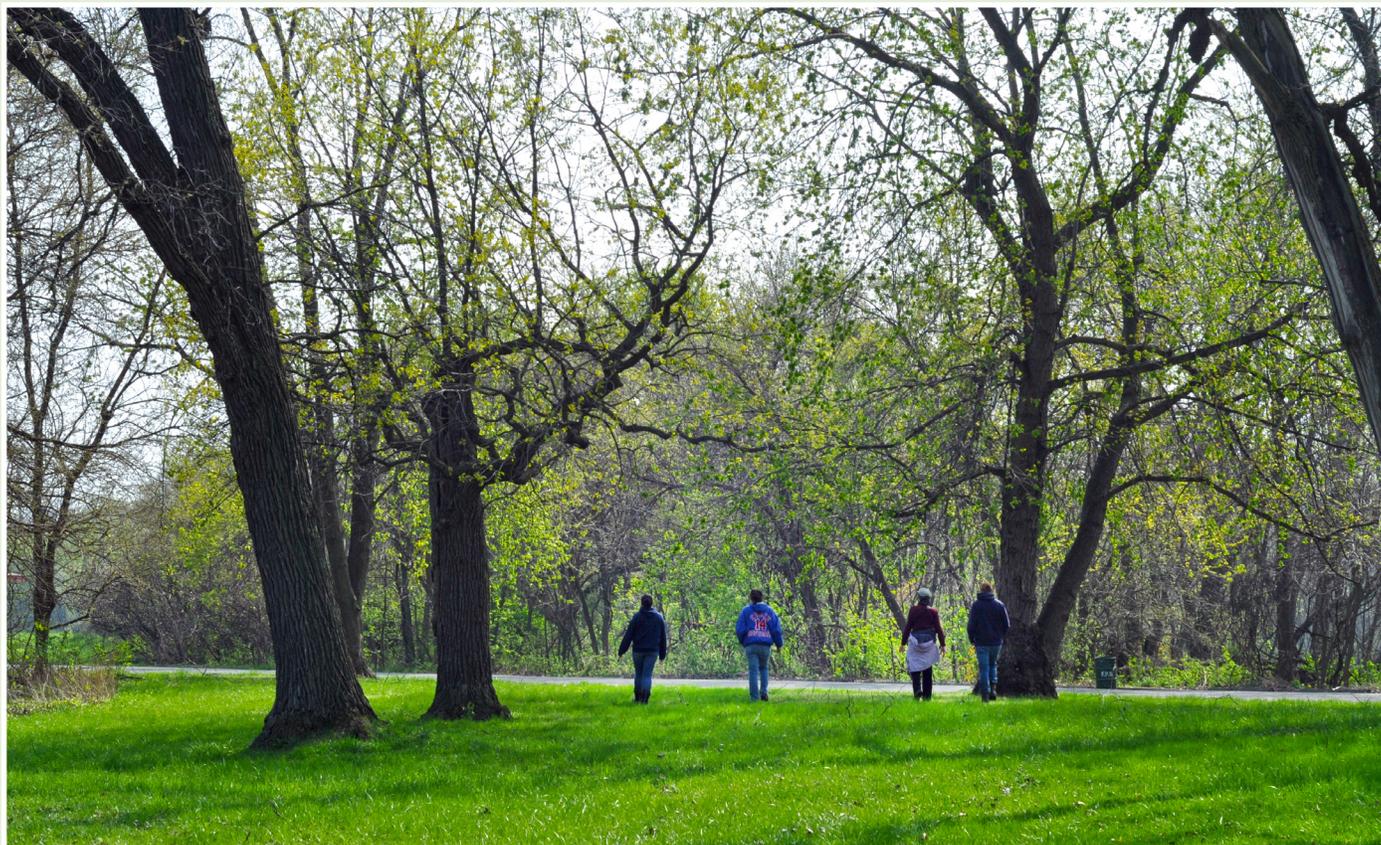


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How to get to Beaubien Woods

E 132nd St, east of S Greenwood Ave
Chicago, IL 60827

Things to Do & Amenities:

- Accessible Fishing Area
- Accessible Picnic Area
- Accessible Portable Bathrooms
- Boat Launch Nearby
- Ice Fishing
- Parking
- Volunteer Opportunities

Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve is home to several 100+ year-old oak trees, high-quality prairie, oak savanna, and wetland habitat, and hundreds of species of native plants and migratory birds. There are many ways to enjoy this 135-acre preserve. A hiking trail on the north end takes you through a mix of woodland and prairie habitats to Flatfoot Lake at the center of the site. The area has a rich history as a former farmstead and location on the Underground Railroad. We invite you to get to know your Cook County Forest Preserve using this field guide.

