

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Springshed

A springshed is an area of land that contributes groundwater to a spring. Your actions within the springshed affect the quality of water flowing from the spring. Indian Lake is a deep sinkhole lake that drains the water from Indian Lake Prairie through the Floridan Aquifer. The water then flows up from the aquifer to the surface at a spring. In this case that spring is Silver Springs, a group of artesian springs with a tourist attraction history. An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock, fractures, or unconsolidated materials which can contain or transmit groundwater. Over 10 million people depend on the Florida aquifer so keeping these systems healthy is important. The dry, sandy hills of Indian Lake State Forest are important for recharging groundwater and improving the overall health of Silver Springs. The forest was purchased because of its importance in improving the water quality of this springshed.

Love the state forests? So do we!

The Friends of Florida State Forests is a direct-support organization of the Florida Forest Service dedicated to ensuring Florida's state forests are available for future generations to enjoy. Make a difference by joining today to help protect Florida's forests.

Membership dues go to the forests for conservation and improvement projects. To join Friends or for more information, visit:

www.FloridaStateForests.org



Things to Know When Visiting Indian Lake State Forest

- The forest is only open during daylight hours except for registered campers.
- Pets are welcome but must remain on a leash.
- Do not create new trails.
- All horses must have proof of current negative Coggins test results.
- Take all garbage when you leave the forest. Containers are not provided.
- Primitive camping reservations can be made at www.FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com
- Removal of plants or animals is prohibited.
- Take pictures and memories home with you to share with family and friends.

For more information, visit:

www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

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Florida Forest Service

Indian Lake State Forest



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES



History

Indian Lake State Forest is comprised of about 4,500 acres and is located just north of Silver Springs in Marion County, Florida. This property was acquired in 2007 and 2008 under the Florida Forever Program with assistance from The Nature Conservancy, the Department of Environmental Protection, and Marion County. The forest is named after Indian Lake, a deep sinkhole lake found on the property.

A neat piece of history for this property is linked to the lake area as water has always been a natural draw for people. The area north of Indian Lake was once home to Ocala Springs RV park. This RV park thrived back in the 1970's at the same time as the attraction Silver Springs was thriving as a theme park. The campground had over 90 designated RV campsites, with most having electric and water hook-ups. Just keep in mind that the size of RV's in the 1970's was not as large as they are today. Other parts of the property, prior to acquisition had been converted to till agriculture or improved pasture which allowed invasive plants to displace historic vegetation in many areas.

Forestry

The Florida Forest Service's mission is to protect and manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring that they are available for future generations. The Florida Forest Service manages more than one million acres of state forests for multiple public uses including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat.

Timber management practices are important in the restoration and maintenance of forest ecosystems and provide a variety of benefits to Floridians. Indian Lake State Forest practices consists of improvement thinning and replanting old agricultural land to initiate restoration and improve water quality. Pine stands are thinned as needed and prescribed burns are conducted to maintain a healthy forest. Prescribed fire is an important management tool used in this forest. The prescribed fire program helps to stimulate the recovery of native ground cover and promotes the regeneration of native pines.



Indian Lake sunrise



Fishing at the lake



Equestrians on the horse trail

For more information contact:
Florida Forest Service / Ocala Forestry Station
6675 NE 40th Avenue Road
Silver Springs, FL 34479
(352) 732-1779
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

Natural Resources

The forest is dominated by rolling sandhills on a sinkhole-rich karst topography. Other natural community types found on the forest include depression marshes, xeric hammocks, and mesic flatwoods. A mix of wildflower color and wiregrass are visible to visitors.

Animals that can be spotted at the forest include gopher tortoises, fox squirrels, kestrels, and turkeys. The use of prescribed fire is used to mimic the natural occurrence of fire in this ecosystem. It is necessary to maintain the forest's unique plant and animal diversity.

Recreation

Recreation opportunities at Indian Lake State Forest include hiking, bird-watching, horseback riding, fishing, and primitive camping. Hikers and bird watchers can enjoy the 1.4-mile loop Bear-N-Oak trail. Equestrians can use 11 miles of designated Florida Forest Service horse trails as well as additional trails in the Silver River Forest Conservation Area managed by St. Johns River Water Management District.

The main recreation area is on the north side on Indian Lake. Visitors can drive in just over a quarter mile to a parking area overlooking the lake. From here you can access the Bear-N-Oak hiking trail or just sit down and enjoy the peacefulness and beauty of the lake and its surroundings. A pavilion with BBQ grills and tables is also on site for people who wish to picnic or grill out.

The forest currently has 5 primitive campsites which are close to Indian Lake. Campsites include a fire ring, picnic table, and parking spot. To find out more about camping opportunities or to make reservations, visit www.FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com.