



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

Mark Twain  
National  
Forest



## WELCOME TO THE IRISH WILDERNESS

In the mid 1800's a Catholic priest, Father John Hogan of St. Louis had a dream of a place where Irish immigrants could escape the oppression of urban life in St. Louis. It was in this wild area of the Missouri Ozarks that Father Hogan established a settlement that would forever after bear their name, Irish Wilderness. It was here that Father Hogan said people could "so profoundly worship as in the depth of that leafy forest... where solitude and the heart of man united in praise and wonder of the Great Creator."

The timing of the ill-fated settlement however was not right, as the Civil War erupted. The Irish Wilderness was caught in the middle, became a "no man's and" and was raided by both Union and Confederate troops as well as bushwhackers. It is not certain what happened to Father Hogan's Irish immigrants, but after the war they were gone.

The mystery of the Irish immigrants is part of the character of the land today. Since that time the area has been logged and grazed clean of vegetation. But today, because of the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Forest Service, and the amazing ability of the land, the Irish Wilderness again has regained the same character that Father Hogan found.



← White's Creek drainage

The Irish is characterized by a rolling to steep topography with a wide variety of Karst topography features such as sinkholes, disappearing streams, and caves. Elevations range from less than 500 feet near the Eleven Point River to over 900 feet in the northeast corner near Camp Five Pond.

Whites Creek, the principle stream in the Irish, flows cool and fresh in the spring, but during the long, hot summers, much of the creek dries up, with only a few scattered pools remaining. Other small streams flow along the surface in short stretches to disappear underground, and emerge again at numerous small springs throughout the area. The western boundary of the Irish is adjacent to the Eleven Point National Scenic River.

The Irish is dominated by an oak-hickory forest with scattered native shortleaf pine. A variety of ground vegetation also exists, including an abundance of smaller trees, such as flowering dogwood, persimmon, and sassafras, shrubs, grasses, and herbaceous plants. Along the Eleven Point River, occasional black walnut and associated hardwood river bottom species can be found. A few old growth stands remain, but the majority of trees are less than 50 years old.

Wildlife is typical of the Missouri Ozarks. White-tailed deer, squirrel, coyote, bobcat, raccoon, rabbits, and the gray fox are common. Occasionally a black bear will use the area. There are also a variety of birds such as eastern wild turkey, hawks, owls, turkey vultures, herons, pileated woodpeckers, and many small songbirds. Rattlesnakes, copperheads and the eastern cottonmouth can also be encountered within the Irish

The major travelway within the Irish Wilderness is the 18.6-mile Whites Creek Trail. From the trailhead at Camp Five Pond to the Eleven Point River, visitors are exposed to a wide variety of natural terrain and geographical relief. From relatively flat land at the beginning, hikers traverse through many ecological zones including dried creek beds, grasslands, glades, bluff country, and breathtaking views overlooking the Eleven Point River. Whites Creek Trail is not designed for horse use, but horse use is permitted. Horseback riders are encouraged to use the old loop trail that comes out just above Fiddler Spring; it is less steep and erodible than Whites Creek Trail. There are three short spur trails from the main trail at Fiddler Spring, Whites Creek Float Camp, and Bliss Spring. There is also trail access near Brawley Pond.

Scenic attractions include Fiddler and Bliss Springs, (both cool and refreshing places to stop for a refreshing break), steep limestone bluffs overlooking the Eleven Point River, Whites Creek, and the unique plant and wildlife communities.

The Irish Wilderness was designated as a Wilderness in Public Law 98-289, on May 21, 1984 and is managed under the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. It is one of eight Wildernesses in Missouri, seven of which are located on the Mark Twain National Forest.

## THE MEANING AND VALUE OF WILDERNESS

Wilderness can be termed as a natural area affected primarily by the forces of nature with little evidence of man's works-- "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Many outdoor enthusiasts seek out its peace and special closeness to experiencing the wonders of nature. Wildernesses also provide outstanding opportunities for primitive or unconfined types of outdoor recreation. Whether the activity engaged in is hunting, fishing, hiking, or photography; no two individuals share the same meaning and values of the wilderness experience.