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Land Acknowledgement

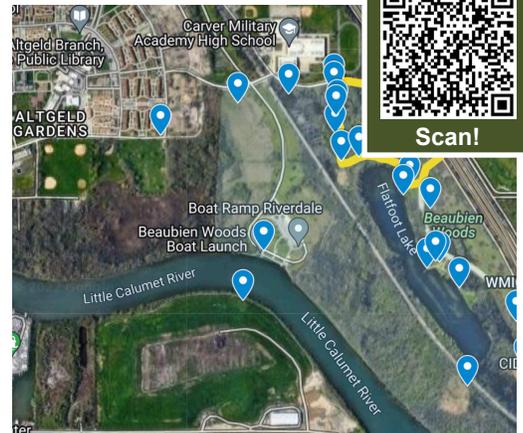
Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve sits on the traditional homelands of the Three Fires Confederacy, collectively known as the Anishnabek (or Anishenabe) people: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodéwadmiké (Potawatomi), and Inoka (Illini Confederacy) and Myaamia (Miami) people. This region near Lake Michigan was a site for trade, gathering, and healing for more than a

dozen Native tribes. The word 'Calumet' is thought to be derived from the ceremonial peace pipe used by native peoples of the region. We offer respect and gratitude to the diverse Indigenous people that still reside here and across the region, as well as their ancestors, and recognize, share and celebrate their immemorial ties to this land.

Beaubien: Then and Now



This aerial image shows what Beaubien looked like in 1938, showing agricultural fields and the railway line that still exists. The dark dots are native oak trees that still grow today.



This 2022 aerial image (on the right) of an interpretive, guided map of Beaubien Woods shows the places and landscape that currently exist in the area. Scan the QR code to explore.



Local Environmental Leaders To Know

Cheryl Johnson | People for Community Recovery (PCR)

Founded in 1979 by Cheryl's mother, Hazel Johnson, to fight for environmental justice (EJ) in and around Altgeld Gardens, PCR and Cheryl continue that legacy today. Hazel is often considered the mother of the national EJ movement, demanding reforms to protect communities of color like Altgeld that are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards.

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Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve



Beaubien is part of the Calumet Region, an area spanning Illinois and Northwest Indiana along the southern tip of Lake Michigan. Few places weave together life and landscape as distinctively as the bi-state Calumet region, a tapestry of people, industry, and globally significant nature. Beaubien is encircled by the Little Calumet River, the Bishop Ford Freeway, landfills, and Altgeld Gardens.

Beaubien Natural Communities

There are nearly nine acres of high-quality prairie at Beaubien, predominantly composed of tall, perennial, native grasses. Only about .01% of the original prairie in Illinois remains.



Prairie Community



- 1 **Rattlesnake Master**
Eryngium yuccifolium
 The scientific name of this plant, means "like yucca leaves."



- 2 **Common Milkweed**
Asclepias syriaca
 The most common milkweed, its leaves are the food for monarch caterpillars.



- 3 **Big Bluestem**
Andropogon gerardii
 The state grass of Illinois, also called "turkey foot," due to the shape of its seedhead.



Local Environmental Leaders To Know

Onome Alabi | Assistant Principal at Carver Military Academy (on right)

Ms. Alabi taught Biology and Forensic Science to 9th-12th grade students, connecting hundreds of students with the Calumet Is My BackYard (CIMBY) program at Beaubien for over a decade, where they learn about local ecology and how to take action for nature conservation.

