

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

DUCK CREEK CA (MAIN UNIT)

Steve Dilks, Edge Wade, Chris Barrigar--revised 2010

6,234 acres Stoddard, Bollinger, Wayne Cos. DeLorme 67, A-9

MDC owned, some leased; for information call: 573-290-5730

Directions: The main entrance is nine miles north of Puxico on Hwy 51. From the west, take US 60 east of Poplar Bluff to Hwy 51. From I-55, there are several "scenic route" options.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Anytime is a good time to visit. Duck Creek is one of Missouri's premier sites to see great numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds, but waterfowl hunting season severely limits accessibility for those without a hunting license.

Rarities that have been or very well could be seen here include Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Mottled Duck, Purple Gallinule, Neotropic Cormorant, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Tricolored Heron, Wood Stork, and Anhinga.

Features of interest to birders: There are 2,400 wetland acres, a 1,800-acre pool, 1,500 acres of bottomland hardwoods, and about 800 acres of cropland.

This suggested approach to birding Duck Creek is by Steve Dilks, written for The Audubon Society of Missouri's, "A Guide to Birding in Missouri," 2001, compiled and edited by Kay and Bill Palmer:

Starting from the headquarters parking lot check for nesting Chipping Sparrow, then proceed to Pool 1. In spring trees anywhere may yield warblers. The shallow pool on the left along the way may have puddle ducks. Wood Duck may be seen along the wood/water edge just before reaching the "Big Pool" [Pool 1].

Examine Pool 1 closely. From late winter to early spring expect thousands of Ring-necked Duck, American Coot, and numerous puddle ducks. Searching might produce a few Redheads, a Western Grebe, or a scoter. This is a great place to see Bald Eagles. A pair of eagles has nested regularly in the cypress trees. A sign on the road will help you locate the nest. In spring the cypress trees in the north part of the pool are usually covered with Double-crested Cormorants as well as Tree Swallows. On occasion Willet have been seen sitting on stumps.

Sometimes the 7.5 mile road around Pool 1 is open. While driving watch for goslings in spring and the many fishermen on weekends. Listen for Fish Crow and keep watching the skies for Black Vulture [and Mississippi Kites that nest in nearby Mingo NWR].

The entrance to the "A" Area, 3.9 miles from the entrance to Pool 1, is on the left. When open, touring this 4.5 mile loop drive is a must. When there is shallow water it is excellent. If the gate is closed you may enter on foot, but you will have to walk at least a mile to reach a wetland area. In early March there can be thousands of Snow Geese with Ross's Geese, puddle ducks, rails, Marsh Wrens, and American Bitterns hiding in the vegetation. One April day, 20 Marbled

Godwits were observed descending out of the sky to join Black-necked Stilt, White-faced Ibis, and hundreds of shorebirds.

Two miles into "A" Area, there will be a road on the right that leads to an abandoned farm. Walk it into the surrounding fields. The field on the right with multiflora rose has many sparrows. Listen for quail. One winter a pheasant was seen. The farm field on the left has yielded Savannah Sparrow. To the northwest of this field is a large stand of mature white pine. It can either be walked to from here or visited by easy access from Rt. P. While driving or walking in the "A" Area watch for a Peregrine Falcon diving at shorebirds or ducks. Black-crowned Night-Herons perch in the willows early in the morning. Return to Pool One.

When the gates are open, two other driving loops are available--Pool 2 and Pool 3. These areas are flooded woodland and may provide species not otherwise evident.

Toilets: 11 privies are on the perimeter of Pool 1; 1 privy is at the headquarters.

Camping: There are 2 designated camping areas with fire pads, picnic tables, and privies. Primitive camping is allowed at 4 spots along the Pool 1 gravel roads.

Hazards/Limitations: Waterfowl hunting season brings closure to most of the area to all but hunters.

Varying water levels determine what species may be present.

Nearby Birding Sites: Mingo NWR (adjacent), Crowley's Ridge CA, Otter Slough CA, Lake Wappapello SP, Coldwater CA, Duck Creek (Dark Cypress Unit), Castor River CA.