

## A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

### **BIG CREEK CONSERVATION AREA EDGE WADE (REVISED 1 NOVEMBER, 2009) 1,064 ACRES ADAIR CO. DELORME 23, B-8 MDC OWNED FOR INFORMATION CALL 660-785-2420**

Directions: The area is adjacent to the west side of the City of Kirksville. From the south, enter via Royal Oaks Drive. This is a gravel road off MO 11 about a mile west of Troy Mills. Where MO 11 makes a 90 degree curve south, stay straight and immediately turn right onto Royal Oaks Dr. The road runs through a rural neighborhood and ends at a parking lot.

To access the east side, Rainbow Basin Trail goes west from Rt. H (Rt. H goes north from Troy Mills on MO 11). The intersection of Rt. H and Rainbow Basin Trail is just north of where Shepherd Ave. (a.k.a. MO 6 coming from the east) turns into Rt. H.

West Michigan Street, going west from Rt. H, ends at a parking lot on the north boundary of the area.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: The area is good for spring and fall passerine migration. Warblers can be plentiful and fairly easy to find along the Thousand Hills Trail. Late fall, early winter and early spring can offer a very good variety of sparrows in the 270 acres of savanna and 225 acres of old fields. Henslow's Sparrows have been found in breeding season.

Features of interest to birders: 3 parking lots (one at the end of each access road noted above).

In addition to the savanna and old fields, there are more than 500 acres of forest and woodland, mostly along the 2.5 mile stretch of Big Creek that traverses the area.

The lot off the end of Rainbow Basin Trail is the trailhead for the multi-use Thousand Hills Trail. The conservation area portion is about a 3/4 mile-long trail down through woods and old fields to and through Big Creek valley. It can be very productive for migrant songbirds and resident woodland species. Three half-acre ponds provide additional variety in habitat along this trail.

The lot at the end of West Michigan St. offers a good view of a cove of Forest Lake (in the state park), and access to grassland meandering birding.

From the Royal Oaks Drive lot, an old field road leads north along a ridgeline through grassland and old fields. At a fork about 1/2 mile from the lot, staying straight (right) leads to a connection with the Thousand Hills Trail where the MDC portion of the Trail ends at the park boundary. This is about 1.3 miles from the south parking lot. A right turn here leads up to the Rainbow Basin Trail parking lot along the trail portion described above.

Toilets: None

Camping: Camping is allowed on or adjacent to parking lots (but not on roadways); walk-in and backpack camping allowed except during firearms deer and turkey seasons.

Hazards/Limitations: The multi-use trail is popular for mountain biking.

Nearby Birding Sites: Thousand Hills SP, Sugar Creek CA