

**GENSBURG MARKHAM PRAIRIE** Just west of the tollway (294), exit at 159th street going west to McDonalds (Whipple Ave.) turn right/north and go to end. Lift chain to open gate...be sure to replace. You are required to stay on the path. Surrounded by residential area.

Gensburg-Markham Prairie is a large natural area consisting of wet-mesic and mesic prairie, dry mesic and mesic sand prairie and sedge meadow communities representative of the Chicago Lake Plain Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. The Chicago Lake Plain was formed as glacial Lake Chicago receded at the end of the Wisconsinan glaciation. As the water receded, it left behind deposits of clay and sand. The wetlands on the preserve are underlain by clay while the drier sites are underlain by sand. An old beach ridge formed by the ancient lake runs southeast to northeast through the preserve, and is responsible for the difference in relief over the preserve. Gensburg-Markham Prairie is an unusual example of sandy loam prairie; it combines the characteristics of the black silt loam prairies with the true sand prairies. The preserve contains rare plant species such as grape fern, sundrop, narrow-leaved sundew and grass pink orchid. In addition, other significant sand prairie plants are colic root, yellow-eyed grass, screw stem and huckleberry. The dominant grasses are big bluestem, Indian grass and prairie dropseed. Typical black loam soil species found here are nodding wild onion, cream wild indigo, prairie coreopsis and prairie alum root. Notable nesting birds include short-billed marsh wren, bobolink, swamp sparrow and Henslow's sparrow. **Ownership:** Northeastern Illinois University, The Nature Conservancy and Natural Land Institute **Dedicated:** September 1980 **Size:** 105.6 acres with an additional 6.2 acres buffer **Pat's comments:** Very healthy, frequently burned, very open, best time is July to August for scenics with blazing stars and goldenrod, masses of rattlesnake master, many individual species from St John's wort to obedient plant to green milkweed to sunflowers and compass plants. Good medium landscape opps. Sunrise opportunities with backlit dew and spiderwebs if you can work around the wires in the distance.

