

Welcome to Crowley's Ridge State Park

Rising in some places two hundred feet above the delta region of northeastern Arkansas is a narrow strip of gently rolling hills known as Crowley's Ridge. Two hundred and ten miles in length and situated between Cape Girardeau, Missouri and Helena, Arkansas, this unique geological feature is one of the most beautiful and fascinating areas within the United States.

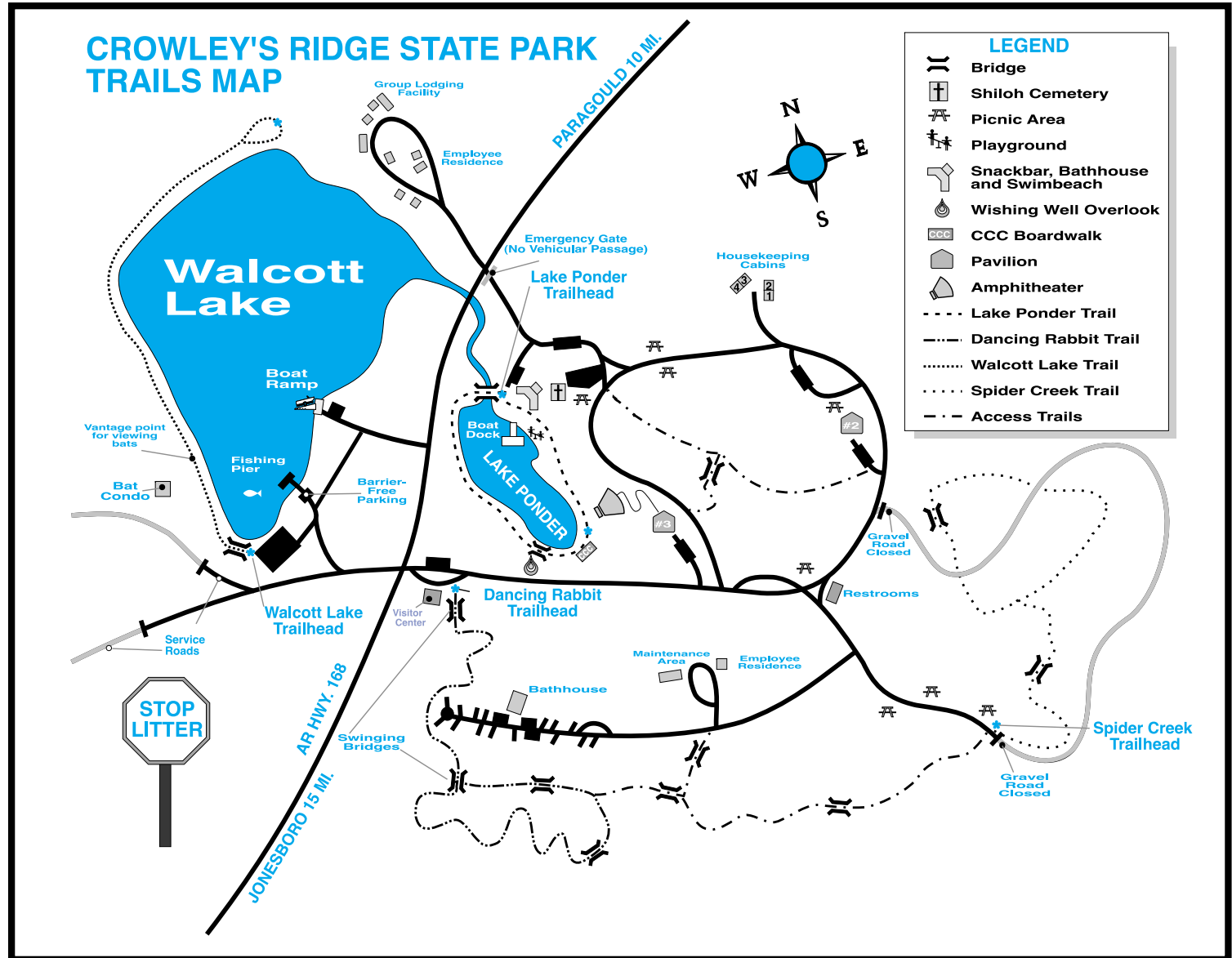
The ridge was formed when two ancient river systems, the Mississippi and Ohio, cut vast trenches across the plains of eastern Arkansas. Crowley's Ridge was once a giant sand and gravel island left between these two rivers. Through time, wind blown dust, called loess, built up on the area left behind, in some areas forming a cap of fine, sandy soil sixty feet deep.

