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and tiny campers  
MAGAZINE

THE DIVERSE WORLD OF TEARDROPS AND TINY  
CAMPERS  
TRADITIONAL MEETS  
MODERN INNOVATION



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GREAT CICADA EMERGENCE: TO CAMP OR NOT TO CAMP // THE POWER OF LITHIUM: UPGRADING YOUR BATTERY FOR OFF-GRID ADVENTURES // HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT ADVENTURE // AND MORE

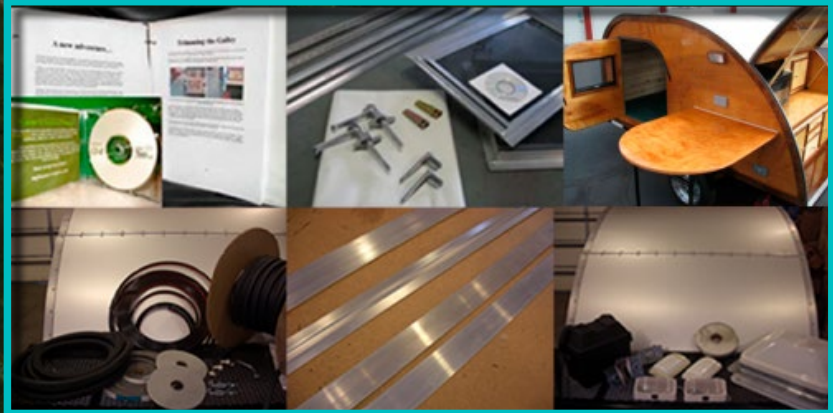
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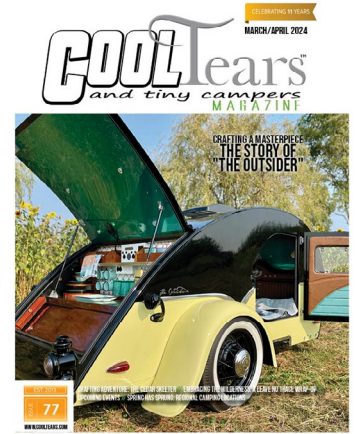
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# COOL Tears™ and tiny campers MAGAZINE

VOL. 12 NO. 3 MAY/JUNE 2024



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# Letter from the Editor:



Hello Tiny Camper Enthusiasts!

**SPRING'S HERE**, and it's time to dust off those campers if you haven't already and jot down our must-dos for this camping season. Every year, we get this awesome chance to blend our favorite camping experiences with exciting new ones. Honestly, isn't that the best part?!

How are you going to come up with your plan for this season?

Think about kicking off with places that are just a hop, skip, and a jump away. There's probably a bunch of cool spots you've missed or haven't checked out in a while. Got a new campground nearby? Throw it on the list! And then, maybe aim for those dream spots you've always wanted to hit up—like that national park with the jaw-dropping views or that quiet beach perfect for catching sunsets.

Why not spice things up with some local flavors? Our teardrop galleys are just begging for us to try out local ingredients. Imagine grilling up something tasty by a lake or picking up fresh goodies from a market on your way to the woods.

And don't forget about all those summer events! Concerts, fairs, you name it. Planning a trip around these can turn a simple getaway into an epic adventure.

Before you roll out, double-check your gear. A quick tune-up can save you a headache later. It's all about making those good times roll smoothly.

I'd love to hear where you all are heading! Drop us a pic or a story. It's your epic tales and snaps that make this community rock.

Here's what's on my personal bucket list this season (feel free to snag some ideas!):

- See the eclipse! (Check!)
- See the northern lights! (Check!)
- Take a long, slow trip to the Canadian Maritimes
- Experience the tidal swing at the Bay of Fundy
- Spend at least 75 nights in the teardrop (current count - 16)
- Check out the local cuisine everywhere we go. Which might mean that we taste test lobster rolls through Maine and Canada
- Buy as much local food at farmers markets along our travels as we can
- Boondock on the coast
- Climb a mountain somewhere in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, or Canada

Here's to making every outing count. Let's make this a season to remember!

Enjoy the read, and as always, camp responsibly. ■

Happy travels and stay safe  
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Lisa Adams  
Editor  
Cool Tears Magazine™  
[Lisa@cooltears.com](mailto:Lisa@cooltears.com)



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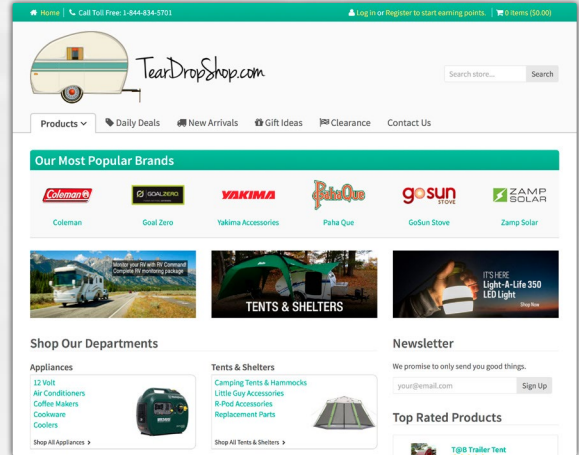
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# Kitchen on Wheels

Spicy Peanut Butter Noodles **BY ANNE COX**

**ARE YOU HUNGRY** but don't have much time to cook?! Or do you want a go-to meal that's delicious hot or cold? These spicy peanut butter noodles are just for you. They are easy to make and they can be made vegan or gluten free if you want or you can add grilled chicken or beef to be a more robust meal.

This is a savory meal with a hint of sweet heat. And best of all, it's up to you how spicy you want the sauce to be. *Note that peanut sauce can be very salty!* We recommend using low sodium soy sauce and low or no salt added peanut butter

## Ingredients

- 16 ounces brown rice noodles (vegan), spaghetti noodles, or egg noodles
- 3 large cloves garlic
- 1 Tablespoon fresh grated ginger
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup creamy peanut butter (we use organic peanut butter from Costco)
- 4 Tablespoon low sodium soy sauce
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup - 1 cup hot water (mixes better with peanut butter than cold)
- 1 Tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1-2 Tablespoon sriracha
- 1-2 Tablespoon honey or maple syrup
- 2 teaspoon chili garlic sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon red pepper flakes (more if you

spicier, less for less spice) (top garnish)

- Green onions (slice the green part to use as a top garnish)
- Optional:
  - peanuts, cilantro, lime as a garnish
  - Broccoli (diced)
  - Sliced red bell pepper
  - Grilled chicken, beef (in a pinch, you could use pre-cooked meat from the store), shrimp, or tofu, if you prefer
  - Shredded or thinly sliced carrots
  - Cauliflower (diced)

## Directions

1. Cook the noodles according to the package directions
2. Finely mince the garlic and saute with 1 T oil for a minute or two
3. Add the grated ginger to the pan and saute for about 1 more minute
4. Remove from heat and add in all remaining sauce ingredients. Start with just a  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of water and whisk together until smooth. Add more water if needed to reach your desired consistency.
5. Adjust each seasoning to taste. We like our noodles on the spicy side, so we add in more chili garlic sauce
6. Add about half of the sauce to the cooked pasta and mix together.



