A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for Hills Creek State Park

# Hills Creek State Park

Located in scenic Tioga County, the 407-acre Hills Creek State Park abounds with wildlife. Osprey, loon, and waterfowl visit the lake that boasts a variety of warmwater fish species. Camping, cabins, swimming, and picnicking make this an ideal spot for a family vacation.

# Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 41.80422 Long. -77.19086

Hills Creek State Park, in northcentral Tioga County, is just north of US 6 and midway between Wellsboro and Mansfield. The park is also reached from PA 287 between the towns of Tioga and Wellsboro.

# Reservations

Make online reservations at www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

# Recreational Opportunities

CAMPING: ♿ modern shower houses

The 82-site modern campground is at the north end of the park and can be reached by the main park road. The campsites range from grassy open areas to sites dominated by immense hemlock trees. The campground opens the second Friday in April and closes at the end of October.

Modern shower houses, restrooms, and water fountains are in central locations throughout the camping area. A sanitary dump station is just outside the camping area. Pet-friendly and ADA accessible sites are available.

CAMPING COTTAGES:♿ Three cottages sleep five people in single bunks and double/single bunks and have a dining table and chairs, porch/deck, picnic table, fire ring, electric heat, lights, and outlets. Camping cottages do not have running water. Potable water and a modern shower house are nearby. Cottage 34 is ADA accessible.

YURTS: These round, canvas and wood walled tents have a wooden deck and sleep five people in single bunks and double/single bunks. Yurts have a stovetop, refrigerator, dining table and chairs, porch/deck, picnic table, fire ring, electric heat, lights, and outlets. Potable water and a modern shower house are nearby. Weekly reservations are required during the summer.

CABINS:♿ Ten modern cabins can be rented year round. Cabins are furnished and have a living area, kitchen/dining area, shower, and two bedrooms. Dog-friendly cabins and ADA accessible cabins are available. Cabin renters should bring their own linens and kitchen utensils. Weekly

reservations are required during the summer.

PICNICKING: There are two picnic areas and three reservable picnic pavilions.Picnic Area 1 is at the south end of the lake near the dam. Picnic Area 2 is just north east of the swimming area along a large cove of the lake.

The picnic areas have picnic tables, charcoal grills, picnic pavilion, centrally located drinking fountains, and modern restrooms. Picnic Area 2 is open year round, however, modern facilities are closed seasonally. Picnic pavilions may be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. Unreserved picnic pavilions are free on a first-come, first-served basis.

ORANIZED GROUP TENTING: Qualified adult and youth groups may use this 40-person-capacity area equipped with picnic tables, pavilion, fire rings, water, and flush toilets. Campers may shower in the campground. This wooded peninsula is open from the second Friday in April to the middle of October, weather permitting. Advance reservations are recommended. Some of the larger hemlock, beech, and maple trees in the park are found on this very picturesque peninsula.

BOATING: electric motors only

The 137-acre Hills Creek Lake has three boat mooring areas with a total capacity of 30 boats. Beaverhut and Pines areas have concrete boat launching ramps. Boat rentals from the concession are available from Memorial Day to Labor Day, weather permitting.

Life jackets must be worn in accordance with Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws.

Motorboats must display a boat registration from any state. Non-powered boats must display one of the following: boat registration from any state; launch permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks, available at most state park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

FISHING: The 137-acre Hills Creek Lake provide excellent fishing for warmwater species. Common fish are largemouth bass, carps, bullhead catfish, bluegills, crappies, and yellow perch. This lake record for largemouth bass is just over eight pounds. A valid Pa. fishing license is required. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

ICE FISHING: Ice fishing success in Hills Creek Lake is exceptional for yellow perch, bluegill and an occasional walleye. **Ice thickness is not monitored.** For your safety, make sure ice is at least 4” thick for a single angler and 7” thick for a small group. Always carry safety equipment.

SWIMMING:♿ A sand beach is open from late-May to early-September, 8:00 AM to sunset. Swim at your own risk. The sandy lake bottom and grass beach are quite popular. The modern shower house and snack bar/boat rental are nearby and open seasonally.

HUNTING: Hills Creek State Park is closed to hunting because of its small size, but many acres of nearby public lands are available for this popular sport. State Game Lands 37 is within walking distance and covers 13,000 acres of rugged terrain.

HIKING: 5.5 miles

All hiking trails are blazed yellow. Trails where the Mid State Trail travels through the park are also blazed orange.

