

HUZZAH CONSERVATION AREA

Allen Gathman, 2016

6,225 acres Crawford Co. DeLorme 47, E/F-10

GPS: 38.0307136,-91.1903016

MDC owned, leased; for more information call 636-441-4554

Directions: From I-44 Exit 214, go south to Leasburg on Rt. H, then an additional 5 miles south, through Onondaga Cave State Park. The area begins on the right immediately south of the river.

ADA Information: Disability access birding is essentially limited to birding by car and around the 9 parking areas. The area is rugged. See comments below about the undesignated road east of Road 28.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: The site list, as of summer of 2016, is approaching 120 species. Most of the visits have been in migration and early summer, with only 5 reports from December through March. April has only one report. Mid to late summer and autumn have no recorded visits.

Winter reports include Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle and Red-shouldered Hawk, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco and Purple Finch.

The spring/early summer lists are full of warblers. Expect Ovenbird, Blue-winged, Worm-eating, Kentucky, Hooded, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Yellow, Louisiana Waterthrush, Black-and White, Prothonotary, Common Yellowthroat, Pine, Yellow-throated, Prairie.

Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Chipping Sparrow, and Summer Tanager are abundant. Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, White-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo, and Blue Grosbeak are present.

Features of interest to birders: More than 98% of the area is forest and woodland. Non-prairie grassland is listed as 43 acres; old fields (mostly field plots) as 40 acres.

About 7 miles of the Ozark Trail, designated as the Colonel Plassmayer Wildlife Viewing Trail, runs generally north/south through the area. Segments can be accessed from parking areas for short forays. The portion through The Narrows at the southwest end of the area, though running largely along a hogback ridge, may be inaccessible due to high water.

Some of the best birding can be had along the roads. Cave Road and Scotia Ranch Road are wide, allowing careful stopping along straight stretches. Ovenbird and Wood Thrush sound off along Cave Road. Listen for Hooded Warbler along Scotia Ranch Road, especially east of Road 28.

Road 22 (a.k.a. Big Eddy), to the right at the intersection of Cave Rd. and Scotia Ranch Rd., is good gravel to the end, turn-around lot. It passes through pine stands good for Pine and Yellow-throated Warblers.

Road 21 (a.k.a. Pattons Rd.) south off Rd. 22, has an area at a high point with some open, non-wooded land and a great view. Check it at dawn or dusk for nightjars. The road deteriorates after the parking area on the right about a half-mile from the west area boundary and may be impassible due to high water toward the end. Listen for Worm-eating Warblers at the parking area. Check the scrubby area on the north side of the road just east of the lot for a variety of summer birds.

The lower end of Cave Road as it nears two parking areas along Huzzah Creek has some old field/grassland habitat on the south side that gives views of the largest hunk of more or less open, non-wooded, sometimes wetland-like habitat. This area is prone to flooding.

Campground Road and Road 23 to the shooting range and beyond to Courtois Creek, are fairly flat, but low-lying, so prone to flooding. The campground may be walked during the closed season (May 16 to September 14).

Road 28 (a.k.a. Pay David Rd.), running north off Scotia Ranch Rd. has good birding with virtually no traffic (but it leads to private, occupied land, so don't block it). A pull-off on the left provides parking for the trail leading north along a ridge.

The undesignated short road about a half-mile east of Rd. 28 is gated. There is room to park at the gate, and very good, mostly level, undisturbed birding through pines and oak-hickory woods along a ridge on the short road and the two-track trail beyond.

Road 32, a.k.a. Huzzah Club Rd. (mailbox for Huzzah Club at intersection with Scotia Ranch Rd.) is narrow gravel through mixed woods and a former primitive camping area. Listen for Worm-eating and Hooded Warbler along it. It leads to private land, where a turn around is just beyond the gate.

Toilets: 2 privies. One is just off the parking area at Courtois Creek. The other is along Campground Rd. in the area closed from May 16 to September 14, but may be accessed by foot.

Camping: A 16-site primitive camping area is along Campground Rd. is open September 15 through May 15.

Hazards/Limitations: Much of the area is low-lying and subject to flooding. Low water crossings may be impassible after heavy rains.

The unstaffed shooting range (closed Mondays) opens 1/2 hour after sunrise and closes 1/2 hour before sunset.

Expect heavy hunter presence, especially in deer season.

Nearby Birding Sites: Onondaga Cave SP (adjacent, across Meramec River), Meramec SP, Meramec CA, Little Indian Creek CA, Pea Ridge CA