We prefer to saute some vegetables to add to this noodle dish. We start by adding some oil to a pan and saute the broccoli, red pepper, carrots, and cauliflower for several minutes. I prefer the cooked vegetables to still have a little bit of crunch and it helps hold them together when stirring into the spicy peanut noodles and sauce.

Once the veggies are cooked to your liking, add them to the bowl of peanut noodles and mix thoroughly. If you need to add more sauce, now is the time!

Serve the dish hot or cold with the diced green onion tops, red pepper flakes, cilantro, chopped peanuts and protein on top. ■



Spicy peanut noodles with ground pork, peas, and red chilis for extra heat!



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# The Great Cicada Emergence

To Camp or not to camp **BY LISA ADAMS**

**AS NATURE ENTHUSIASTS** and campers alike gear up for the summer season, there's a buzz in the air in parts of the United States - literally. This year, we are on the cusp of witnessing an extraordinary natural phenomenon: the simultaneous emergence of two major cicada broods, Brood XIII and Brood XIX. These insects, known for their deafening chorus and periodic appearances, are set to create a spectacle that hasn't been seen in decades.

## Historical Significance and Overlapping Broods

Cicadas follow a unique life cycle, spending

the majority of their lives underground before emerging en masse every 13 or 17 years to mate and then die while their newly hatched nymphs burrow underground to start the cycle over again. The two broods, which are emerging in 17 states across the Midwest and Southeast have not emerged at the same time since 1803 when Thomas Jefferson was president! These two broods won't emerge together again until 2245, so don't miss this experience if you enjoy seeing unique natural history events. The overlap of these two broods in parts of Illinois and Iowa is a rare event, making this year's emergence historically significant.

This synchronous emergence is a fascinating event for entomologists and nature lovers. It provides a unique opportunity to study the behaviors and interactions of these broods, which could yield insights into their evolutionary strategies and ecological impacts. The sheer numbers of cicadas will be staggering, with estimates suggesting that there could be up to 1.5 million cicadas per acre in the densest areas.

I'm not this adventurous, but did you know that cicadas are edible?! Check out this article from USA Today to get some recipe ideas. [“Can you eat cicadas? Try these tasty recipes with Brood XIX, Brood XIII this summer”](#) PLEASE! PLEASE! If you try any of these recipes or others, take some pictures and submit them along with your taste review to [Lisa@cooltears.com](mailto:Lisa@cooltears.com). We'll highlight the best that we see!

## Duration of the Cicada Extravaganza

The cicada emergence is a fleeting phenomenon, typically lasting about four to six weeks. The first cicadas will start to emerge when soil temperatures reach about 64 degrees Fahrenheit, usually around late May. By late June or early July, the spectacle will be over, as the cicadas will have completed their life cycle, leaving behind their nymphs to burrow underground for the next 17 years.

For those intrigued by this natural marvel, the brief duration makes it a must-see event. However, it also means that planning your camping trips around the cicada emergence requires precise timing. If you're looking to witness this once-in-a-generation occurrence, the window of opportunity is short.

## Camping During the Emergence: A Mixed Bag of Fun and Challenges

### Pros: A Unique Experience

Camping during the cicada emergence can be a thrilling experience. Imagine sitting by the campfire, surrounded by the crescendo of cicada songs, which can reach up to 100 decibels. It's an auditory experience unlike any other, providing a real sense of being immersed in nature. For kids and adults alike, this can be an educational adventure, offering a chance to learn about these fascinating insects up close.

Photographers and nature enthusiasts will also find plenty of opportunities to capture stunning images and videos. The sight of cicadas emerging from the ground, shedding their exoskeletons, and taking flight is a visual treat. Additionally, the large numbers of cicadas attract a variety of wildlife, including birds and small mammals, creating a lively and dynamic environment.

### Cons: The Noise and the Mess

However, camping during the cicada emergence isn't for everyone. The noise, while fascinating, can also be overwhelming. If you're sensitive to loud sounds, the constant cicada chorus might disrupt your peace and quiet. Earplugs might become your best friend during this period.

Moreover, the sheer number of cicadas can be quite a spectacle, but it also means a lot of cicada carcasses littering the ground. These insects are harmless to humans, but their

presence can be a bit unsettling for some. If you're not a fan of insects, finding cicadas in your tiny camper, on your gear, or even in your food might not be the most pleasant experience.

## Practical Tips for Camping During the Emergence

If you decide to brave the cicada invasion, here are a few tips to make your camping trip more enjoyable:

1. **Choose your Campsite Wisely:** Look for campsites that are known for their tranquility and away from the densest cicada areas. Some state parks and campgrounds may provide updates on cicada activity. But if you're looking for a cicada experience, look for a site in the thick of things! Our regional camping spotlight will highlight two places to go for the full cicada experience!
2. **Bring Ear Protection:** Earplugs or noise-canceling headphones can help you get through the day because these critters can reach sound levels upwards of 90 - 120 decibels, which is like being next to a gas-powered lawn mower all day. Fortunately, the cicadas only "sing" during the day and they observe quiet hours at night.
3. **Keep Food Covered:** Cicadas are not interested in your food, but their sheer numbers can make it feel otherwise. Use sealed containers and keep your food covered to avoid any uninvited guests.
4. **Embrace the Experience:** Approach the cicada emergence with a sense of wonder and curiosity. It's a rare event

that offers a unique connection to nature.

