A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

CAPE GIRARDEAU CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER
Mark Haas, winter 2017
50 acres of mature forest plus additional open areas, water, and woods. Cape Girardeau County.
DeLorme 58, 4-G
GPS: 37.344983,-89.592116
Owned by MDC. For additional information, call 573-290-5218 or see
http://mdc7.mdc.mo.gov/applications/moatlas/AreaList.aspx?txtUserID=guest&txtAreaNm=s

Hours: The nature center building is open 8 a.m.--5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. The grounds around the nature center building are open daily from sunrise to 10 p.m.

Directions: Located within the North Cape Girardeau County Park, just east of Interstate 55 (Exit 99). Take Kingshighway (Highway 61) east 0.25 miles from I-55 to the park and nature center.

ADA Information: The Ridgetop Trail (0.3 miles linear) leads from the nature center to a viewing platform in the middle of the forest.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Any time can be good. About 140 species have been reported here, including 21 warblers. Spring and fall bring a variety of migrants; among them are flycatchers, vireos, warblers, and thrushes.

In winter, expect Golden-crowned Kinglets, Winter Wrens, Brown Creepers, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Look and listen overhead for Snow Geese and Greater White-fronted Geese. You might see Purple Finches and Pine Siskins at the feeders viewed from inside the nature center. In late winter and spring, a few migrating ducks pass through.

In summer, the woodlands host Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Summer Tanagers, Red-eyed Vireos, Great-crested Flycatchers, Wood Thrushes, and Kentucky Warblers. Trees at the west end of the county lake are usually a sure bet for Warbling Vireos. Look and listen overhead for Mississippi Kites and Fish Crows. Adjacent to the nature center building, enjoy the colony of Purple Martins nesting in gourds and the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds visiting the feeders and wildflower garden.

Features of interest to birders: The White Oak Trace Trail (2 mile loop and linear) takes you through the steep hills and valleys of the mature forest. The big oaks, hickories, and tulip poplars are definitely worth a visit, but birds in the treetops high above can be difficult to locate.

You'll find more diverse birding on the moderate Maple Hollow Trail (0.5 mile) which takes you through a mixed-age woodland. Be sure to walk the easy trail that connects Maple Hollow with White Oak Trace. This trail goes past some brushy-grassy areas for your best chance at sparrows and to the Wood Duck Swamp, which actually is the spot where you are most likely to see Wood Ducks (in March).

From the Maple Hollow trailhead, a short county-park road leads to two picnic shelters. The woodland edges created by mowing in this area can be quite productive birding. During winter and spring, check the kids' fishing pond and the county park lake for waterfowl. The shorelines of these water bodies are not very attractive to shorebirds.

Toilets: Restrooms are available in the nature center building (open 8 a.m.--5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday)

Camping: None

Hazards/Limitations: The nature center is located in a popular county park, so do not expect solitude.

Nearby Birding Sites: Juden Creek CA, Trail of Tears SP, Cape Woods CA, Apple Creek CA, Maintz Wildlife Preserve, Bollinger Mill Historic Site, Gen. Watkins CA, Perry County Community Lake.