A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

BRICKYARD HILL CONSERVATION AREA

Edge Wade, summer 2014

2609.7 acres Atchison Co. DeLorme 14, B-2

GPS: 40.4633900087,-95.5680081498

Site Map: http://extra.mdc.mo.gov/documents/area_brochures/6301map.pdf

MDC owned; for more information call 816-271-3100

Directions: From I-29 Exit 116 go east on Rt. B for one-eighth mile, then turn southeast on Route RA for one-eighth mile to the main area entrance. Staying on Rt. B will take you to a lot near the north boundary with bluff prairie as described below.

The area can be entered on the southeast side by taking US 136 west of Rock Port, and going north on US 275, then left on 185th St.

Brickyard Hill is named for the brick factory built here about 1900 to exploit the 10 to 90 foot deep deposit of loess. The area is a fine example of the yellow, wind-blown loess soil formed as glaciers retreated, and the plants supported by the loess and the fairly dry conditions reminiscent of the steppes further west.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: 120 species have been recorded here.

On a day in mid May, 10 to 15 species of warblers can be found. Catbirds, thrashers, tanagers, grosbeaks and orioles are summer residents. In May and September Olivesided Flycatchers come through, adding variety to the resident flycatcher population that includes Great-crested and Acadians. October brings a good suite of sparrows that may be seen well into November, among them, Grasshopper, Vesper, Lark, and Harris'. Winter can be harsh at Brickyard Hill, but Winter Wren and Golden-crowned Kinglets may liven the day. A good woodpecker population is resident year-round.

Curiously, none of the 29 trip reports as of July 2014 has included any geese or ducks. Waterfowl and many other species, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Hermit Thrush may be added to the checklist by a venturesome birder.

Features of interest to birders: Erosion has formed a rugged terrain of ridges and gullies supporting dry prairies with several plant species that are state listed species of conservation concern. There are six parking lots. The parking lot off Rt. B on the north end of the area is a good place to access dry bluff prairies unique to this part of Missouri and western Iowa.

The 13-acre Charity Lake has a 1-mile moderately difficult hiking trail around it that gives several vantage points to see birds on the lake while traversing a varied terrain.

Rt. RA becomes 165th St. and goes about 1.6 miles from the northwest portion (near the lake), cutting across the area and through private land to a right (south) on G Avenue to reach the south portion of Brickyard Hill.

About 1 mile south along G Avenue from the intersection with 165th St. is a road leading west to a parking area. 125-acre Brickyard Hill Loess Mounds Natural Area in the southwest corner of the area is accessible by trail (an old field road) from this parking area. It has loess prairie plant communities maintained with controlled burns and cutting of woody invasives.

The more than 1,500 acres of forest and woodland is a mix of lowland species like cottonwood and willow and upland hardwood oak-hickory. Savannas, grasslands and old fields add to the matrix of potentially bird-rich habitats.

Toilets: 2 privies. See the camping section below for locations.

Camping: There are primitive sites near the lake with fire rings and a nearby privy. A second camping area with a privy is near the intersection of G Ave. and 125th St. in the southeast portion of the area.

Hazards/Limitations: Rugged terrain, occasional presence of hunters, and the usual precautions appropriate for Missouri weather, are the only limitations noted.

Nearby Birding Sites: Star School Hill Prairie CA, Nishnabotna CA, Langdon Bend Access, Aspinwall Bend CA, Tarkio Prairie CA, Bilby Ranch CA.