



*Nature now thrives at  
Constitution Lakes.*

## CONSTITUTION LAKES PARK

**S**ituated in an industrial area of south DeKalb County, Constitution Lakes is one of DeKalb's newest parks and also one of its most secluded and beautiful. There is something for everyone here—a handicapped-accessible paved multi-use path, a boardwalk with views of the lake and wetlands, and a trail with many unusual pieces of “found object” artwork. Be on the lookout for new trails being built on the west side of the lakes. Having reclaimed what was once a brick mine and factory, nature now thrives at Constitution Lakes.

**DISTANCE FROM DOWNTOWN ATLANTA • 6 MILES**

**BY CAR FROM I-20** From downtown Atlanta, take I-20 east to exit 60A for US 23S/Moreland Ave. Take the exit and turn onto Moreland. Continue 4.3 miles, then turn left at the traffic light at S. River Industrial Boulevard. Immediately on your right will be the entrance to Constitution Lakes Park. Drive 500 feet on the gravel road to the parking area near the information kiosk.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION** Take the 4 Thomasville/Moreland Ave bus south on Moreland Avenue and get off at the intersection of Moreland and Constitution Road. Walk south on Moreland for just under 1 mile, making a left turn onto S River Industrial Boulevard, and then an immediate right at the sign for Constitution Lakes Park. The trailhead is 500 feet down a gravel road from the park entrance.

**PARKING** Gravel parking area just beyond the park entrance;  
GPS N 33° 40.9550, W 84° 20.6840

**ADDRESS** 1305 S. River Industrial Boulevard SE, Atlanta, GA 30315

**HIKE DISTANCE** 2.25-mile lollipop loop

**WHY THIS HIKE IS GREAT** The beauty of the lake and wetlands (which provide refuge for many animals and plants in this industrial area) and the unusual artwork on Doll's Head Trail are great reasons to spend an afternoon here.

## DIFFICULTY

**Overall**—Easy

**Terrain**—First 0.5 mile is concrete path and boardwalks, other trails are hard-packed soil; some trails are narrow, others can be muddy after rain.

**Elevation change**—Very little

**HOURS** 7 am to sunset, year-round

**DOGS** Leashed dogs permitted

**FACILITIES** Portable toilets in parking lot; information kiosks along concrete path and boardwalk

**FEES & PERMITS** None

**LAND MANAGER** DeKalb County Parks & Recreation

## SENTINEL TREES

**Willow Oak – GPS N 33° 40.8299, W 84° 20.1515**

- 9'6" circumference
- This willow oak growing at the water's edge is one of the larger trees in this park. Willow oaks like wet areas and are easily identified by their long, skinny leaves.

**City Champion Willow Oak – GPS N 33° 40.8932, W 84° 20.1958**

- 16'2" circumference, 119' tall, 122' crown spread (344 champion points)
- This park is mostly very young forest, but that doesn't mean there aren't a few large (and possibly old) trees here as well. This one stands rooted on a mound of earth in the middle of the Doll's Head Trail section of the park and just happens to be the second largest willow oak known in Atlanta. The largest is a whopping 2 feet bigger around and sits behind a small home in Avondale Estates, where it shades three houses.

## BIRDS TO LOOK FOR



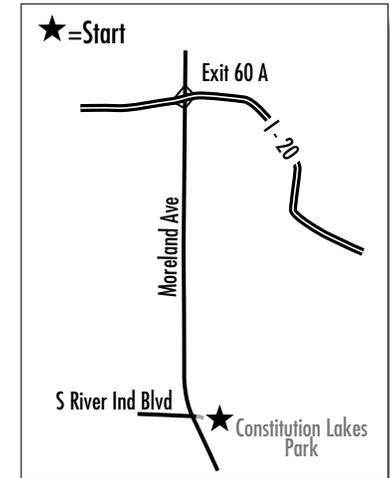
### CONSTITUTION LAKES PARK

**Winter & Spring:** cedar waxwing  
**Summer:** green heron, yellow-crowned night heron  
**Fall:** great egret, osprey

## Water Oak & Sweetgum – GPS N 33°

**40.8992, W 84° 20.7127**

- 9'7" and 9'9" circumferences, respectively
- About 30 feet to the right of the new trail on the west side of the lake, these two mature hardwood trees are growing so close together that they intertwine. Despite the fact that they are different species, they are almost exactly the same size.