## Conclusion: Embrace the Cicada Adventure

The 2024 cicada emergence, with the overlap of Brood XIII and Brood XIX, is set to be a spectacular event. Whether you're a seasoned camper or a nature newbie, witnessing this natural phenomenon can be a memorable adventure. While the noise and the mess might be a bit of a challenge, the chance to experience one of nature's great spectacles is well worth it. So, pack your earplugs, cover your food, and get ready to immerse yourself in the cicada symphony. It's a once-in-a-lifetime event that you won't want to miss ■





# Tiny Campers in the News

BY COOL TEARS STAFF

## **nuCamp's Tab 360: Sold Out First Four Months of Production**

**Sugarcreek, Ohio. April 30, 2024** – nuCamp, a leading manufacturer of high-quality teardrop trailers and truck campers, proudly announces the complete sell-out of the TAB 360's initial four months of production. This success underscores the remarkable demand for this groundbreaking addition to the tiny living lifestyle and the teardrop trailer market.

Within 48 hours of its introduction to the dealer base, nuCamp received orders that filled the first 16 weeks of production – with the list continuing to grow. The TAB 360's strategic positioning in terms of pricing, weight, size, and amenities makes it an ideal choice for camping enthusiasts seeking the ultimate fusion of comfort and convenience. The overwhelming dealer response confirms the strategic position of the TAB 360 in the market.

A core aspect of the TAB 360's design is its ability to bridge the gap between nuCamp's existing best-sellers, the TAB 320 and TAB 400. The TAB 360 strikes the perfect balance, fitting snugly between its esteemed predecessors.

The TAB 360 features:

- Interior height of 6'4"
- Spacious sleeping area accommodating individuals up to 6'6" tall.
- Slimline 5 cu ft 12-volt compressor refrigerator
- Two large vertical stargazer windows and two large side windows for an expanded view of the outdoors.
- Central A/C, Nautilus Water Management System, and Alde Hydronic Heating and Hot Water System.

- Brand-new ALDE 3030 with built-in continuous hot water.
- Custom XL Diamond Plated Storage Tub for additional storage space.

"The TAB 360 has exceeded our expectations in terms of demand and excitement," said Scott Hubble, CEO of nuCamp. "It perfectly fills the gap in our product range, offering a blend of innovation, luxury, and functionality. We're thrilled to see the positive response from our dealers."

### **About nuCamp**

*nuCamp manufactures the highest quality teardrop trailers and truck campers available in the North American market. Our recreational vehicles and trailers are the result of extensive research and development, customer feedback, and the fusion of technology and old-world craftsmanship. The dedicated craftsmen and women who work at the nuCamp facility in Sugarcreek, Ohio, are committed to the principles of simplistic design, high-quality fabrication, and fanatical customer support. nuCamp is the world's largest manufacturer of teardrop trailers.*





# Tiny Camper Gatherings

BY COOL TEARS STAFF

**AT COOL TEARS**, we're all about keeping you in the know about the latest events and gatherings in the teardrop camping world. But hey, we can't be everywhere at once! That's where you come in. We count on our awesome community to help us uncover fresh stories, spotlight cool events, and share articles that inspire and excite our fellow teardrop enthusiasts.

Joining these gatherings is like unlocking a treasure chest of possibilities. It's a fantastic opportunity to hang out with other teardrop camper owners, swap tips and tricks, and bask in the camping bliss these unique rigs offer. It's all about learning from each other and finding new ways to make the most out of

your teardrop camper.

Whether you're a seasoned camper or just getting started, consider hitting up one (or more!) of these upcoming events. Connecting with other enthusiasts can seriously up your camping game, ignite your sense of adventure, and create unforgettable memories. Let's come together and celebrate the joy of teardrop and squaredrop camping, building a vibrant community that loves the great outdoors.

Check out these upcoming tiny camper events, and if you decide to attend one, we're here to help you share your adventure with our readers!



## Teardrop and tiny camper events June - July

### May 31 - June 2

Hawkeye Chapter Tears in Tosanek Gathering, Tosnanak Recreation Area, Marble Rock, Iowa

Lone Star and Sooner State Chapters Lake Murray Gathering, Lake Murray State Park, Ardmore, OK

### June 6 - June 9

Twain and Tears, Unionville Nevada

Jefferson State at Oregon Caves National Monument, Cave Junction, Oregon

Land of Lincoln's June Gathering, Thomson Causeway Recreation Area, Thomson, IL

### June 7 - June 9

Southern Ontario Chapter June Gathering, Elora Conservation, Elora Ontario

The Ledge, Dodge County Ledge Park, Horicon, Wisconsin

### June 10 - June 14

uCamp Teardrop Rally, Sugarcreek, Ohio

### June 14 - June 19

Safari Condo Alto Gathering, Washoe Lake State Park, Nevada

### June 12 - June 15

North Dakota June Camping, Downstream Campground, Hazen, North Dakota

### June 12 - June 17

7th Annual DIYTCC Gathering, Mountain Lake Campground and Cabins, Summersville, West

Virginia

### June 15 - June 16

Father's Day Wings and Wheels, Canada West Teardroppers, The Hangar Flight Museum, Calgary, Alberta

### June 20 - June 23

Liberty Bell Chapter, Shenango Campground, Transfer, Pennsylvania

### June 21 - June 23

Hoosier Chapter, Brown County State Park, Nashville, Indiana

### June 23 - June 26

Bubble Bears Adventures at Bandits Roost (Rustic Trail Teardrops and Friends), Wilkesboro, North Carolina

### June 28 - July 2

Back to Yahk, Teardrop Camper Adventures, Yahk Motel and Campground, Central Kootenay, British Columbia

### July 4 - July 7

Hawkeye Chapter Red, White, and Blue on Red Rock!, Wallashuck Campground, Pella, Iowa

### July 11 - July 14

2024 Farm Gathering, Kalispell, Montana

### July 14 - July 18

Jefferson State, Crater Lake National Park, Prospect, Oregon

### July 18 - July 21

Land of Lincoln's First Ever July Gathering, Fisherman's Corner, East Moline, Illinois



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Liberty Bell and New York Chapter, Lake Erie State Park, Brocton, New York

**July 24 - July 29**

Bushwhacker Boil and Tiny Camper Meetup, Hot Springs Resort and Spa, Hot Springs, North Carolina ■

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# The Diverse World of Teardrops and Tiny Campers

Traditional meets modern innovation **BY LISA ADAMS**

**TEARDROP CAMPERS** have long captured the hearts of outdoor enthusiasts with their distinctive shape and minimalist appeal. Designed primarily as a "bed on wheels," these campers typically feature an indoor sleeping area with an outdoor kitchen or galley in the rear. As the camping landscape evolves, manufacturers have broadened the traditional teardrop design to include more internal amenities, including kitchens and bathrooms, responding to campers' desire for greater comfort and convenience. Brands like nuCamp and Safari Condo have been at

the forefront of this evolution, but they're not alone. Other companies such as Little Guy Trailers and Happier Camper also play significant roles in shaping the modern tiny camper.

