



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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Hoosier NF Highlights

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Trees & Tech: A guide to technology in the woods



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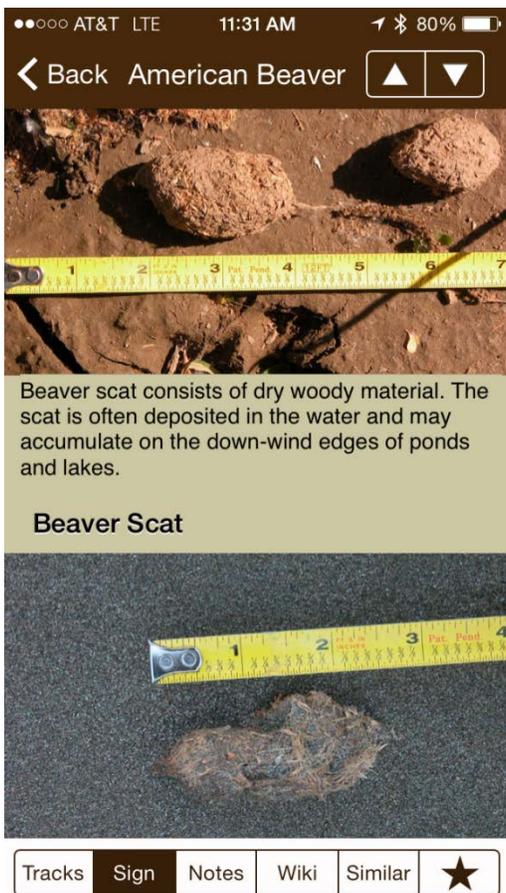
The Hoosier National Forest is unique in many aspects. One of the smallest stand-alone units in the National Forest System, the Hoosier is close to urban and developed areas when compared to larger and more remote National Forest, particularly in the west. As a result, visitors to the Hoosier enjoy outdoor resources that are relatively accessible to cellular services allowing users to digitally enhance their outdoor experience. This benefit, however, comes with some necessary warnings.

Reliance of technology in the woods can lead to disaster. Why, you ask? Any mechanical device can fail. An unplanned rainstorm can drown your tablet. Loose footing might cause a trip and send a smart phone crashing down a rock face to its demise. And, there is always the dreaded dead battery. You also risk personal embarrassment, or worse, if not paying attention to where you are walking and impact a tree or walk over a cliff. Blindly following a cell phone map or GPS unit has led to some life-threatening situations. Google it, you can read about people driving into water bodies, following mountain roads that are snow covered and impassable, and more. One contributor to this story led a caravan of soccer moms to into a questionable area of Nashville, Tennessee late at night by relying on the dashboard voice.

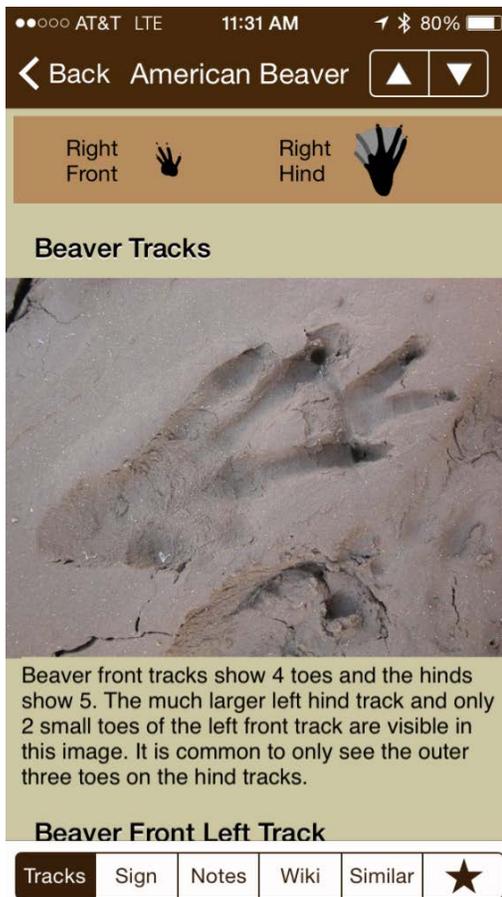
However, by taking precautions, you can transform your smart device into a lifesaver! Protect your electronics in a protective, water proof case. Have a battery backup and limit battery usage except when absolutely needed by shutting off the device or turning off cellular or data connections when not needed. This will help extend battery life which becomes valuable in case of an emergency.

