

Visiting Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve

Lake Renwick Heron Rookery is a dedicated Illinois State Nature Preserve. The preserve is jointly owned by the Forest Preserve District of Will County and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. As a protected nature site, it is studied and managed for the best interest and use of its wildlife.

The birds at Lake Renwick are sensitive to human activities and could abandon the site and their young if disturbed. Therefore, the nature preserve has limited access that varies from season to season.

From May 1 – August 15, the visitor center is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Staff provide informational talks on the birds and viewing scopes allow guests to see the birds in their nests.

Preserve Hours

March 1 – April 30:
Closed

May 1 – August 15:
Wednesdays, 10 a.m. Guided Tour
Saturdays, 8 a.m. – noon.

August 16 – October 31:
8 a.m. – Sunset

November 1 – February 28:
8 a.m. – Sunset

Fishing, bicycles and pets are not allowed in the nature preserve.

Many species of birds can be seen at Lake Renwick. Binoculars, field guides, and cameras are recommended.

Visiting Copley Nature Park

Copley Nature Park provides accessible year-round viewing of the birds of Lake Renwick Heron Rookery. The 3.25-acre site was acquired in 1998 with the assistance of Friends of the Rookery, a local group of citizens and the Copley newspaper organization.

The site offers self-guided interpretive signs and mounted viewing scopes focusing on the resident heron and egret populations.

Copley Nature Park Hours

Year Round: 8 a.m. – Sunset



Visiting Lake Renwick Preserve –Turtle Lake Access

Turtle Lake Access provides accessible shoreline fishing, a 2.9-mile hiking and biking trail and additional opportunities for bird watching. Turtle Lake is used by herons and egrets to forage for food, so access is limited.

Shoreline fishing is allowed on Turtle Lake in designated areas only. Shoreline fishing is permitted along the entire shoreline of Budde Lake. Fishing permits are required for all persons 16 years of age or older.

Lake Renwick-Turtle Lake Access Hours

Year Round: 8 a.m. – Sunset

Directions to Lake Renwick

Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve is located 0.4 mile east of Route 30 on Renwick Road, in Plainfield.

Copley Nature Park is located 0.75 mile north of Renwick Road on Route 30, in Plainfield.

Lake Renwick Preserve–Turtle Lake Access is on Lockport Street, 1.0 mile east of Division Street, in Plainfield.

For more information on visiting Lake Renwick Preserve, call 815.727.8700 or visit ReconnectWithNature.org

The Forest Preserve District of Will County does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, age or disability. In providing programs and services to the public, the Forest Preserve District will make reasonable modifications to ensure that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy District offerings. To request this document in large print, audio or Braille, or to request modifications to participate in one of the Forest Preserve's programs or services, contact the Superintendent of Public Affairs, Sugar Creek Administration Center, 17540 W. Laraway Road, Joliet, IL 60433; comments@fpdwc.org; 815.722.9383 (voice); 800.526.0844 (TDD). Requests should be made at least 48 hours in advance. While the Forest Preserve District will make every effort to meet requests in a timely fashion, some requests may take longer to fulfill than others. Persons believing that they have been discriminated against by the Forest Preserve District of Will County may file a complaint alleging discrimination with the Forest Preserve District or the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of the Interior, www.doi.gov/diversity.

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Forest Preserve District of Will County



Lake Renwick



The Birds of Lake Renwick

Lake Renwick is a 150-acre lake with several small islands used for nesting by great blue herons, great egrets, black-crowned night herons, double-crested cormorants and cattle egrets. Lake Renwick is one of the unique sites in Illinois where these five species of birds can be seen together.

Today, this lake provides critical nesting and feeding areas for these birds. The rookery's nesting success is due to the many nearby rivers and wetlands where the birds forage for food. Large amounts of fish and other aquatic life are necessary to feed their young. In 2002, a major restoration of the islands and nearby property enhanced breeding and feeding areas for the birds. Due to the erosion of the islands and loss of trees, artificial nesting platforms were installed that provided 500 new nesting spots. Additionally, 65 acres within the preserve were transformed from farmland to a grassland and wetland habitat.

Great Blue Herons

Great blue herons are Illinois' most common heron. They stand 48 inches tall with a six-foot wingspan. They are slate gray, with white heads, a broad black stripe above the eye, and dagger-like bills. Great blue herons nest in tree tops. Often, they use the same nest each year, adding



sticks until the nest becomes very large. Flying overhead, great blue herons are often mistaken for

cranes. To tell them apart, look at their necks. Herons fold their necks close to their bodies; cranes fly with their necks extended. Herons wade in shallow water, searching for fish, frogs, and other aquatic animals.

Black-Crowned Night Herons

Black-crowned night herons are an endangered species in Illinois. They are short, standing 25 inches tall.

Adults have a black crown and back, gray wings and white underparts. Night herons nest low, often on the ground. As their name suggests, black-



crowned night herons are active at night, when they do most of their feeding.

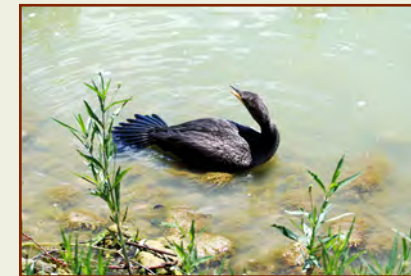
Great Egrets

Great egrets stand about 38 inches high. They are slender, white birds with long, black legs and yellow bills. They nest halfway up the tree, sometimes in fallen logs. Long plumes develop on the tails of both sexes during breeding season. In the early 1900s, great egrets were almost hunted to extinction. Their beautiful plumage was fashionable for ladies' hats. The great egret was removed from Illinois' endangered and threatened species list in 1999.



Double-Crested Cormorants

Double-crested cormorants are about 33 inches tall and are black, with webbed feet and a red-orange chin pouch. Cormorants nest in



tree tops. They dive underwater to catch fish, using their wings to swim to depths of 25 feet.

Double-crested cormorants may be seen in tree tops with their wings spread, drying their feathers.

The cormorant colony at Lake Renwick was the first in northeastern Illinois. They are the only non-heron species nesting in the rookery.

Cattle Egrets

Cattle egrets are the smallest of the egrets at Lake Renwick. They are around 20 inches high and are white, with stubby yellowish bills. Adults in breeding plumage have an orange-buff color on their crowns, breasts, and backs. Often hard to spot, these birds nest low, often within the shrub layer. They are the last of the herons to arrive at the rookery in spring, usually by late-May. Cattle egrets often look for food in fields among livestock. Unlike other water birds, cattle egrets eat mostly insects rather than aquatic life.



Other Bird Species

A variety of birds visit Lake Renwick during the year. Some birds pass through on migration routes while other bird species make Lake Renwick their home all year.

Birds recorded at Lake Renwick include: great horned owls, pelicans, Canada geese, northern shoveler, bluebirds, and bald eagles.



Photos courtesy of Joel Craig and Glen Buckner