Crowley's Ridge State Park occupies the former homestead of influential pioneer Benjamin Crowley and the ridge bears his name. A large monument in Shiloh Cemetery, the oldest cemetery in Greene County, marks his grave. The cemetery is located in the park just east of the CCC Pavilion.

Belle Hodges Wall, Secretary of the Paragould Chamber of Commerce, and W.R. Heagler, a civil engineer, persuaded the National Park Service to select the badly eroded Crowley homestead for a park site in 1933. The Civilian Conservation Corps remained here from 1933 to 1938 and provided funding and manpower to build the park. The men planted trees, built trails and Lake Ponder. Mr. Heagler later became the park's first superintendent.

Among some of the projects undertaken by the CCC was the construction of trails. They were built to blend in with the surrounding terrain creating the appearance of natural woodlands paths. Years later, two other government programs somewhat similar to the CCC were used to assist with trail construction and maintenance. The first was the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) in the late 70's, and the second was Americorps whose members worked on the trail system in 1996.

We hope you take the time to enjoy the history and beauty found on Crowley's Ridge State Park's trails!



Dancing Rabbit Trail

Length: 1.22 mile
Trailhead: east side of Visitor Center
Trail ends: loops back to starting point
Difficulty: moderate
Trail Blaze: light blue

The Park was once a favorite campground for local Native Americans. The first pioneer settlers kept a few of the Indian names for local features such as the Dancing Rabbit Arroyo. An *arroyo* is a deep gully cut by an intermittent stream. Two swinging bridges over Dancing Rabbit Arroyo highlight your woodland journey.

Spider Creek Trail

Length: .75 mile
Trailhead: south end of picnic area
Trail ends: loops back to starting point
Difficulty: moderate
Trail Blaze: pink

Spider Creek Trail winds through a pine and mixed hardwood forest. Often seen wildlife such as grey squirrels, wild turkey, white-tail deer and grey fox make this trail very popular. Many species of birds can also be seen such as pileated and downy woodpeckers and Carolina chickadee. Spring wildflowers color the forest floor and fall foliage sets the hardwoods ablaze with crimson and gold.

Amphitheater Trail

Length: .01 mile
Trailhead: behind pavilion #3
Trail ends: amphitheater
Difficulty: moderate
Trail Blaze: lavender

The Amphitheater Trail winds through what was once the upper tier of the Belle Hodges Wall Amphitheater that the CCC originally constructed to seat 2,100 visitors. Restoration of the Amphitheater was only limited to the first tier which today seats approximately 600 visitors. As you hike the trail, you will see that much of the original upper tier is still visible today.

Lake Ponder Barrier-Free Trail

Length: .45 mile
Trailhead: CCC Pavilion
Trail Ends: loops back to starting point
Difficulty: easy
Trail Blaze: none

This paved trail was named after former state senator and park commissioner, Harry L. Ponder of Walnut Ridge. The trail is barrier free and offers visitors a chance to see plants such as the sensitive fern that grow along the marshy shoreline. Several natural springs flow into the lake throughout the year. The CCC Boardwalk/Overlook is a beautiful feature of this trail. This easy and level trail is often used by walkers, joggers, visitors with disabilities, and mothers with strollers.

Walcott Lake Trail

Length: .5 mile
Trailhead: south of fishing pier
Trail Ends: group lodging area
Difficulty: easy
Trail Blaze: none

Running along the top of the fishing lake levee, this trail offers hikers a chance to observe many birds such as the great blue heron, belted kingfisher and various species of waterfowl.

Trail Regulations

As you walk along the park trails, please observe the following regulations:

- * Leave all plants, animals, and rocks undisturbed so that others may enjoy them. *State Parks are wildlife sanctuaries.*
- * Cans, bottles, cigarette butts and other litter are not allowed on the trail.
Please don't leave trash behind.
- * All trails are limited to foot traffic only.

Hiking Suggestions

The following suggestions are made for your safety and comfort.

- * Wear appropriate footwear such as hiking boots or sneakers.
- * In warm months, insect repellent may be necessary to ward off mosquitoes.
- * Know how to identify poison ivy and venomous snakes (esp. copperheads) and avoid both!
- * Let someone know where you are going and take a buddy.

Notice: To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.

For further information contact:

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