Aldo Leopold, an early wilderness advocate, described wilderness in this way: "No servant brought them meals; they got their meat out of the river or went without. No traffic cop whistled them off the hidden rock in the next rapids. No friendly roof kept them dry when they mis-guessed whether or not to pitch the tent. No guide showed them which camping spots offered a nightlong breeze, and which a nightlong misery of mosquitoes; which firewood made clean coals, and which only smoke. The elemental simplicities of wilderness travel were thrills not only because of their novelty, but because they represented complete freedom to make mistakes. The wilderness gave them their first taste of those rewards and penalties for wise and foolish acts which every woodsman faces daily, but against which civilization has built a thousand buffers."



In today's mostly urbanized society, the number of individuals seeking wilderness experience is at an all-time high. At least 20 times as many people visit wilderness now as in the 1930's. With the increasing number of wilderness users the resulting impact may seriously threaten the very values they seek. To insure that these areas are allowed to flourish for future generations and that these same values remain intact, everyone needs to practice proper wilderness etiquette and comply with regulations of use.

## WILDERNESS REGULATIONS AND MANNERS

Increasing numbers of Wilderness users may seriously impact the very values they seek. To insure that these values remain intact, please practice good wilderness manners and comply with the following regulations.

### Regulations

There are certain human impacts that could damage or destroy the wilderness resource. These practices are not allowed within the Irish Wilderness.

- Possessing or leaving refuge, debris or litter in an exposed or unsanitary condition;
- Placing in or near a stream, lake, or water any substance which does or may pollute a stream, lake or water way;
- Leaving a fire without completely extinguishing it;
- Cutting or defacing live or dead standing trees or other vegetation;
- Possessing or using a motor vehicle, motor boat, motorized equipment, or mechanical transport (including mountain bikes and wagons);
- Landing an aircraft, dropping or picking up materials, supplies or persons by means of aircraft, including helicopters;
- The building of "structures" such as rock fire rings, lean-tos etc.;
- Discharging a firearm or any other implement capable of taking human life or causing injury, in or within 150 yards of an occupied area, or in any manner or place whereby any person or property is exposed to injury or damage as a result of such discharge;
- Firing any tracer bullet or incendiary ammunition;
- Camping in groups of more than 10 people;

Missouri Department of Conservation hunting and fishing regulations and license requirements apply.

### Wilderness Manners

Today, backpackers should leave no sign of their presence so that the next person can enjoy natural scenes and solitude. You must tread lightly so nature can endure and replenish.

Plan your party size, limit size of group to 10 persons or less. This reduces impact on soil and ground cover. Camp at least 100 feet away from the trail or water sources.

Leave your camp cleaner than you found it. Pack out what you pack in. Animals generally dig up what you bury, so don't. Dispose of human waste at least 100 feet from campsites, trails and waterways. Dig a shallow hole and cover; nature will biologically decompose.

Keep the number of campfires low and small in size. Dead fallen trees add to the natural environment and future shortages may cause complete restrictions. Fire rings are unnatural signs of man and should be avoided. The use of small gas or chemical cooking stoves is recommended. Use care with open campfires - make sure they are dead out and their evidence scattered before leaving.

Protect the solitude; seek out campsites that are out of sight and sound of trails and other camps. When sharing an area keep a low profile and maintain the solitude.

Avoid overuse of popular areas, and search out the lesser-known attractions.

Be prepared --- have the right equipment and clothing for primitive travel and the season of the year. Carry a good **map and compass**; practice safety and carry a first aid kit. The universal distress signal is three of anything: shots, shouts, smokes, whistles.

When traveling on a trail, stay on the trail. When traveling cross-country use your map and compass. Use of blazes, ribbons or other trail markers should be avoided; let the next person find their own way as you did.

Pack your own shelter, including needed poles and stakes; they are more comfortable than lean-tos.

Irish Wilderness is surrounded by private property. Please respect the rights and property of private landowners.

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND COMMENTS

Safe drinking water is not available. The limited **open water** sources within the Irish Wilderness are **not recommended for drinking**. Bring an adequate water supply of your own, or plan to chemically treat or boil water found within the area.

Within the perimeters of the Irish Wilderness, the visitor may encounter old woods roads that do not appear on the map. These roads are in various stages of reverting to natural conditions. A few sections of the trail are located on the old woods road and caution is required by the user to watch where the trail departs from the old road.

