



ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSION



When agricultural land is abandoned in southern Illinois, the area gradually reverts to a forest. These natural changes in an ecosystem that occur over time are referred to as ecological succession. The time taken and the trajectory of change depends upon the environmental conditions and dispersal of seeds into the site.

The plots in this field are a long-term ecological experiment established in 1996 that tests the effects of disturbance (mowing) and soil resource (fertilizer) treatments on plant succession in a former horse pasture. Can you tell which treatment is which from looking at them?

Ecologists from SIUC monitor these plots allowing them to better understand and teach students how ecological succession proceeds. Special thanks to the National Science Foundation for funding to establish these plots