Camping:

River to River Trail (R2R) features white diamonds with trail numbers written onto diamond with trail numbers written onto them. River to River Trail east and west to the nearest road. Cell phone coverage follow Hutchins Creek either Emergencies: from time to time. Required to locate them as the high water moves River to River trail crossings at Hutchins Creek levels during heavy rain events. Hutchins Creek can rise quickly to flash flood and copperheads. Spring, summer and fall. Venomous snakes are on the weather and terrain. Carry plenty of Wear appropriate clothing and footwear depending on the weather and terrain. Carry plenty of water, food, compass and a first aid kit. This hike is remote cell phone coverage could be spoty.

Environmental safety: Be aware of poison ivy and stinging nettles. Various insects including ticks and mosquitoes are present here during spring, summer and fall. Venomous snakes are also present here including timber rattlesnakes and copperheads.

Hutchins Creek can rise quickly to flash floods during heavy rain events. Due to the dynamic nature of Hutchins Creek the River to River trail crossings at Hutchins Creek may not be apparent. Some scouting may be required to locate them as the high water moves the gravel around and erodes the stream bank from time to time.

Emergencies: In the event you become lost or injured stay put and call 911. There is no cell phone coverage follow Hutchins Creek either north or south to exit the area or travel the River to River Trail east and west to the nearest road.

Camping: There are no designated campsites along the trail but numerous ideal camping areas exist. Use existing campsites. If no existing campsite is present where you camp please follow the Leave No Trace principles by camping 200 feet off the trail, use portable stove for cooking. If a campfire is needed keep it small and low the Leave No Trace principles by camping. If a campfire is needed keep it small and low the Leave No Trace principles by camping.

Trail Markings:

General Forest Trails marked by white diamonds with trail numbers written onto them.

Surface Type: Dirt and rock

Safety: Personal safety make sure someone knows your route and establish a check in time. You leave the trailheads you become self reliant. Please practice Leave No Trace principles. To protect rare plants please stay on designated trails. Leave rocks, plants and wildflowers for others to enjoy. These trails are open to hikers and equestrians. Please remember that hikers yield to horses. If you are sharing the trail with your pet please keep it under control. Almost all of this hike is within wilderness. Please abide by wilderness guidelines and restrictions.

Facilities: There are no facilities in Bald Knob and Clear Springs Wilderness areas. When you leave the trailheads you become self-reliant.

Avenza: The map included with this brochue is available in the Avenza Map Store for downloading to your smart phone. The Avenza App can be downloaded by searching the app store on your phone for this:

Once the app is downloaded access the map store and search for the following map: Shawnee NF Multi-Day Hikes. This brochure will still be a handy reference to This area remains much the same as it did when the first government surveyors came through in 1803. Rugged, steep and unexplored, the ridges and hollows of Bald Knob and Clear Springs Wilderness are the northernmost range of the Ozarks. The tall narrow ridge tops fall sharply into deep ravines where the sun comes up late and goes down early. The land use history of Clear Springs suggests this area provided suitable timber for the early settlers who were mostly of Scotch-Irish or German descent, as well as timber resources suitable for railroad ties and barrel staves. Historic travel routes traverse the ridgeline and through the Hutchins Creek valley where early settlers, timber companies and the US Forest Service sought to harvest the valuable timber resources to improve their quality of life and provide lumber, railroad ties, barrel staves and poles to support the local economy. Today these historical routes provide visitors access to some of the most primitive areas in southern Illinois.

Hutchins Creek separates Clear Springs from Bald Knob Wilderness and is rich with aquatic biodiversity. Spring-summer and fall. Aquatic wildlife includes fishless ponds. This powerful waterway is a Candidate for Wild and Scenic River designation, and is one of the highest quality streams in Illinois. Spring wildfires put on their best faces beginning in late March as remnant daffodils, Blue-eyed Mary, Patty root orchids, wild phlox, Larkspur and May Apples bloom through May along the Hutchins Creek trail. Columbine drapes elegant-ly over rock outcrops and golden seal makes its appearance along the ridge tops.

The variety of foliage, ranging from floodplain to grayson openings and pine plantations provide ample habitat for an abundance of wildlife. Natives of tropical origines, wild turkey, deer, bobcat, timber-rattlesnakes and eastern woodpeckers thrive in the mixed forest and on the clean, spring-fed creeks. Indiana bats and timber rattlesnakes rely on this area for survival. Cerulean warblers and scarlet tanagers are rarely seen indicators of a healthy wilderness. Barred owl, pileated woodpecker, hawks, vireos and occasional Bald Eagle soar through the old oak forest and high above the meandering creek. Amphibians thrive in the ephemeral drainages, intermittent cool streams, and fishless ponds.

Spend the night in Clear Springs Wilderness and be treated to a wonderful symphony of night sounds including the harmony of tree frogs in early spring, the inquiry of the barred owl as he wonders “whoosh” is spending the night in his house, and listen for the high pitched chorus of coyotes as they run the ridges. Even the sounds of the lonesome freight trains in the distance seem to blend in to the majesty.

Travel Time: This depends entirely on how fast you hike and how much exploring you do but is recommended as a 2-3 day adventure.