The Irish Wilderness is a relatively large tract of land, so be sure to bring a compass and always carry a map of the area. Trail markers along the 18.6-mile Whites Creek Trail are minimal. If you should become lost, remember the following tips:

- First, if you become lost, **don't panic**. Stay calm and try to remember how you got to your present location.

- Look for familiar landmarks, streams, or white diamonds that indicate the trail. If you are injured, near exhaustion or its dark, pitch camp and stay where you are. A good nights sleep will help relieve some of the tension. If decide to go on, do it slowly and calmly. Use your head.
- Try to find a high point with a good view and then your compass and map. Plan your route of travel stick to it.
- When you find an old woods road, stay on it. A heading of either east or west will eventually lead you to Eleven Point River or J Highway. A heading of north or south will take you to a county road.

The 18.6 miles of the Whites Creek Trail take the visitor through a variety of natural terrain. **Allow 2 days to hike the trail.** Enjoy the sights instead of seeing how fast you can complete the journey.

If you should decide to take a day hike, start early and allow plenty of time to return to your starting point before dark.

The Ozark climate is mild enough to make Wilderness visits feasible throughout the year, as long as visitors bring proper gear. When possible, take advantage of this opportunity and plan your visit outside the peak spring and fall use seasons.

### Location

The 16,500 acre Irish Wilderness is located on the Doniphan Ranger District of Mark Twain National Forest. It is accessible from Doniphan via Highway 160, west 20 miles to State Highway J, then north 7 miles to the Whites Creek Trailhead at Camp Five Pond. This same trailhead may also be reached from U.S. Highway 60 to the north by traveling 16 miles south on Highway J to Camp Five Pond.

USGS quadrangle maps may be purchased from the Forest Service or the U.S. Geological Survey. The Irish Wilderness is located on the Wilderness, Handy, Riverton and Bradley quadrangle maps. Maps 1/2 inch to the mile of the Eleven Point and Doniphan Units may also be purchased from the Forest Service.

Wilderness rangers visit trailheads and patrol the interior of the area. They are there to assist you and answer questions. Have a pleasant wilderness experience and remember, leave only footprints and take only photographs and memories.

The total distance to hike the entire trail leaving and returning to Camp Five Trailhead is 18.6 miles. Hiking distances for portions of the trail can be calculated from the guide below.

<b><u>NORTH LOOP</u></b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Miles</b>	
Camp Five Pond	0.0	12.5
Fork in Trail	0.3	12.2
Brawley Pond Spur	4.0	8.5
Bliss Spring	8.1	4.4
Whites Creek Float Camp	12.5	0.0

<b><u>SOUTH LOOP</u></b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Miles</b>	
Camp Five Pond	0.0	7.1
Fork in Trail	0.3	6.8
Fiddler Spring	5.0	2.1
Whites Creek Cave*	6.5	0.6
Whites Creek Float Camp	7.1	0.0
Brawley Pond to Whites Creek Trail	1.1	

For Further Information Contact Us:

