

## A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

### **LITTLE DIXIE LAKE CONSERVATION AREA**

**Edge Wade, spring 2015**

**733 acres Callaway Co. DeLorme 38, B-2**

**GPS: 38.9054950744,-92.1259361607**

**MDC owned; for information call 573-884-6861**

**Directions:** From I-70, Exit #137 (Rt. J/ Millersburg). Follow Rt. J south to the west lakeside parking lot about 2 miles (a mile north of the WW/RA intersection). A small MDC sign indicates the entrance road, Breezy Oak Lane, just south of the big water tower.

To reach the main parking area at the southwest corner of the lake, near the earthen dam, take Rt. J a little more than 3 miles from Exit #137 to the junction with Rt. RA at Millersburg (just beyond the stop sign and merge with Rt. WW). Turn left (east) onto Rt. RA and make an immediate left into the area (west side of the lake).

From Columbia, take Broadway east. It becomes Rt. WW. Take Rt. WW to the junction with Rt. RA just beyond merging with Rt. J. From Fulton, take Rt. F west to Millersburg.

A parking lot at the north end of the area, gives access to the largest pond and extensive grassland. It is on CR 230, east of Rt. J, about two miles north of WW/RA.

The eastside parking lot and nature trail are reached by continuing east beyond the RA turn into the main area. The road becomes CR 228. At CR 246 turn left (north--following MDC signs). At CR 248, turn left (west) to the parking lot.

To reach the easternmost parking lot (Henslow's Sparrow area), continue on CR 246 beyond the turn toward the lakeside lot. CR 246 will go north, then east. Look for the road on the left into the parking area shortly after CR 246 turns east.

To complete the circuit of the area and to reach the north parking lot and Rt. J from CR 246, take CR 257 north to the intersection with CR 230. Turn left (west) onto CR 230.

**ADA Information:** The lower third of the lake may be viewed from a car in the southwest parking area. The .4-mile loop asphalt Dixie Woods Nature Trail, accessed from the southeast lakeside parking lot, has rest pull-offs for wheelchairs. The trail has a view of the lake with some more area visible than from the southwest lot. It winds gently through woods and a small glade.

**When to Visit/Species to Expect:** Anytime. Nearly 200 species have been recorded here. Late fall and winter can be good for waterfowl until the lake freezes. Cackling Geese have been seen here among the Canadas. Greater White-fronted and a small

number of Snow Geese have been recorded, as well as at least 22 species of ducks, including Black and Surf Scoters. Unusual sightings include Common Loon and sightings of Eared Grebes (Horned Grebes have been reported several times.)

Gulls reported include Bonaparte's, Franklin's, Ring-billed and Herring. Tern reports are for Caspian, Black and Forster's.

A good variety of songbirds may be found in migration and during nesting season. The rich habitats accessed by trails have provided sightings of all expected Missouri species of woodpecker, vireos, wrens, thrushes excepting Veery, and 25 species of warblers.

Henslow's Sparrows have been present in the northeast part of the area. There is a good variety of wintering sparrows.

Features of interest to birders: 205-acre Little Dixie Lake has 3 parking areas (southwest, west and southeast portions of the lake) that provide excellent views of the lake and easy access to trails.

Trails offer views of the lake, traverse regenerating oak-hickory forest and old fields and lead to several small ponds.

Boundary Trail (6 miles), accessed from all parking areas, it follows the area's boundary, encircling the area, with occasional loops toward the interior.

Shoreline Trail (4.5 miles), accessed from the 3 lakeside parking lots, extends for varying distances and connects in several places with the boundary trail.

Dixie Woods Nature Trail (.4 mile paved, is accessed from the southeast lakeside parking lot.

At the south end of the area, along CR 228, research fish ponds lie on both sides of the road. These fish ponds are not open to the public, but a gravel pull-in on the north side of CR 228 offers a place to park. Much of the pond area can be viewed from this pull-in, or by walking a few feet along the road. This road carries fairly heavy traffic and the shoulder is narrow.

A slightly raised (about 6 inches) wooden platform along the Shoreline Trail on the east side (more than 1/2 mile from any parking lot) provides a pleasant spot from which to view an extensive portion of the upper lake not visible from any parking area.

**Toilets:** 3 privies at the lakeside parking lots.

**Camping:** None

**Hazards/Limitations:** None noted other than narrow shoulder on CR 228. Assume ticks and chiggers are present in warm months.

Nearby **Birding Sites:** University of Missouri South Farm, Bradford Farm, Turkey Farm Lake.