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Beaubien Natural Communities

Before European settlement, Beaubien Woods was a wet prairie and open savanna community. The oak savannas of the Midwest form a transition zone between the drier Great Plains to the west and the broadleaf forests to the east. There are five acres of oak savanna at Beaubien today.



Oak Savanna Community



4 Bur Oak
Quercus macrocarpa
 Provides habitat for hundreds of living organisms and works as a backbone to the ecosystem.



5 Bottle Brush Grass
Elymus hystrix
 Produces beautiful seed heads that resemble a brush; does well with dappled sunlight.



6 Spring Beauty
Claytonia virginica
 Spring ephemerals like the *Spring beauty* is a sign of spring.

Beaubien has large areas of wet prairie, a 15-acre man-made lake, and is adjacent to the Little Calumet River. Great egrets are known to gather here, and you can find evidence of beavers having chewed on wood for their lodges in Flatfoot Lake (named for its shape).



Wetland Community



7 Largemouth Bass
Micropterus salmoides
 Largemouth bass, bluegill, and redear sunfish are commonly stocked in the lake.



8 Buttonbush
Cephalanthus occidentalis
 This native wetland shrub attracts 24 birds and numerous butterfly species.



9 Blue Flag Iris
Iris virginica shrevei
 The blue-violet flowers are striking in wetlands, blooming late spring to early summer.



Local Environmental Leaders To Know

Deloris Lucas | Founder of We Keep You Rollin' (WKYR)

The Bike & Wellness Group holds safety workshops, eco-tours to Beaubien Woods, as well as, the 7th annual "Lucas Legacy" Bike Ride & Wellness Pop-up event. Visit WKYR's Facebook page for up to the minute details.

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Points of Interest at Beaubien



Boat Launch

Provides a scenic overlook and is located at E 132nd St, east of S Greenwood Ave, Chicago, IL 60827. The parking lot and ramp allow access to the Little Calumet River and have interpretive signage and a small pavilion.



Osprey Nesting Platform Near Boat Launch

Keep your eyes to the sky in warmer months for these fish-eating raptors, as well as for bald eagles that have been known to fly overhead.



Gathering Space "Prairie Boat"

Designed by sculptors Christine Perri and Roman Villareal, in partnership with Imani Village, this artistic gathering space provides a beautiful place to convene and view the waterfront.



Picnic Shelter

The pavilion provides a sheltered spot for visitors and views of the lake. A portable bathroom is located next to the picnic shelter and is usually available May 1st to October 31st.



Local Environmental Leaders To Know Mighty Acorns Students and Habitat Volunteers

Volunteers of all ages work together each month to care for and restore biodiversity and health in Beaubien Woods. Local elementary students participate in the Mighty Acorns program and have been learning about and helping to beautify and take care of Beaubien Woods since 2005.



Volunteer!

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Nearby Points of Interest



Jon Ton Farm and Underground Railroad

"Freedom seekers" escaping slavery found refuge with local abolitionists and Dutch immigrants Jon and Aagje Ton whose 40-acre farm was located adjacent to Beaubien on the north bank of the Little Calumet River from the 1840s until the Civil War. In 2019, the National Park Service formally included the Farm Site in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom registry.



Altgeld Gardens and Golden Gate

To the west of the site, built in 1945 for returning World War II veterans, Altgeld Gardens was one of the nation's first public housing developments and is still a vibrant, predominantly African-American community today, alongside neighboring Golden Gate homes and duplexes.



Calumet Heritage Area

Efforts are underway to establish a Calumet National Heritage Area. The heritage area showcases the assets of this unique American region, and Beaubien Woods is a part of that story. Pullman National Monument and Big Marsh are two other nearby natural areas of interest.



African American Heritage Water Trail

The Water Trail, which begins at the boat launch, honors the legacy and stories of African Americans who settled along the river. The Little Calumet River is part of the system that connects Lake Michigan with the Mississippi.



Local Environmental Leaders To Know

Donisha Reed and TCA Health

Donisha Reed is a public health leader, wellness consultant, yoga teacher, and outdoor enthusiast that works for TCA Health, a community health center adjacent to Beaubien Woods that brings community members to experience and enjoy the preserve.