## Traditional Teardrop Campers: Embracing the Outdoors

The charm of traditional teardrop campers lies

in their simplicity and functional design. These campers are lightweight, which allows them to be towed by a variety of vehicles such as small trucks or SUVs and cross over vehicles like Subarus, making them accessible to a broader audience. The typical configuration includes comfortable sleeping quarters that can double as seating during the day (based on manufacturer), with cleverly integrated storage solutions. The rear galley kitchen, a signature feature, is equipped with essentials like a stove, cooler, and storage for cooking gear, enhancing the outdoor cooking experience. This setup promotes a unique camping experience, encouraging more outdoor time and making these campers a perfect companion for adventurers looking to immerse themselves in nature.



unique roofs to add headroom. (We featured a DIY build with a small pop up space to stand up in our last issue.)

## Innovations by Larger Teardrop and Tiny Camper Manufacturers

Manufacturers like nuCamp and Safari Condo have expanded on the traditional teardrop formula by integrating more indoor features to cater to the needs of modern campers. For example, nuCamp's teardrops often include indoor kitchens, wet baths, and convertible dinettes. See "Tiny Campers in the News" in this issue to read about the brand new T@B 360! Safari Condo offers unique designs with pop-up roofs for added headroom and adaptable furniture to maximize interior space. We are also seeing more DIY teardrops with



Joining these innovators are companies like Little Guy Trailers, Happier Camper, Braxton Creek, and Scamp. Little Guy Trailers offers a range of models that balance traditional teardrop aesthetics with modern amenities. Their campers often feature full kitchens, entertainment systems, and custom interiors that can be tailored to the owner's



preferences.

Happier Camper adds a modular touch to the industry with their ultra-flexible interiors that can be rearranged to suit various needs, from sleeping to dining to hauling equipment. Their use of lightweight, durable materials makes them an excellent choice for those who frequently change their camping setup. Last summer, we saw a young family of four in northern Michigan with the smallest Happier Camper trailer and we loved the retro styling and convertible interior.

## A Broader Look at Small Camper Innovations

Beyond the well-known names of the larger campers, smaller manufacturers are also making waves. Companies like Timberleaf

Trailers offer beautifully crafted campers that maintain the classic teardrop look with modern materials and craftsmanship. Their attention to detail, such as insulated walls and large skylights, appeals to those who value both aesthetics and functionality in their camping experience. Timberleaf has three main models to choose from and their bold choices of exterior colors and retro countertop designs, detailed woodworking and nods to mid-century modern design are sure to please whether you camp off-grid or in a campground.

Camp-Inn Teardrop Travel Trailers also pushes the design limits with their 560 Raindrop model which adds a couch that converts into bunk beds at the front of the camper.

TC Teardrops has a teardrop that believe it or not, is also a toy hauler! This tandem axle, heavy-duty off-road trailer has an extended

front platform where you can easily mount two dirt bikes.

Vistabule teardrops was the first company that caught our attention with their large front window and bed that could fold into a couch for indoor seating, if needed. Cosmo Weems (now deceased) popularized these teardrops on his YouTube channel. Earlier this year, they launched a new teardrop, The DayTripper, that maintains their classic shape and windows, but it lacks a galley. It still has the traditional hatch opening, but it's just another way to access the interior.

## Conclusion

The evolution of teardrop and tiny campers reflects a broader trend towards versatility and comfort in the outdoor industry. From traditional models that celebrate the simplicity of outdoor living to modern designs that incorporate luxury and customization, the range of options available today ensures that there is a perfect camper for every type of adventurer. Companies like nuCamp, Safari Condo, Little Guy Trailers, and Happier Camper, among others, continue to innovate, pushing the boundaries of what a compact camper can offer, and ensuring that even the smallest spaces can deliver unforgettable outdoor experiences. ■



*Photo of Safari Condo R series camper submitted by: Marta Krogstad*





# OFF GRID

## The Power of Lithium

Upgrading your battery for off-grid adventures **BY LISA ADAMS**

**IN THE WORLD** of tiny campers and off-grid adventures, the shift from AGM (absorbed glass matt) batteries to lithium batteries has truly revolutionized the way we boondock. With more campers choosing remote and scenic locations over crowded state parks or RV campgrounds, understanding the benefits of lithium batteries is essential.

### Why Make the Switch

1. Longer Life and Durability: Lithium batteries boast a significantly longer lifespan than AGM batteries. With proper care, lithium batteries

can last up to 15 years, providing around 5,000 charge/discharge cycles. This means you can discharge and recharge your battery daily for nearly 10 years before noticing a reduction in capacity. To put that into perspective, if you fully depleted and recharged your lithium battery every day for 13.7 years you would just hit 5,000 cycles.

2. Cost Efficiency Over Time: To achieve the same usable amp-hour capacity as a single 100Ah lithium battery, you would need two 100Ah AGM batteries, since AGM batteries should not be discharged below 50% but

it's safe to discharge a lithium to near 0%. Additionally, AGM batteries typically need replacement every five years. Over a 10-year period, you would need to purchase four 100Ah AGM batteries, costing approximately \$1200. In contrast, one lithium battery, despite its higher upfront cost, will last the same duration, making it a more cost-effective solution in the long run.

**3. Weight and Space Efficiency:** Lithium batteries are much lighter and more compact compared to their AGM counterparts. For instance, a 100 amp-hour lithium battery weighs about 31 pounds, whereas a similar capacity AGM battery can weigh around 80 pounds. This weight reduction is particularly beneficial for tiny campers, where every pound matters. Replacing an AGM with a lithium battery can greatly reduce your tongue weight if the battery is in the front of your tiny camper.

#### **4. Full Utilization of Capacity:**

Unlike AGM batteries, which should not be discharged below 50% to avoid damage, lithium batteries can be used to their full capacity without harm. This means a 100 amp-hour lithium battery provides the full 100 amp-hours, while an AGM battery of the same capacity only offers around 50 usable amp-hours.

**5. Faster and Efficient Charging:** Lithium batteries charge faster and more efficiently than AGM batteries. They can also handle higher charge currents, reducing the time spent charging and maximizing your off-grid time.

**6. Temperature Performance:** Lithium batteries perform better in a wider range of temperatures. They can operate efficiently even in cold climates, down to -4°F, whereas AGM batteries struggle in extreme temperatures. However, charging lithium batteries in temperatures below 25°F requires



a built-in heating element to maintain optimal performance.

