

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

TRAIL OF TEARS STATE PARK

3,415 acres Cape Girardeau Co. DeLorme 58, E-4

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Owned by DNR; contact 573-290-5268 for additional information.

Directions: From I-55 Exit 105 (Fruitland/Jackson), take Hwy. 61 north for about one mile. Turn right onto MO 177 and continue for seven miles. At the four-way stop in front of the Proctor and Gamble Plant, turn right to stay on MO 177 and continue for another 2.8 miles. The park entrance is on the left, just before the junction with Rt. V.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: The park is an excellent place to experience the passerine spring migration, as many species work their way north along the Mississippi River and adjacent woodlands. A summer visit should produce sights of the good variety of species nesting in the park. Mississippi Kites are regular here in summer.

Bald Eagles roost along the Mississippi River bluffs in the park in winter.

Features of interest to birders:

300 acre Vancill Hollow Natural Area is a diverse mesic forest of American beech, tulip poplar and cucumber magnolia, more typical of the Appalachians than the Ozarks.

20 acre Lake Boutin is on the west side of the park. Watch for the earthen dam on your left along MO 177 just before reaching the park entrance if you are coming from the north. If you miss it here, another park road will bring you back. Warblers, vireos, flycatchers, mockingbirds, thrashers and swallows nest around the lake. The area across MO 177 from the lake is also very productive.

There are 14.5 miles of trails.

10 mile long Peewah (meaning "come follow in this direction") Trail may be birded in sections by following various lengthed loop segments. The trail includes some steep ascents with switchbacks, an overlook on the Mississippi River, and a loop along the river.

Sheppard Point Trail is a two mile loop with a very steep ascent to a Mississippi River bluff.

The two mile Lake Trail goes around the basic campground along a portion of Lake Boutin.

There is also a half-mile nature trail with limited birding potential.

Toilets: There are several restrooms.

Camping: There are two campgrounds. Flooding may occur. Check the DNR Missouri State Parks website for current conditions, <http://mostateparks.com/trailoftears.htm>

Hazards/Limitations: Park roads offer good birding, but no shoulders on steep sections. Find a parking spot and walk the road, rather than bird it from a car.

Some trails have steep sections.

Flooding may close portions of the park.

Nearby Birding Sites: Apple Creek CA, Maintz Wildlife Preserve, Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center, Cape Woods CA.