

**MORE PARK & MOUNDS TIDBITS**

- The conical (round) mounds tend to line up along the ridge of the hill running southwest to northeast.
- The animal effigies tend to have their legs to the downward slope of the hill as if they are climbing the mound.
- “Turtle” mounds are believed to be “birds-eye” views of the water spirit, while “panthers” are believed to be the side view of the same animal.
- Since 2003, volunteers, staff and others have worked to clear trees and brush from many of the mounds. Clearing work continues on the northern end to uncover the remaining mounds.
- 3 large interpretive signs, provided by the Beaver Dam Charter School, are situated along the main trail leading up to the mounds.
- Other interpretative signs along the trail help provide some understanding and education about specific mounds.
- More park information and mounds data can be viewed at the kiosk and in the shelter of the park.

**Parks Central Office:**  
 (Office Hours: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm - Mon-Fri)

Dodge County  
 Land Resources and Parks Department  
 127 E. Oak Street  
 Juneau, WI 53039

(920) 386-3700 x1  
 Fax: (920) 386-3979  
 Email: parks@co.dodge.wi.us

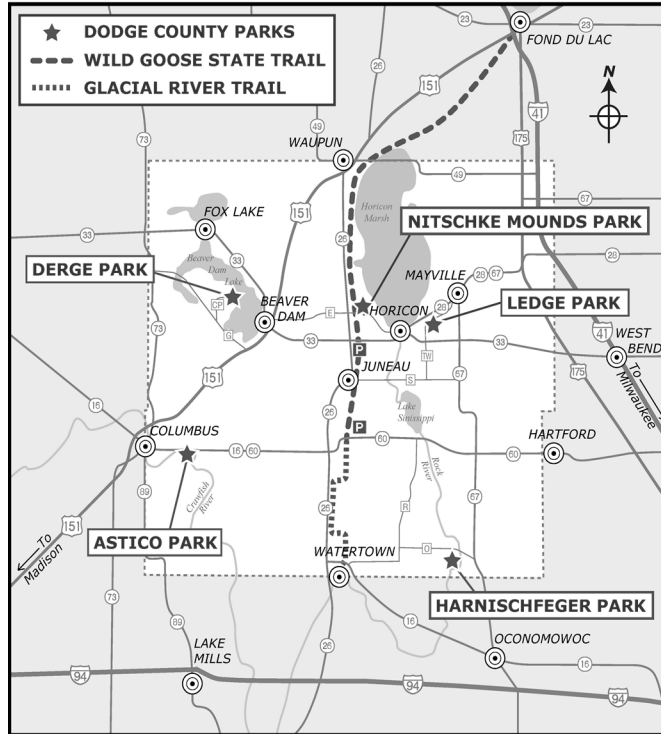
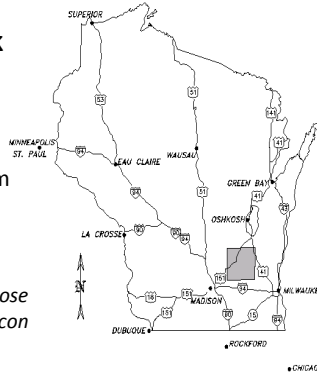
Sheriff's Department ..... (920) 386-3726  
**EMERGENCY - 911**

**PARK LOCATION**

**Nitschke Mounds Park  
 W5934 County Road E**

- 3 Miles - West of Horicon
- 6 Miles - East of Beaver Dam
- 4 Miles - North of Juneau

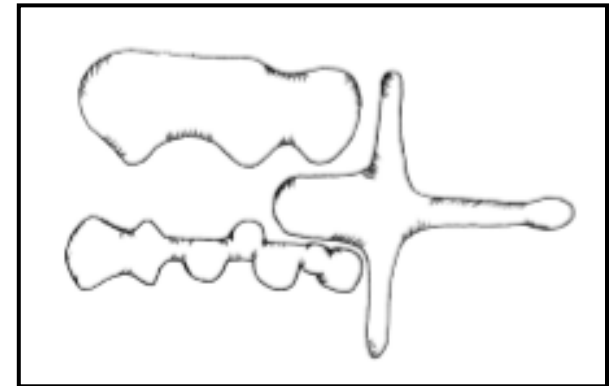
*The park lies adjacent to the Wild Goose State Trail between the Cities of Horicon and Beaver Dam.*