#### Lakeside Trail: 3 miles, more difficult hiking

This loop trail is accessible from multiple locations. Beginning at the entrance to the campground, follow the lake shore in a westerly direction to the Beaverhut Boating Area where many signs of beaver activity may be seen including a beaver lodge. The next section of trail along the west side of the lake to the dam offers an excellent variety of bird life attracted by seeds from white spruce, red-osier dogwood, and viburnums. Lakeside Trail continues through Picnic Area 1, crossing Spillway Road, and back into the woods along the lake once again. The trail continues along the east side of the lake, passing Picnic Area 2 before returning back to the campground.

#### Tauschers Trail: 1.5 miles, easiest hiking

This trail is in the southeast section of the park near the cabin area. It winds through pine plantations, dense stands of alder, and areas containing numerous wildflowers. Wildlife abounds in this section of the park and it is not uncommon to startle deer or grouse along the trail. Make a loop trail by adding 0.5 mile of the Lakeside Trail, parallel to Kellys Swamp Lane.

#### Yellow Birch Trail: 1 mile, easiest hiking

This loop trail starts at the entrance to the campground. Although short in length, this trail leads through diverse forest habitats, including stands of hardwoods, hemlock swamps, and marsh areas. The observant hiker may see a variety of wildlife and animal signs along with interesting tree development, such as burls.

Tell us about your hike at: [www.ExplorePATrails.com](http://www.ExplorePATrails.com).

# Learn, Experience, Connect

Hills Creek State Park offers a wide variety of programs between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. Gain a better understanding of the park’s natural, cultural, and historical resources through guided outdoor recreation, hands-on activities, walks, special events, and other programs. The park operates a seasonal nature center in the campground.

Contact the park office or explore the online calendar of events, https://events.dcnr.pa.gov, for more information on programs and other learning experiences.

# History

The land originally known as Kellys Swamp had been impounded for hundreds of years by beaver colonies. Before the land was purchased in 1950, a small mine was once located near the present day swimming beach. The mine extracted pigment for the paint industry. The park opened in 1953 and is named for the creek that runs through it. The creek was named after Captain William Hill who settled in the area around 1820.

# Wildlife Watching

Wildlife is plentiful in and around Hills Creek State Park. Along with an active beaver colony, there are other water-loving creatures including loons, buffleheads, and common mergansers. Bald eagles are frequently seen in the park.

Visitors may see a transient black bear, a flock of wild turkey, or deer. Hills Creek is also the perfect habitat for rabbit, grouse, pileated woodpecker, and owls.

In the spring, Hills Creek Lake becomes home to many species of migrating waterfowl.

# Hills Creek Lake

The focal point of the park is a 137-acre lake developed by impounding Hills Creek. The earth dam, completed in 1952 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, is 34 feet high and 422 feet long. The basin of Hills Creek Lake is long and narrow ending in an irregular triangle at the north end. The elevation is 1,486 feet, and the nearby mountains rise to an elevation of 2,200 feet.

The temperatures and chemical make up of the lake support a good warmwater fishery.

The general area now covered by water has been under the influence of beavers since the end of the last ice age. These large rodents still frequent the lake and the surrounding area. The depth of the beaver marsh (vegetation and sediment) is as great as 20 feet deep.

# Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Potter-Tioga Visitors Bureau. https://visitpottertioga.com

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has dayuse and overnight facilities at the **Tioga-Hammond Lakes Recreational area**, six miles north of the park.

**Leonard Harrison** and **Colton Point state parks** (the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon) are 18 miles west of Hills Creek.

# Explore Pennsylvania Wilds

Pennsylvania Wilds is two million acres of public lands for hiking, biking, fishing, boating, hunting, and exploration in northcentral Pennsylvania.

Highlights of the area are elk watching, scenic PA 6, Pine Creek Gorge (PA Grand Canyon), the darkest skies in the east at Cherry Springs State Park, and hundreds of miles of backpacking trails, bike paths, and trout fishing streams. www.pawilds.com

# Access for People with Disabilities

♿ This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

# In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

**NEAREST HOSPITAL**

UPMC Wellsboro Soldiers and Sailors

32-36 Central Avenue

Wellsboro, PA 16901

570-723-7764

# For More Information Contact:

Hills Creek State Park

111 Spillway Road

Wellsboro, PA 16901-9676

570-724-4246

HillsCreekSP@pa.gov

# Information and Reservations

Make online reservations at:

www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

www.visitPAparks.com

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

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