

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

BIG OAK TREE STATE PARK

Bill Eddleman, Silvey Barker, Edge Wade: edgew AT mchsi.com

1,028 acres Mississippi Co. DeLorme 69, G-6

DNR owned; contact 573-649-3149 for additional information

Directions: From I-55 Exit 58 (East Prairie/Matthews exit), go east onto MO 80, passing through East Prairie to the junction with MO 102 about 1 mile east of town. Turn right/south onto MO 102. The park is about 10 miles from this junction.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Enjoy the beginnings of spring migration in Missouri at this and nearby sites. Warblers, thrushes and other migrants are abundant migrants. Summer residents include Prothonotary, Hooded, and Yellow-throated Warblers, Northern Parula, Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos, Acadian Flycatcher, Mississippi Kite and Least Tern. Swainson's Warbler were known to nest here, but very few sightings have been reported in recent years. Winter residents include Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Brown Creeper.

Features of interest to birders: Eighty acres of remnant virgin forest are designated as a National Natural Landmark Forest. The average canopy is 120 feet, with several trees more than 130 tall. There are several state champion trees within the 1,007 acres of bottomland hardwood forest within the park.

This island of remnant bottomland forest is a migrant trap. The 1.25 mile (round-trip) handicapped accessible boardwalk through the swamp provides excellent birding in any season.

The mowed picnic area and park road offer easy birding.

The lake at the end of the park road is not known as particularly good for birding, but Anhinga, a rare species for Missouri, have been seen here recently. The levee along the east and south sides provides additional birding and viewing angles for the lake.

Toilets: 1 Vault toilet (privy) near the picnic shelter.

Camping: No camping is allowed in the park, but private camping is available nearby.

Hazards/Limitations: Stinging nettle and poison ivy are abundant in the forest understory. Mosquitoes can be numerous during the summer.

Nearby Birding Sites: Ten Mile Pond CA, Towosahgy State Historic Site, Thirtyfour Corner Blue Hole, Dorena Access, Seven Island CA.