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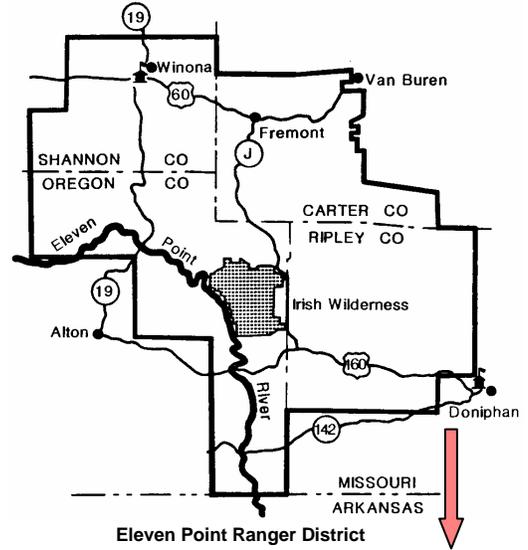
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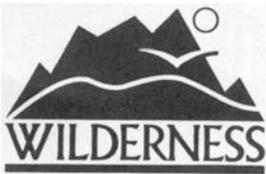
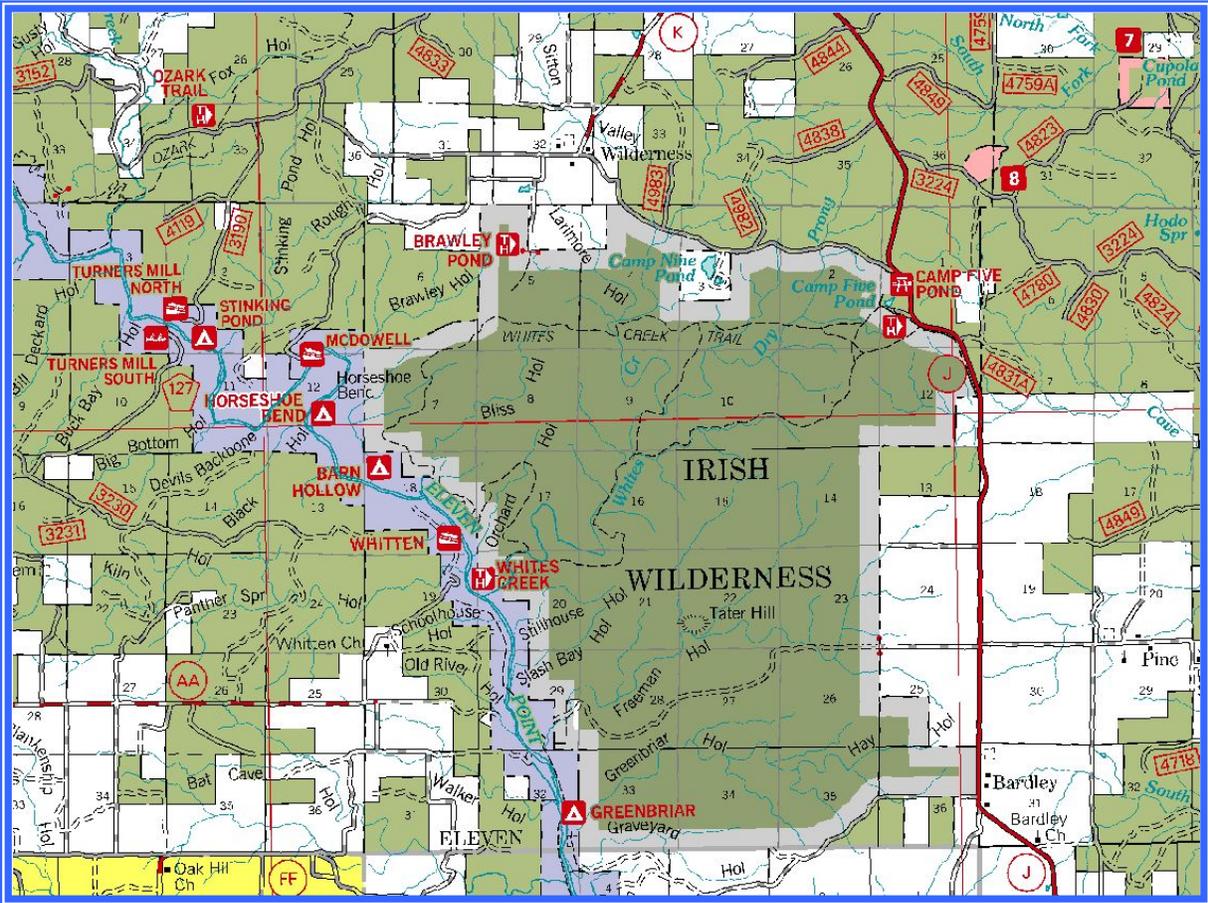
Brochure as originally published in 1997. Modified for Internet use 01/2001 and Updated March 2004. For additional history of the Irish Wilderness area try: History of the Irish Wilderness Country by Ronald Wihebrink, Forest Historian, Mark Twain National Forest, 1970. Available on the Internet under the link: [http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/marktwain/ranger-districts/doniphan/Irish\\_Wilderness\\_Country.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/marktwain/ranger-districts/doniphan/Irish_Wilderness_Country.pdf)



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Eleven Point Ranger District



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