

APPLE CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

Allen Gathman, autumn 2014

2,100 acres, Cape Girardeau Co., DeLorme 58, C4

GPS: 37.549978,-89.561554

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

Directions: From I-55 north, take Exit 117 (Old Appleton exit), take State Hwy KK east 3 miles to US 61; 61 south 4 miles to State Hwy CC, then CC east and follow signs. From I-55 south, take exit 105 (Fruitland exit), go 7 miles north on US 61, then 6 miles east on Rt. CC.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Migration for passerines and shorebirds; winter for raptors, woodpeckers, sparrows, finches, waterfowl; summer for waders and other residents.

Features of interest to birders: Wetland (70 acres) accessible on trails from the boat ramp onto Apple Creek. Nearly 1,650 acres of forest/woodland.

Several parking areas off State Hwy CC; the furthest east access on CC leads to the Apple Creek boat ramp. This is generally the best place to start when birding the area. Park at the boat ramp. When water levels are high, there are shallow ponds by the ramp that may have shorebirds and waders. If the river is low enough, a poorly maintained trail leads east along the riverbank to a wetland area. When the Mississippi is high, Apple Creek backs up and this trail is inaccessible. If you walk back up the road from the boat ramp about 300 yards, there is a service road that leads to the west. This road goes through varied habitats including streambeds (usually dry), cultivated fields, meadows, and woodland. About 1 mile in, the road opens into fields, with one fork turning sharply left into the woods. Follow the other fork along the east edge of the field, and it leads into a large wetland area with multiple shallow ponds. This is a good area for waders, waterfowl, shorebirds, and passerines.

Two small parking areas on CC west of the turnoff for the boat ramp provide access to trails into wooded hills.

There is a turnoff from CC to the shooting range; a culvert nearby has harbored breeding populations of Cliff Swallows.

There are two other parking areas on a gravel road off CR 525. These provide access to a 5 mile looping multi-use trail. Three small ponds are accessible from the second parking area, but they have not produced much in the way of waterfowl, etc. for me. This is the best place in the conservation area to see Mississippi Kites in season, though.

Toilets: 1 pit toilet at shooting range

Camping: Primitive (no facilities)

Hazards/Limitations: Major shooting range -- shotgun, rifle, pistol, archery range with very high activity; very loud, on south side of CC. Range closed on Tuesdays.

Nearby Birding Sites: Trail of Tears SP, Tower Rock NA