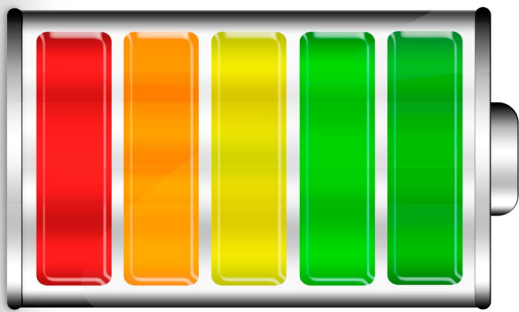
## **Making the Transition**

Switching from AGM to lithium batteries can involve more than just swapping out the batteries. Here are key considerations and

steps to ensure a smooth transition:

1. **Check Compatibility:** Ensure your current charging system (converter, inverter, and solar charge controller) is compatible with lithium batteries. Many modern manufactured teardrops come with lithium-ready systems, but older models may require upgrades.

2. **Space and Installation:** Verify that your battery compartment has enough space for the new lithium battery setup. While lithium



batteries are generally smaller, if you plan to increase your battery bank, you'll need adequate space.

3. **Consult with Experts:** Manufacturers like Battle Born Batteries (zero affiliation with Cool Tears) offer excellent customer support to guide you through the process. They can help you determine the necessary upgrades and provide detailed instructions for installation.

4. **Safety and Maintenance:** Lithium batteries are much safer than older battery technologies. They don't produce harmful gases, have no terminal corrosion, and require

virtually no maintenance. Simply keep them charged regularly, and avoid letting them sit empty for extended periods. Many people can fully charge their lithium battery, keep it installed on their teardrop over the winter, and still have a fully charged battery in the spring!

## Real-World Benefits

The advantages of lithium batteries become particularly evident during real-world usage:

**Extended Off-Grid Time:** With lithium batteries, you can stay off-grid longer without worrying about battery life or capacity. This is especially beneficial for remote camping locations where commercial power is unavailable.

**Enhanced Energy Usage:** Lithium batteries can handle high-demand appliances like air conditioners and coffee makers more efficiently. For example, running an air conditioner might require a minimum of three 100 amp-hour lithium batteries and a 3,000-watt inverter.

**Cold Climate Performance:** For campers in colder regions, lithium batteries with built-in heaters ensure reliable performance and charging even in freezing temperatures.

## Comparison of Battery Voltages and Capacity

Here's a comparison of the voltage and remaining capacity for AGM and lithium batteries:

<b>Voltage (V)</b>	<b>Lithium Battery Capacity (%)</b>	<b>AGM Battery Capacity (%)</b>
13.4	100	-
13.3	99	-
13.2	98	-
13.1	97	-
13	96	-
12.9	95	-
12.8	94	100
12.7	93	90
12.6	92	75
12.5	90	60
12.4	80	50
12.3	70	40
12.2	60	30
12.1	50	20
12	40	10
11.9	30	5
11.8	20	0
11.7	10	-
11.6	5	-
11.5	0	-

## Conclusion

Upgrading to lithium batteries is a game-changer for tiny camper enthusiasts who love boondocking. The increased lifespan, weight savings, full capacity utilization, efficient charging, and better temperature performance make lithium batteries an invaluable asset for any off-grid adventure. By making the switch, you can enjoy longer, worry-free camping experiences and explore more remote and beautiful locations with confidence. Additionally, the long-term cost efficiency of lithium batteries compared to AGM batteries makes them a wise investment for serious campers.

In our next issue, we'll tackle the issue of your tow vehicle battery system and your lithium battery in your tiny camper. We'll explain why it's possible to have lower lithium battery voltage when you arrive at your campsite. ■





# Harnessing AI

Plan your next adventure **BY LISA ADAMS**

**THIS IS THE FIRST** article in a series that will highlight several different AI trip planners. We will lay out the pros and cons of each and warn you of any pitfalls to avoid if you try your hand at using AI to plan a trip. We are taking a four week trip later this year and other than knowing the end destination and a few stops along the way, it is not planned, campgrounds aren't booked, etc. We will use several different AI trip planners, discover the pros and cons of each as they compare to more traditional methods of planning a trip, which can include watching YouTube videos, travel books, and talking to people who have made

similar trips.

When it comes to planning trips with teardrop or tiny campers, the charm often lies in the details: finding the perfect camping spots, mapping out scenic routes, and ensuring that all camper-specific needs are met. With the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI), tiny camper enthusiasts can now streamline their travel planning process, uncover unique destinations, and enhance their travel experience with ease. This guide provides a comprehensive overview of how to use AI for planning a memorable journey in your tiny

camper, along with detailed prompts to get you started.

## Understanding the Basics of AI in Travel Planning

AI can analyze large amounts of data quickly and efficiently, providing customized advice based on your preferences and previous interactions. For tiny camper trips, this means AI can help you find campgrounds that are accessible and suitable for small campers, suggest the best travel routes, and even help you prepare for weather conditions and local attractions.

### How to Use AI, like ChatGPT, for Tiny Camper Trip Planning

#### 1. Choosing Your Destination

- Prompt: "What are some popular tiny camper-friendly destinations in [region]?"  
- Explanation: AI can suggest top-rated destinations that cater to tiny campers, including details about the size and amenities of campgrounds.

#### 2. Route Planning

- Prompt: "Generate a scenic route from [starting location] to [destination] for a tiny camper."  
- Explanation: AI can map out the best driving routes that are safe and scenic for tiny campers, considering factors like road width and traffic.

#### 3. Campground Booking

- Prompt: "List campgrounds near [destination] that are suitable for teardrop trailers."  
- Explanation: AI can provide a list of available campgrounds, with filters for amenities such

as outdoor kitchens, hookups, and shower facilities.

#### 4. Weather Forecasts and Preparations

- Prompt: "What's the weather forecast for [destination] during [month]?"  
- Explanation: AI can give you a detailed weather forecast, helping you pack appropriately and plan activities that are weather-dependent.

### Advanced AI Use: Customized Itineraries and Checklists

#### 5. Itinerary Creation

- Prompt: "Create a 7-day itinerary for a teardrop camper trip to [destination]."  
- Explanation: AI can craft a day-by-day itinerary, including driving times, recommended stops, and attractions along the way.

#### 6. Pre-Trip Checklist

- Prompt: "Generate a pre-trip checklist for a teardrop camper."  
- Explanation: AI can list essential items and preparations specific to teardrop campers, ensuring nothing is overlooked.