## HIKE

Begin your hike at the information kiosk where the concrete multi-use path begins.

Walk past the motor vehicle barrier and continue on the multi-use path for 0.5 mile until you reach the boardwalk next to the lake. As you walk along the multi-use path, you'll pass an information sign about Native Americans next to the second bench you see. This sign introduces you to Soapstone Ridge, of which you'll have a good view shortly. The next set of benches is paired with another information sign about early settlers. The forest surrounding the multi-use path is a young forest containing trees common to bottomlands—red maple, loblolly pine, box elder, willow and water oak, and an occasional beech and redbud. Don't get confused by the small trails to the left off the path; these simply lead into the surrounding neighborhoods.

At the boardwalk, you'll pass a stately willow oak on your right. Walk straight ahead onto the boardwalk, and stop to look at the view from the octagon platform. The lake and wetlands were created when a brick mine and factory closed and the mine crater filled with water; that was when the land began to go back to nature. This park is a great reminder that industrial degradation does not always end in ugliness. Nevertheless, you'll probably see some trash on the boardwalk—you can help by picking up and carrying out any bottles or cans you see lying around. You might also see anglers on the boardwalk.

After taking in the view from the octagon, turn right and walk to the end of the boardwalk, where you have another view of the wetlands. Walk quietly and you may see some turtles sunning themselves on a log in warm weather.

When you're ready, backtrack and turn right before leaving the boardwalk. As you walk down this section, look beyond the lake and you'll see Soapstone Ridge, a major geological formation just south of the South River valley you're walking through now. The ridge is named for the soapstone that Native Americans used to make bowls. Civil War ruins and Native American artifacts have been found on the ridge.

Continue straight where the boardwalk ends and walk along the dirt path surrounded by tall grasses and vines that make the trail feel a little like a tunnel. River cane, a native bamboo species, grows along the trail on your right. You'll emerge from this section of the trail at a junction with the Doll's Head Trail on your right. If you continue straight, you'll end up paralleling the railroad tracks on a trail that's not officially part of the park but leads to a railroad trestle over the South River. Turn right onto Doll's Head Trail. Pass an old well and trough. Pass a spur that leads to the railroad trail on the left, then reach a junction with Doll's Head Trail loop.

Turn left to start the Doll's Head loop. Doll's Head Trail is created by hikers and Constitution Lakes volunteers recycling trash found in the park to create "found object" art installations. Sometimes creepy, sometimes beautiful, sometimes thought-provoking, always intriguing, this trail is one of a kind. Follow the small winding path past small art projects.

After 0.1 mile, reach a junction at the other end of Doll's Head Trail. Go left, then right to make a small loop. After the right turn where a proposed boardwalk will connect this trail with others on the west side of the lake, pass the first sentinel willow oak on the left at the water's edge.

Back at the Doll's Head Trail junction, stay left and pass more art installations, along with bricks and tiles that hikers can write notes on. At a large willow oak (on the left) and a pile of bricks with writing on them (on the right), stand with your back to the willow oak on your left and you'll see another majestic champion willow oak—the second largest in Atlanta.

Continue on the trail to the junction with the other half of the loop. Stay left to reach the main trail and turn left to return to the boardwalk. From the boardwalk, a right turn onto the multi-use path will take you back to the parking area.

## INSIDER TIP

### NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT CONSTITUTION LAKES PARK

A major new trail project is underway at Constitution Lakes that will connect the east and west sides of the lakes. A recently built soft-surface trail will soon lead to an observation platform and a boardwalk crossing the lake near the South River; the boardwalk will connect with the small loop trail on the south end of Doll's Head Trail. When these western trails are complete, the recommended loop will start on the soft-surface trail and end via the paved multi-use path.

