

# Donaldson Cave Nature Preserve

## Donaldson's Woods Nature Preserve

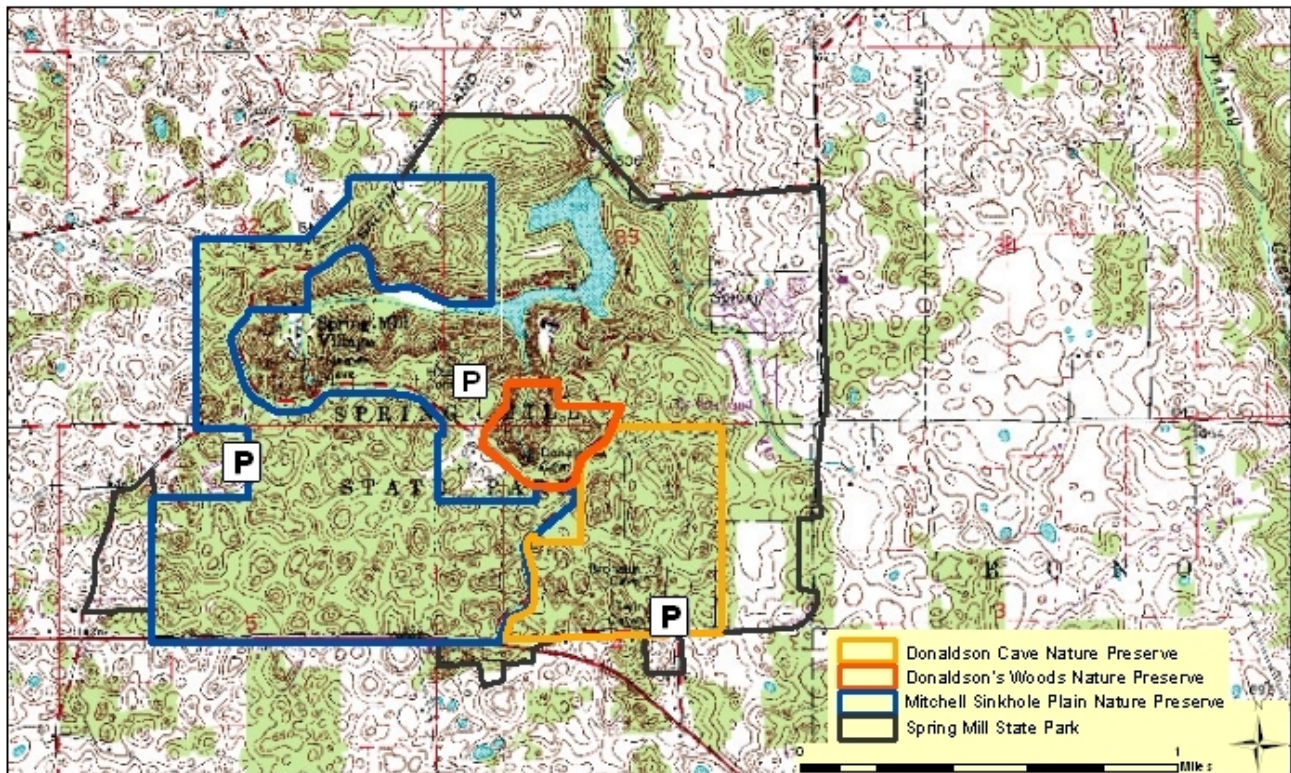
## Mitchell Sinkhole Plain Nature Preserve



County: Lawrence	Size:	Cave	39 acres	
		Woods	145 acres	
		Sinkhole	459 acres	<b>Total 643 acres</b>
Ownership: State Parks – IDNR				