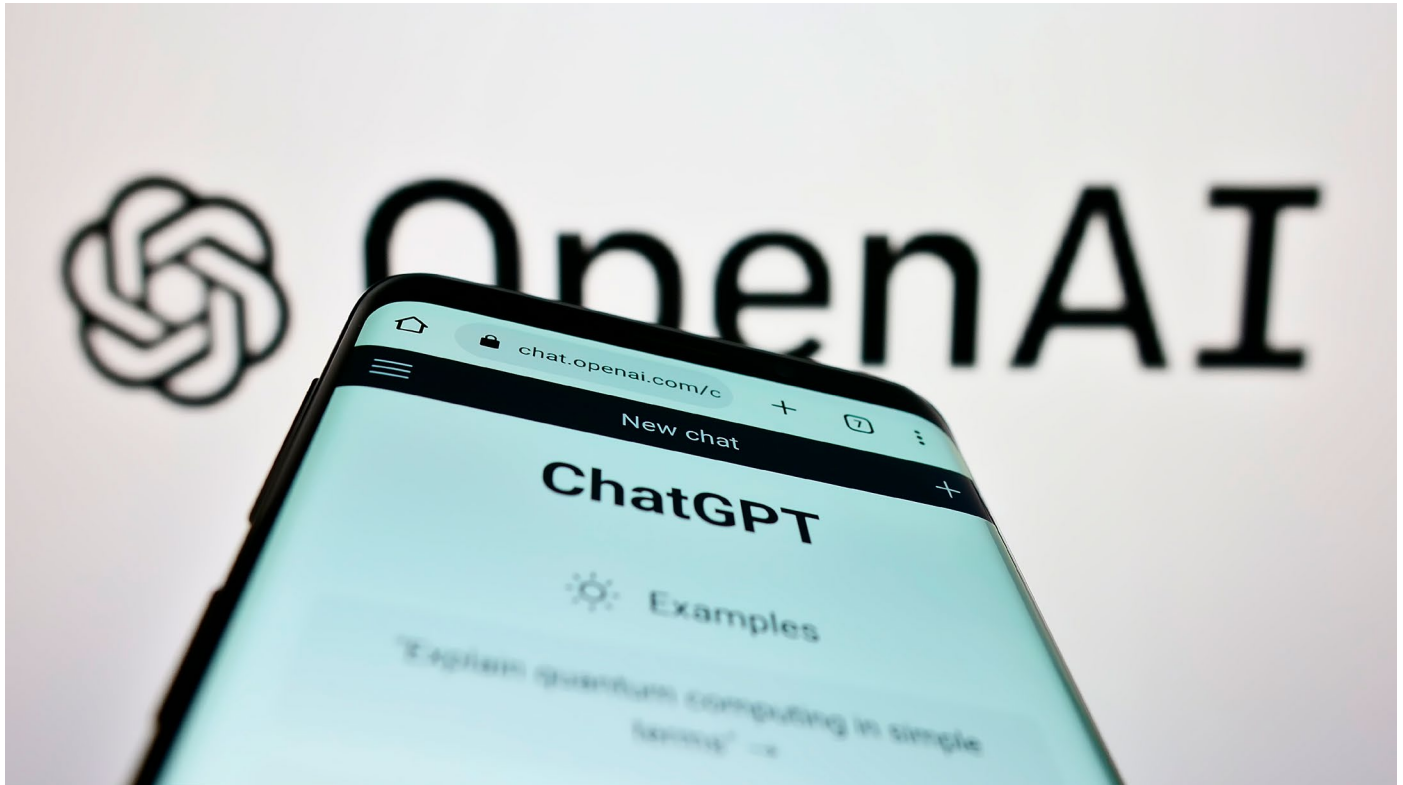
### Displaying Information in a User-Friendly Manner

When planning a trip, visual representation of information can greatly enhance understandability and accessibility. Here's how AI can present data in an organized format:

#### 7. Using Tables and Charts

- Prompt: "Show a table of the top 5 tiny camper-friendly campgrounds in [area] with amenities and ratings."  
- Explanation: AI can display campground

options in a table, making it easy to compare choices based on your preferences.



## Tips for Maximizing AI Efficiency in Travel Planning

- Be Specific: The more detailed your questions, the more tailored and useful the AI's responses will be.
- Use Follow-Up Questions: If the initial information isn't enough, ask follow-up questions to narrow down the details.
- Integrate AI with Other Tools: Combine AI insights with mapping and travel review apps for a comprehensive planning toolkit.

## ChatGPT Summary

Planning your next tiny camper adventure doesn't have to be overwhelming. By leveraging AI, you can access a wealth of information and tools that make trip planning more enjoyable and thorough. Whether it's finding the perfect spot to park your teardrop camper or planning each step of your journey, AI is your on-demand travel planner, ready to assist every mile of the trip.

This approach not only saves time but also



introduces tiny camper enthusiasts to new possibilities they might not have considered, ensuring every trip is as unique as their tiny home on wheels.

## AdventureGenie

For the next several issues, we're going to put AI travel technology to the test. We'll plan a week-long trip in our home area so we'll be able to quickly validate if the AI tool is hallucinating or not. A hallucination, in AI terms, occurs when a large language model, which powers AI chatbots, creates false information. I will ask each AI travel tool to plan a weeklong round trip within 300 miles from home. We'll tell the tool that we like to kayak, hike, bird watch, take wildlife or nature photos. We travel with pets and we enjoy beautiful gardens, art galleries, and great local food.

### AdventureGenie Background

Scott Lengel, a former Microsoft CTO (chief technology officer), went from a corporate executive to tech entrepreneur when he launched AdventureGenie. After his retirement from Microsoft, he and his wife Lisa began traveling the world, until the pandemic hit. Lengel and his wife had never been camping before, but the idea of RVing with friends appealed to them, especially since they could no longer travel internationally. Their maiden voyage to Nashville in a rental RV was a revelation. They quickly fell in love with the camping lifestyle and their newfound passion led them to purchase their own RV and embark on North American adventures.

When Scott and Lisa tried to plan a six-week, multi-stop road trip, they realized how challenging it was. The resources available

for RV trip planning were insufficient, cumbersome, and outdated. Lengel's frustration with the planning process was the inspiration for AdventureGenie, an AI-powered RV trip planner launched in May 2023. As chairman and CEO, Lengel saw an opportunity to revolutionize how people plan their road trips by leveraging artificial intelligence to offer a personalized, seamless experience.

