

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

ROCKY FORK LAKES CONSERVATION AREA--UPDATED: 8/16/2008

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2,200 acres Boone Co. Delorme 30, I-5 See also: Finger Lakes State Park (adjacent)

Directions: US 63, 6 miles north of Columbia; half-mile east on Peabody Rd.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Anytime. Summer nesters include Blue Grosbeak, Bell's Vireo, Blue-winged, Pine and Prothonotary warblers. Ospreys frequent the lake and Purple Martins stage beside lake in autumn. Marsh and big lake attract good variety of waterfowl, including divers (small numbers), and some shorebirds.

Features of interest to birders: Three parking areas at points around 48-acre Rocky Fork Lake; another at the shooting range, all accessed via the Peabody Rd. entrance.

One parking area near the southwest corner of the area is at the north end of Patricia Rd., off Calvert Hill Rd. One parking area near the west end of Mt. Zion church Rd., off Rt. B. These offer alternative points of entering/leaving the extensive trail system. Most of the trails are not loops; they tend to radiate from points at or near the big lake. Many ponds and year-round pools, mostly created by mining, can be viewed from trails.

A marsh may be viewed from the dirt road leading south from Peabody Rd. just west of the entrance (to the north) to Finger Lakes SP (See hazards).

Pine plantations and alders were good for crossbills and redpolls in 1980s-90s. Habitat still good and accessible by gravel road or short walks.

1,150 acres strip-mined area in various degrees of reclamation. Autumn Olive planted as part of restoration is now being removed, but much remains. Most of the 400 acres of grass is fescue. 25-acre bluestem prairie and other small bird-attractive habitats, including 200 acres of savanna may be reached by short or moderate length hikes along old field or mining roads.

An old railroad right-of-way runs east from the southeast corner of the main area, providing an elevated view of woods, grasslands and ponds.

Toilets: 2 pit toilets at big lake.

Camping: At adjacent Finger Lakes SP.

Hazards/Limitations: Shooting range and clay pigeon range, often very active. Marsh is beside and behind shooting range.

In 2008, a gate was installed at the entrance to the road leading to the marsh. One must now park there and walk. Still, it's worth the effort, especially when waterfowl may be present.

High tick population on some trails. Areas of rugged terrain caused by mining activity; some steep slopes.

Nearby Birding Sites: Finger Lakes SP (adjacent), Lick Creek CA, Tri-City Community Lake