

# Oakwoods Nature Preserve AT A GLANCE

Oakwoods Nature Preserve, which is named for the large oak trees along Aurand Run, is a 227.5-acre natural area containing diverse habitat, an extensive trail system, and two lakes—all anchored by the Richard S. “Doc” Phillips Discovery Center. The Discovery Center was named in honor of Richard S. “Doc” Phillips—a local friend of nature, teacher, author, and volunteer.

The Discovery Center opened in 1994, followed by an expansion in 2012. It serves as the Hancock Park District’s primary facility when conducting environmental education programs for the general public and school groups. The facility offers a Wetland Window on Wildlife viewing area, aquatic and reptile enclosures, seasonal displays, animal mounts, books, binoculars, and interactive stations. The expansion led to a second room for enhanced learning opportunities and an outdoor patio with picnic tables, fireplace, walkways, planting beds, and exhibits showcasing Best Management Practices in the area of conservation.

Historically, part of Oakwoods Nature Preserve was a quarry that served local railroads in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Included on the property was a roundhouse for the narrow-gauge railroads that served the quarry. The roundhouse is gone now, but much of its stone foundation remains. This visible reminder of the area’s history can be seen from inside the Discovery Center and from the deck overlooking the wetland.

Trails can be found throughout the nature preserve, including but not limited to the .95-mile Aurand Run Trail. The trail system provides opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, birdwatching, photography, environmental education, and nature appreciation.



*The Richard S. “Doc” Phillips Discovery Center is at the “heart of the park.” This year-round, multiple-use, educational facility provides a centralized location for programming opportunities.*



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Piers at Dold Lake (above) and Shank Lake (cover) provide fishing and breathtaking views.

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1400 Oakwoods Lane, Findlay

Wetlands, woodlands, and prairie create a place for discovery and form a natural attraction full of seasonal beauty that supports wildlife, environmental education, and nature-based outdoor recreation. In spring, mayapples, trout lilies, toad trilliums, and many other plant species can be seen along the trails. In summer, the wetlands, woodlands, and prairie are teeming with life. In autumn, the hardwood canopy takes on a seemingly magical transformation with its presentation of colors. And in winter with snow-laden branches, the nature preserve becomes a winter wonderland.

A few relatively quiet destinations can be found while hiking Oakwoods Nature Preserve. The overlook offers a rare vantage point within the park. A bench near the Prairie Trail affords a nice view of Shank Lake. And hiking the entire 1.7-mile Meadowlark Trail may give hikers a sense of isolation and solitude, and a rewarding backcountry experience.

In *In Nature's Realm*, "Doc" Phillips wrote, "Then we came to an inviting-looking woods and an expanse of blue water off to the right, and of course, we had to investigate these. This is how we found Shank's Quarry." Shank Lake is available for fishing and boating with electric motors only. Access to the lake is provided by a boat ramp, a fishing pier, and the Shank Lake Trail. Dold Lake is also available for fishing. Access to the lake is provided by the McKinley Trail, a beach, and a fishing pier with picnic tables.

