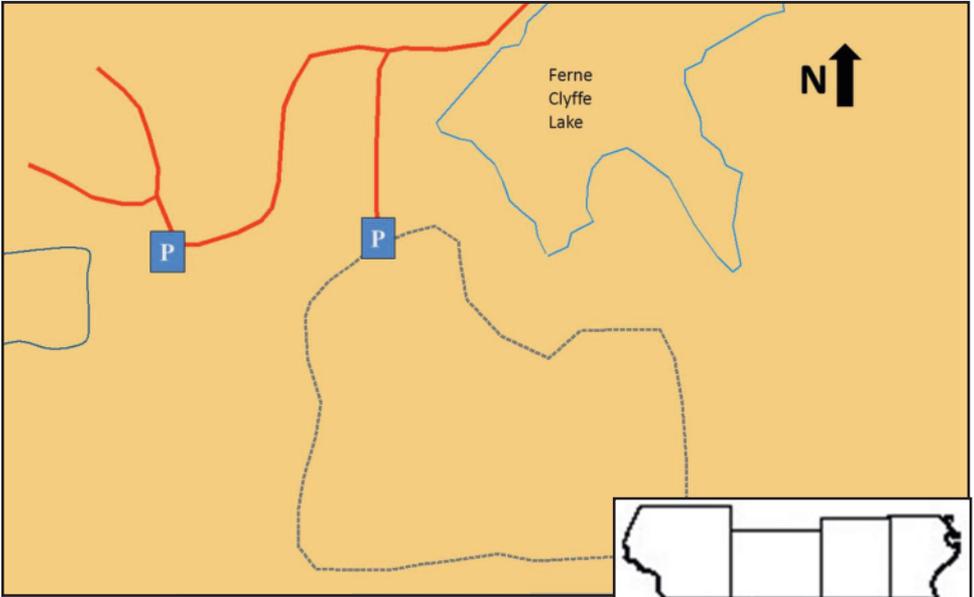


Round Bluff Trail

Ferne Clyffe State Park

1 mile - Moderate Rating

Trailhead: 37.5317, -88.9879



Round Bluff Trail is a 1-mile loop around the perimeter of Round Bluff Nature Preserve at Ferne Clyffe State Park, staying mostly in the moist woodlands. While the hiking itself is mostly easy, the trail does have several long series of steps, leading to its moderate rating. The trail begins at the edge of the parking lot and returns by leading hikers through the adjacent picnic area. This picnic area and the latter part of the trail offer beautiful vistas of the 16-acre Ferne Clyffe Lake.

The first half of the trail mostly winds through younger forest and somewhat follows a old roadbed. The second half of the trail is where the wildflower viewing gets really good. What is most impressive about Round Bluff is the large displays of early spring wildflowers, such as spring beauty, toothwort and corydalis. The rich woods along the trail can be entirely blanketed by these flowers. Later in spring, the observant wildflower watcher may spot some of the rare and beautiful fire pink blooming near the base of the bluff.

When the trail winds close to the base of towering bluffs, keep an eye out for wild columbine flowering on the rocks. Even though this is a wildflower guide, the ferns found at Round Bluff need to be mentioned. The rugged sandstone bluffs and boulders found abundantly along the trail are often covered in beautiful ferns and the fragile, fall-flowering small-flower alumroot. Keep an eye out along the bluffs for the rare cinnamon fern, easily distinguished by the cinnamon-colored fertile fronds sticking up like spikes from the center of the fern. Hay-scented fern can also be found on these bluffs. The trail is accessed via the main entrance at Ferne Clyffe State Park, 2-miles south of Goreville on Route 37. Go past the lake, turn left, and follow the signs to the trailhead.

Notable wildflowers present at site

Dutchman's breeches
Dicentra cucullaria

Fire pink
Silene virginica

Waterleaf
Hydrophyllum appendiculatum

Toothwort
Denartaria laciniata

Wild columbine
Aquilegia canadensis



False garlic on top of the bluff. Firepink (inset)