

## A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

### **WESTON BEND STATE PARK**

**Frances Cramer, Edge Wade (revised July, 2012)**

**1,133 acres Platte Co. DeLorme 26, D-3**

**DNR owned; for additional information call 816-640-5443**

<http://mostateparks.com/park/weston-bend-state-park>

Directions: From the south take I-29 to Platte City, exit 18. Go west on MO 92 about two miles to MO 45/273; then northwest about 4 miles. Watch for the signs.

Along with Lewis and Clark SP, Bluffwoods, Kneib Memorial, and Little Bean Marsh CA, Weston Bend SP is an important part of the 100,000 acre Iatan/Weston River Corridor IBA. The park includes a significant portion of the Weston Bend bottomlands, the largest tract of old-growth bottomland forest along the Missouri River. These bottomland forests and marshes are of critical importance to many migrants and nesting species.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Weston Bend's wooded bluff tops have delighted birders with several spring migration fallouts.

More than 140 species are on the SPARKS checklist. There are few trip reports for late autumn and early winter, so many species may be underrepresented (Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, for example).

Twenty-four species of warblers have been reported, including nesting Hooded Warbler; 7 species of vireo; all migrant thrushes (only one Veery--mid May) have been reported.

There are 4 records of Black-billed Cuckoo (3 in May; 1 in September).

Sightings of Olive-sided Flycatcher have been reported, May through September, with two being seen on one trip in August.

Features of interest to birders: Long a favorite of birders is the paved three-mile loop bicycle/walking/hiking trail beginning at a lot on the left just past the entrance/contact station. It follows a creek through a forest of cottonwood, sycamore and maple. In migration and/or breeding season, both species of cuckoo, Alder and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Bell's, Yellow-throated, and Blue-headed Vireos, Swainson's Thrush, Blue Grosbeaks, and more than 10 species of warblers can be found along this trail.

In breeding season, the West Ridge and McCormick trails can serve up Wild Turkey, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Wood Thrush, American Redstart and the expected assortment of chickadees, titmice, vireos, and orioles, tanagers and grosbeaks.

The Harpst Valley and Harpst Pass trails connect between the bike trail and the West Ridge Trail.

The River Trail and the North Ridge Trail are accessed from the parking area at the end of the road. The North Ridge Trail begins on the west side of the parking area and climbs steeply through a wooded area always good for woodland birds.

To get to the River Trail on foot, follow the pavement west around the gate barrier, cross the railroad tracks, and watch for signs. This trail follows the Missouri River through cottonwood and willow and borders a marsh that can be very productive for warblers and vireos during spring migration.

The overlook on the bluff gives a fine view of the Missouri River and the countryside around Fort Leavenworth and the city of Leavenworth in Kansas. Watch for Bald Eagles, Blue Herons and the occasional duck, but don't forget to check out the nearby treetops for smaller birds.

Toilets: Restrooms in campground, day use area, bicycle trailhead, and Bee Creek area.

Camping: A full range of camping options is available year-round.

Hazards/Limitations: Flooding may cause some trail closures.

Nearby Birding Sites: Platte Falls CA, Little Bean Marsh CA, Lewis and Clark SP.