Many apps are available to utilize your electronic devices in nature...some requiring a data connection while others do not. These include apps that help you find places to watch wildlife, hunt, fish, kayak, hike, or discover other natural features. Other apps assist in the identification of plants, trees, fungi, wildlife tracks, and birds. Interested in insects, soils, geology and rocks? There is an app for that too. A personal favorite are apps that help to identify night sky features such as constellations and planets. Several apps allow you submit your sightings or observations to scientist or officials. The list goes on and on. A list of suggested apps for the outdoors can be found on the Forest Service website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/outdoors/naturewatch/apps.php>. Additional apps can be found on-line as well as state specific apps. For example the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has an app with information about access to statewide resources including locations to hunt, fish, or other recreational opportunities.

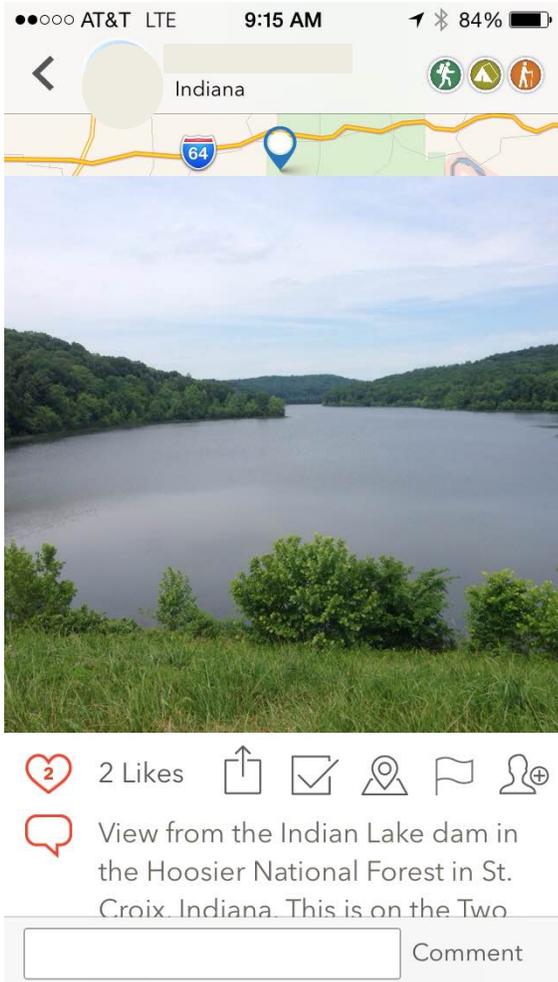
No matter the app you chose to enhance your outdoor experience it is essential that you do not come to rely solely on the app or even electronics, have a backup in place. The selected app may be useless if you are in an area with no service or a GPS signal. Batteries in electronics seem to be dead when you most need them. Using your phone or a GPS unit for navigation can be beneficial. The ability to attain your latitude and longitude can be an asset in case of emergency. You also need to be aware of specific rules for where you are. But always, always, always, be prepared: bring water and at least some food, tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return, and have the old standby of paper map and compass...batteries not required. For more information contact the Hoosier National Forest at (812) 275-5987.



Screen shot from the iTrack Lite



Screen shot from iTrack Lite



Screen shot specific to the Hoosier National Forest from the Yonder app

Note – Shapes to obscure the personal information from the person posting were used in the above photo.