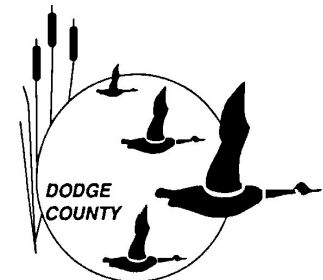
**Park Open Dawn to Dusk**  
*Unless Otherwise Posted*

# Nitschke Mounds County Park

**Dodge County, Wisconsin  
 W5934 County Road E, Burnett**



*History, Education & Recreation....*



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## ABOUT THE PARK

Nitschke Mounds County Park opened in 2003 shortly after Dodge County purchased the 54 acre property with the assistance of the National Park Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources utilizing a Land and Water Conservation Grant. The park preserves an important pre-historic Native American archaeological site, referred to as the Nitschke Mounds Group and offers residents and visitors, the opportunity to view the remnants of a culture that once occupied this area roughly 1000 years ago. These visible remnants include 37 effigy mounds that can be seen from existing trails that wind through the park.

Records of the first official investigation of the Nitschke Mounds Group by archeologists dates back to 1892. Further exploration, documentation and mapping was done in 1927 by W.C. McKern, an archeologist with the Milwaukee Public Museum. McKern documented 62 mounds (46 mounds north of Hwy E and 16 mounds south of Hwy E). Today only 37 of the mounds remain visible— all within the park property. The mounds group may have originally contained in excess of 100 mounds prior to cultivation. The mounds were believed to have been constructed between 800 AD - 1200 AD by the Late Woodland Culture, otherwise known as the Effigy Mound Builders.

During his 1927 expedition, McKern also discovered prehistoric raised garden beds near 2 springs on the property. These features give reason to believe the area east of the mounds might have been a pre-historic encampment or village site. Recent archeological investigations have uncovered pottery pieces, spear points and other artifacts, but no evidence of structures.



## THE EFFIGY MOUND BUILDERS

The Effigy Mound Builders occupied primarily southern Wisconsin and adjacent areas of Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota. They adopted the use of the bow and arrow, stone tools and grew corn. Pottery was also an important part of their culture. Many pottery shards have been discovered and catalogue in recent years and many were discovered in the mounds and documented during McKern's excavations



Many of the Nitschke Mounds contained burials. The burials usually contained the remains of more than one individual and were usually found in flexed "in the flesh" or clean bundle of bones burial configurations. The pattern of effigy mounds burials suggest that burials were usually not made immediately after death. Rather they were done at certain appointed times with appropriate ceremonies. Corpses would be brought from other temporary resting places, such as scaffolds, for final burial. Burials were characteristically located in the head and/or heart regions of the effigies and were often found in burial pits below the mound. Often times artifacts such as bone awls, arrowheads, shells and stones were found buried in the mounds as well.

Although many of the mounds contained burials, it is believed some mounds were constructed for other reasons. Some believe they were built to represent religious spirits or the supernatural world. Some shapes may be linked to various clans, used as symbols, travel guides or resource markers. The truth is, no one really knows for sure what the mound shapes meant to those who made them.

### Important Note!

Nitschke Mounds Park contains burials of ancient inhabitants and is considered sacred ground. Please treat with respect, stay on the trails and do not walk on the mounds.  
**It is illegal to remove artifacts or disturb archaeological sites on county lands without a permit.**

## THE MOUND SHAPES

The Nitschke Mounds Group contain a variety of shapes with varying sizes. Many of the mounds were shaped to resemble birds and mammals, but the group also includes linear and conical (round) shaped mounds with uncertain animal affiliations.

Two of the largest mounds exceed 200 feet in length. It is believed that most effigy mounds fall into three classes corresponding to the three natural realms - air, earth and water. The cosmology of many Midwest Native American tribes consider these realms in terms of the upper world (air) and lower world (earth and water). Some of the prominent shapes in this particular grouping include turtles, panthers, canines, buffalo (bear), deer and birds. Long-tailed effigies, such as turtle and panther mounds are believed to be representations of

powerful (lower world) water spirit-beings. Canines, buffalo (bear), deer and other legged animal effigies are associated with the lower world earth spirit beings. Birds are classified in the upper world (air) realm. The water spirit effigies tend to be more common in this part of the state, however, mound groups usually contain effigies from all spirited realms possibly signifying an attempt to be in balance and harmony with the natural world.