AdventureGenie simplifies trip planning by guiding users through three key phases: shaping the trip, selecting campsites, and finding things to do. The AI customizes routes based on user preferences, recommends campsites that fit personal needs, and highlights attractions that match individual interests.

### Results

The first few times I entered my prompt in the Genie Journey section, I was not getting accurate results. It was recommending great places within 300 miles of home, but it would also throw in a few places in Missouri, then Texas or New York state. I live in Michigan, and none of those states are within 300 miles of me. I redid my prompt and directed it to take me no further than 300 miles from home. That worked!

AdventureGenie provided recommendations for each stop on my trip, starting in my hometown which I thought was strange. As for the recommendation on a great place to eat near me, it was a great pick! EXCEPT, they closed last summer and haven't reopened.

The next recommended stop provided activities that fit my criteria perfectly. We've eaten at the restaurant that it recommended

and I'd suggest it to anyone.

The other stops were accurate and they were relatively inline with my likes/dislikes that I entered. While most of the locations would be good for a paddle, it never created a recommended "wish" that included water. The recommendations focused on every other criteria.

AdventureGenie gave me some ideas for a different trip and it's at least a starting point that I'll use for further, more traditional research. The trips and highlights that were recommended definitely are a great starting point for an upcoming trip, but I won't let AI do all of my planning.

## Comparing AI-Powered Trip Planners: ChatGPT vs. AdventureGenie

When planning a trip with your tiny camper, the right tools can make all the difference. AI-powered trip planners like ChatGPT and AdventureGenie each offer unique features tailored to the needs of travelers. In the first section, we highlighted several example ChatGPT prompts that you can use to try to pinpoint information that would be useful for you. Second, we highlighted a few things that you can learn from AdventureGenie. Here, we'll dive into a detailed comparison of these two platforms, focusing on their pros and cons to help you decide which might best suit your travel planning needs.

### ChatGPT: Versatility at Your Fingertips

#### Pros:

- Flexibility in Queries: ChatGPT excels in

handling a wide range of queries, from broad travel advice to specific recommendations like campground details and local attractions. Its ability to understand and generate responses based on natural language queries makes it highly versatile. Since ChatGPT is now connected to the internet, it's capable of providing more accurate, up-to-date information

- Customizable Responses: Users can guide ChatGPT to provide more tailored information based on follow-up questions, making it possible to refine the details as needed.
- Integration and Accessibility: Being a text-based AI, ChatGPT can be accessed easily via any device that supports basic web browsing, without the need for specialized apps.

#### Cons:

- Lack of Specialization: Unlike AdventureGenie, ChatGPT is not exclusively focused on RV or tiny camper travel, which might mean that some of its recommendations aren't as tailored as they could be for specific camper needs.
- No Built-in Itinerary Features: ChatGPT does not have built-in functionality to create and store itineraries, so users would need to manually track and organize the information provided.

### AdventureGenie: Tailored for the Road

#### Pros:

- Specialized for RV and Camper Travel: Designed specifically for RVs and campers, AdventureGenie offers features that cater to the nuances of road trips involving larger vehicles or specific camping needs.
- Integrated Itinerary Planning: AdventureGenie allows users to build, store, and modify their itineraries directly within the

platform, which can include routes, reservations, and activities.

### Cons:

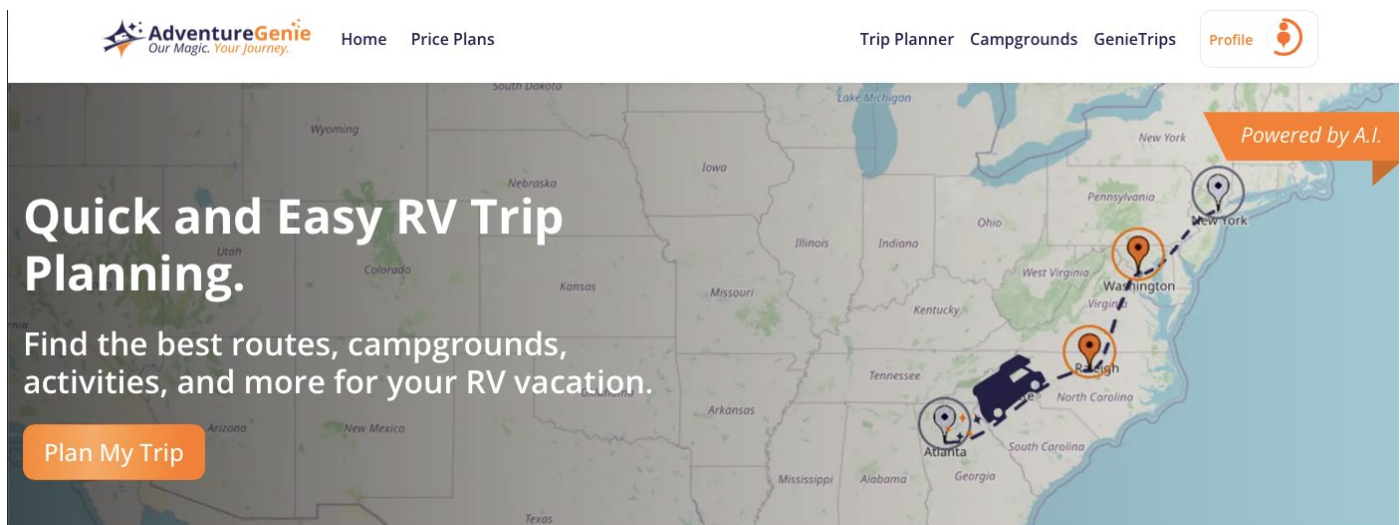
- Limited Flexibility: While it offers detailed and specialized information, AdventureGenie's structured format may offer less flexibility in response to the diverse and spontaneous questions a traveler might have.
- Cost: To get the most benefit from AdventureGenie you have to pay. AdventureGenie has a free basic plan or a Pro Plan which is currently \$39.99/year with 30 day free trial.

## Making the Right Choice

When deciding between ChatGPT and AdventureGenie for planning a trip with your tiny camper, consider the following factors:

- Type of Trip: If you're looking for highly specialized camper travel information and appreciate having a dedicated itinerary planner, AdventureGenie might be the way to go. For more general inquiries or diverse types of travel planning, ChatGPT offers greater versatility.
- User Experience: Do you prefer a more conversational interface that adapts to your way of asking questions, or a structured interface that guides you through the planning process?
- Access and Convenience: Consider whether you prefer using a web-based tool accessible from any device or an app that you need to download and use on specific devices.