### Location and Access

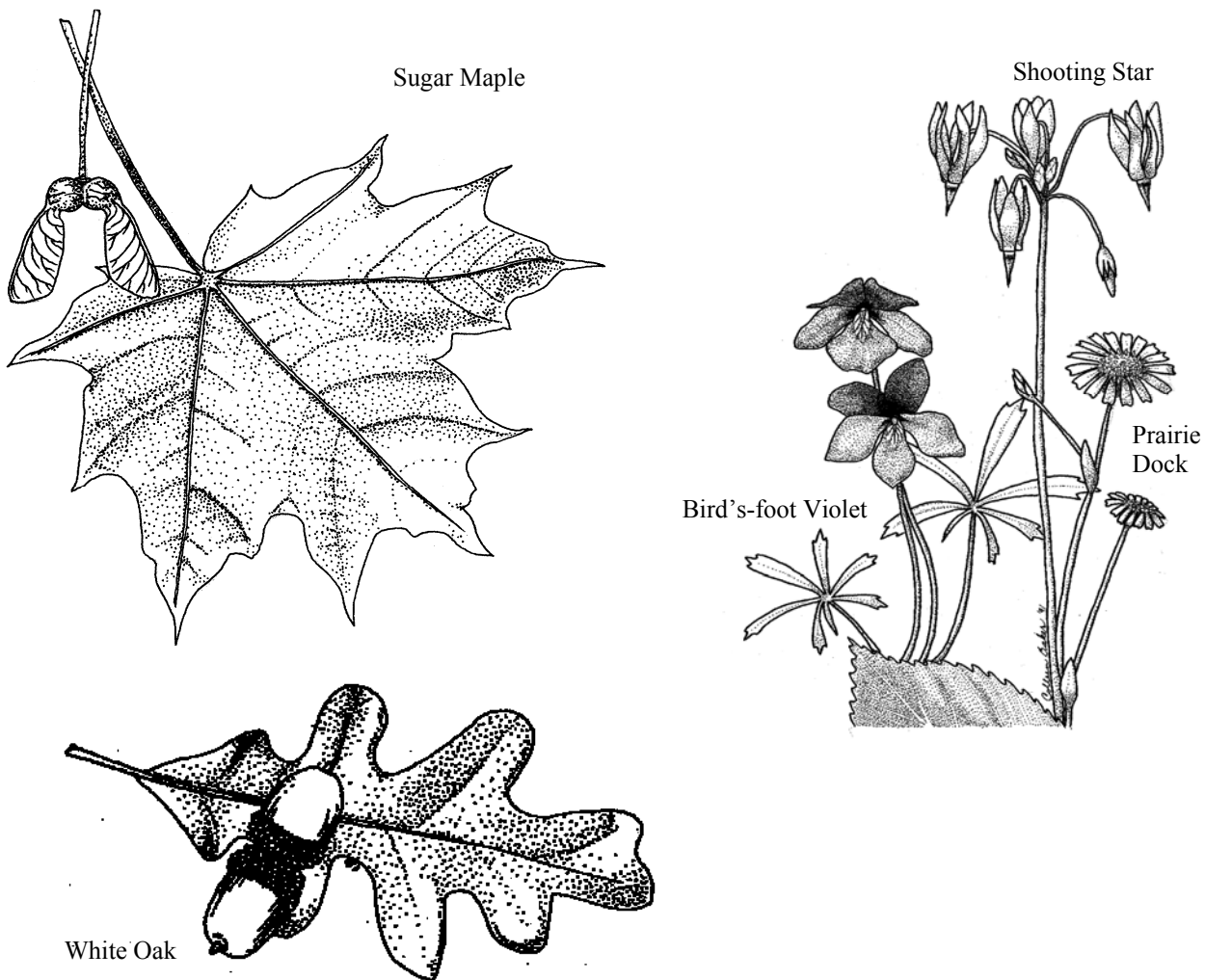
**Parking and trails.** Take SR 37 to Mitchell. Go east on SR 60 about 2.75 miles to the Spring Mill State Park entrance, which will be on the left. These preserves are located in this State Park and are marked on the park map available at the gate house or park office. Several trails run through the preserves: Trail 4 leads to Donaldson Cave; trail 3 passes through Donaldson's Woods. Please stay on trails. There is a naturalist in the park year round.



**Donaldson Cave:** All caves and sinkholes on DNR properties except Twin Caves at Spring Mill are closed to provide protection from White-nosed syndrome, a fungus that is killing bats in large numbers in the Northeastern U.S. and is now confirmed in Indiana. You may walk the trails of this preserve, but the cave itself is closed. To learn more about WNS, visit [www.dnr.IN.gov/batdisease](http://www.dnr.IN.gov/batdisease). Thank you for cooperating with DNR in this effort (2012). Donaldson Cave Nature Preserve surrounds the cave mouth. This is one of the most picturesque scenes in the state. Stream water flows from the cave and winds along the gorge bottom. The slopes of this gorge support forest types typical of the southern Indiana hill country. White oak, black oak, and pignut hickory occupy higher, drier portions of the slope. Lower, more shaded slopes are covered by beech-maple forest. A few plants can grow on the steep dry slope directly above the cave mouth, accessed by the trail. Many of the plants that do survive are more commonly found in prairies. These include shooting star, bird's-foot violet, hoary puccoon, blue-eyed grass, prairie dock and New Jersey tea.

**Donaldson's Woods:** This undisturbed old-growth woods is recognized by botanists as one of the most impressive stands of the original forest remaining in Indiana. This woods is classified as a western mesophytic forest type because it is intermediate between beech-maple and oak-hickory types. However, studies indicate that beech and maple are assuming greater importance. An unusual feature of the woods is the high percentage of white oaks. This region of the state is rich in karst features such as caves and sinkholes. Much of the run-off from the woods drains through sinkholes, rather than surface streams.

**Mitchell Sinkhole Plain:** This example of classic karst terrain consists of a very pronounced sinkhole plain that borders the entrenched valley of Mill Creek. The area is dominated by an abundance of sinkholes in various states of activity; many quickly swallow rainwater whereas others are plugged and remain ponded for short time periods. The natural opening and collapse of small caverns throughout exemplify the very dynamic nature of this landscape. This portion of Spring Mill appears to represent the largest single block of undisturbed sinkhole plain in a natural forest community remaining in Indiana.



**Further Information:**

Spring Mill State Park, Box 376, Mitchell, IN 47446. (812) 849-4129. [www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/](http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/)  
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