

## **BLACK ISLAND CONSERVATION AREA: BRADFORD UNIT**

Allen Gathman, 2016

6365.24 Acres Pemiscot Co. DeLorme 71, B-9

GPS: 36.2919302,-89.6816569

MDC owned; for more information call 573-290-5730

**Directions:** From Hayti I-55 exit, take Highway 84 east, then County Road 337 north, and County Road 338 east to the area.

**ADA Information:** Birders with limited walking ability have good opportunities to experience the area from the parking lots, camping area, and by car along the elevated roads.

### **When to Visit/Species to Expect:**

**Features of interest to birders:** The Stephen C. Bradford Unit of Black Island Conservation Area is enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), which is a program through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) designed to restore and protect wetlands.

The Stephen C. Bradford Unit consists of a recently abandoned river channel of the Mississippi River. Two wetland pools were created, and will be managed for waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds. The remaining portion of the area is agriculture fields that will be converted to riverfront forest.

About 400 feet after entering the area on CR 338, there is a parking lot to the left. From this lot it is possible to walk along a ditch northward about 300 yards. The trees and shrubs along the ditch often harbor warblers and tanagers, while the fields to the east are good for grassland species. This is also a good location to watch for flyovers.

A half mile further east on CR 338 there is a parking area with a gravel boat launch on the right. This spot offers a good view of a slough where there may be some waterfowl, and of more woodland species in the trees around the parking lot, as well as across the slough on the edge of the Gayoso Bend Unit.

One-third mile beyond the boat ramp parking area, CR338 reaches the eastern boundary of the Bradford Unit. If you stop here it is possible to walk north along the edge of the conservation area for some distance. To the west there are trees and brush that are good for passerines, and depending on conditions, there should be some marsh or shallow pond areas spanning the boundary. This marshy area has produced shorebirds and waders, including American Bitterns on one occasion.

Continuing one-half mile further east on CR338 (1.4 miles from the point where the road first entered the conservation area), CR339 branches off to the left (unmarked). The slightly raised roadbed provides another opportunity to view the marsh and shallow pond areas to the west and open fields to the east.

CR339 reaches a strip of conservation area at a tree line in 0.4 mile, and follows the area boundary north one-fourth mile to another tree line. At the second tree line, turn west to a parking area between fields. This area is mostly good for grassland species. It is marked as a primitive camping area on the MDC map.

After this parking area, the road continues west and north by half-mile zig-zags to another parking lot (about 2 miles from the camping area in total). From here it is usually possible to walk west along a small ditch and tree line. There is excellent grassland habitat north of this line, and the trees have been good for warblers and orioles. There is a large shallow pond (marked "Big Lake" on the MDC map) southwest of this line that has been good for waders, gulls, and waterfowl, sometimes in large numbers. Depending on conditions it may be possible to walk to the levee about one-third mile west of the parking area.

If you return to the campground, you can follow CR339 one-half mile north to CR336. Continue a half mile east on CR336 to a junction with CR333. From here, go three-quarters of a mile north on CR333 to a parking area with a gate to the right. Walking in to the east about 1/3 mile you reach an extensive newly developed pond and wetland area and Robinson Lake, all of which should provide waders, shorebirds and waterfowl.

It is also possible to continue east from the CR333/CR336 junction 3 miles to get access to the easternmost portion of the Bradford Unit. There are several gates along CR336 between 3 and 4.5 miles east of CR 333. The gate 3.5 miles east of CR333 gives foot access to a fairly good service road north through the woods; this should be good for woodland species.

**Toilets:** None.

**Camping:** One primitive camping area on CR339.

**Hazards/Limitations:** All public use is prohibited, except fishing and waterfowl hunting by boat only, when the Mississippi River water level is at or above twenty-eight (28) feet on the [Caruthersville gauge](#).

The area is popular with hunters, particularly during deer seasons. Check the MDC website for dates and take appropriate precautions.

There are no formal trails. Walking may be difficult depending on the time of year and extent of recent maintenance. Most wooded areas have a lot of poison ivy. The county roads mentioned are all gravel at best, and may be impassable due to mud if there has been a lot of rainfall. High-clearance vehicles are recommended.

**Nearby Birding Sites:** Triangle Boat Club Access; Black Island Conservation Area – Gayoso Bend Unit; Black Island Conservation Area – DeSoto Unit; Black Island Conservation Area – Wolf Bayou Unit.