Both ChatGPT and AdventureGenie offer powerful tools for trip planning, but the choice ultimately depends on your specific needs and how you prefer to interact with technology during your travel planning process. Whether you're mapping out a detailed route for your tiny camper or just brainstorming possible destinations, leveraging the right AI can enhance your travel experience significantly. ■





# Camping with cicadas

A guide to camping in with trillions of cicadas in east central Illinois

BY COOL TEARS STAFF

**JUST LIKE THE APRIL 2024 ECLIPSE** across North America, the great cicada emergence of May-early July 2024 can offer a once in-a-lifetime camping experience. If you are not afraid of bugs and are looking for a few recommendations where to camp to experience the trillions of cicadas that will emerge when the ground temperatures are warm enough, these are a few places to try out. As of the writing of this article (May 20, 2024) there were still campsites available at both locations.

## Kickapoo State Recreation Area

Nestled in the heart of central Illinois, Kickapoo State Park is a year-round haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Whether you're an avid hiker, a wildflower aficionado, wildlife observer, or cicada hunter this park offers a rich tapestry of natural beauty and activities that promise to captivate and inspire.

Once a stark landscape of surface-mined banks, Kickapoo has transformed into a lush forest teeming with life. The park's diverse flora includes cottonwoods, hawthorns, ashes, and wild cherries, which provide a vibrant canopy over deep water ponds. These ponds are brimming with aquatic life, including insects, crustaceans, amphibians, and a variety of fish. The introduction of bald cypresses along the pond edges adds to the park's botanical variety, creating picturesque scenes perfect for nature photography.

The Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, recognized as a Scenic River by both federal and state designations, meanders through the park. This river is a focal point for many activities, from serene canoe rides to adventurous fishing trips.

Kickapoo's forests are a mosaic of bottomland and upland ecosystems. In the bottomlands, you'll find majestic sycamores and silver maples, while the upland areas are dominated by oaks, hickories, beeches, sugar maples, and dogwoods. This mix of hardwood species ensures a spectacular display of fall colors, making autumn a particularly enchanting time to visit.

For water enthusiasts, Kickapoo's 22 lakes and the Middle Fork River offer excellent opportunities for fishing, boating, and canoeing. Anglers can fish for largemouth and smallmouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill, crappie, and redear sunfish. The park also hosts fall and spring trout stockings, providing a unique fishing experience.



Hikers and runners can challenge themselves on the 7.6-mile Out and Back trail, which winds through forests and bottomlands. For a more relaxed experience, numerous shorter trails are well-marked and easily accessible.

Mountain bikers will find over 22 miles of trails, featuring a mix of log jumps, dips, climbs, and fast-flowing sections, perfect for riders of all skill levels.

**Pro Tip:**

Kickapoo is one of the few state parks in Illinois that allows scuba diving. Divers with proper certification can explore the clear, deep waters of Inland Sea and Sportsman's Lake.

The park's concession stand, open seasonally, offers rentals for canoes, kayaks, and tubes, as well as bait, ice, firewood, and a restaurant.

Their campground has 184 sites with 1 - 101 having electric. There are showers and water available as well.

## Walnut Point State Park

Nestled in the serene landscapes of Douglas County, in east central Illinois, Walnut Point State Park is a haven for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts. With its rich history, diverse natural features, and a variety of recreational facilities, the park offers a delightful escape into the tranquility of the Illinois wilderness.

Walnut Point State Park derives its name from Douglas County's first pioneer settlement,

established in the 1830s about two miles from the current park site. Although the original settlement no longer exists, the park stands as a tribute to the area's pioneering spirit. Officially opened in 1968, Walnut Point has since become a beloved destination for both locals and visitors.

Despite its well-developed recreational amenities, Walnut Point State Park retains much of its natural charm. The park's extensive wooded areas are dominated by oak, hickory, maple, walnut, locust, and sassafras trees. These woods provide a picturesque backdrop for two winding, tree-lined drives, which are particularly beautiful in the spring when redbuds and wildflowers are in full bloom. In autumn, the fall foliage creates a spectacular array of colors, making the park a popular spot for leaf-peepers.

In addition to its wooded areas, the park features a prairie restoration plot and the 65-acre Upper Embarras Woods Nature Preserve. These areas offer a glimpse into the region's original landscapes and are home to a variety of wildlife. Bird watchers can enjoy sightings of songbirds, owls, raptors, wood ducks, herons, and Canada geese, especially around the lake.

Hiking and nature-study enthusiasts will find 2.25 miles of trails weaving through the timber. These trails provide an intimate experience of the park's diverse flora and fauna. For those seeking a longer route, the main park road and the Gray Squirrel-Twin Points connection trail offer a 3-mile exercise loop, perfect for walkers and joggers. All trails are restricted to foot traffic only, ensuring a peaceful hike through the natural surroundings. Additionally, the Lakeside Nature Trail, a half-mile loop, is handicapped

accessible, making it inclusive for all visitors.

The heart of Walnut Point State Park is the 59-acre, multi-fingered Walnut Point Lake. This stream-fed lake, formed by an earthen dam on its southern shore, boasts an average depth of 12.5 feet and 6.3 miles of scenic shoreline. The lake is a popular spot for fishing, with boat motors limited to electric trolling to preserve the tranquility of the water. Swimming is not permitted, ensuring a peaceful environment for anglers and nature observers.

With its many fingerlike coves, Walnut Point Lake provides a picturesque setting for anglers to enjoy a quality fishing experience. The lake supports a variety of fish species, including largemouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish, redear sunfish, bluegill, and brown bullhead. Anglers can fish from floating docks, fixed piers, or the banks of the Embarras River. The park also features two single-lane boat launches for easy lake access.

**Pro Tip:** Note that fishing is restricted to pole-and-line only, ensuring a sustainable and enjoyable experience for all.

**Primary activities within the park:** hiking, biking, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

Walnut Point has electric sites available, showers, and flush toilets.

Cicadas have already been spotted in a few places in Illinois, according to Cicada Safari. Brood XIII is starting to emerge in the central part of the state according to the app (as of the writing of this on May 20). The other brood, XIX, is starting to emerge in southern Illinois and near the central east side of the state. Both of the camping locations highlighted in this issue should put you in the middle of both broods! There could be trillions of cicadas in Illinois now through early July. It's important to remember that cicadas will pose no danger to people or pets - they can't bite or sting and they don't carry diseases. ■



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