Burgess Falls State Park, located on the Falling Water River, is noted for its natural beauty and four waterfalls that cascade down from over 250 feet in elevation. The last of these falls is the most spectacular, plunging more than 130 feet into the gorge. While the park is popular for its waterfalls and wildlife, the open air Native Butterfly Garden, adjacent to the upper parking area, is easily accessed and provides striking seasonal native wildflower displays.

Historical Significance
The area was originally populated by Native Americans of the Cherokee, Creek and Chickasaw tribes. These tribes used the land as a hunting ground until the late 19th century when a gristmill and sawmill began operating on the river. The Falling Water River was used to generate hydroelectric power for the city of Cookeville from 1928-1944. In 1973, the territory became a designated Tennessee State Natural Area, protecting the diverse forest and aquatic habitats.

Birding
Birding is a popular activity at Burgess Falls. Barn and northern rough-winged swallows sally out over the river, and green and yellow-crowned night herons may be seen during spring and summer at the river’s edge and on the lake. An observation deck overlooks the lake and is conveniently located next to the upper parking area and butterfly garden.

Hiking
The 1.5-mile round-trip River Trail/Service Road Loop is a moderately strenuous hike, taking visitors past the waterfalls and ending at the main overlook. The waterfalls are 20’ cascades, 30’ upper falls, 80’ middle falls, and 136’ lower falls in height. A steep trail ends near the top of the main waterfall. This is not an easy hike; the trail from the main overlook to the top of the main falls is very strenuous. Most people prefer to hike back to the parking lot along the service road. The one-half mile Ridge Top Trail is very scenic with views down the main canyon of Falling Water River. All trails are foot trails.

Planned Programs
Park staff offers year-round interpretive programs for adults and children.

Fishing
Fishing is permissible below the dam to the cascades along the bank and at the observation deck near the dam. There are no public boat ramps or canoe/kayak access areas in the park.
Butterfly Garden
The annual Butterfly Garden Celebration is a family-friendly event held each summer. The celebration features staff led educational programs, hikes, butterfly identification, creek studies, landscaping with native plants and other programs.

Playground and Picnic Tables
Several picnic tables, most with grills, are conveniently located to restrooms and a playground is nearby. None of the picnic tables are equipped with water spigots. All are available on a first come, first serve basis.

Directions
From I-40, take Exit 286. Turn south off the 286 ramp onto State Highway 135. Proceed on State Highway 135 for eight miles, following the signs to the park.