A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

DANVILLE CONSERVATION AREA
Edge Wade, 2016
1,743 acres Montgomery Co. DeLorme 39, C-7
GPS: 38.8654023,-91.5070065
MDC owned; for information call 573-815-7900

Directions: If driving east, from I-70 exit 170 (Danville), take the south outer road east 2 miles, then Rt. RB south 2 miles to the entrance. If driving west, take I-70 exit 174, then continue west on the south outer road to Rt. RB.

ADA Information: This is a generally rugged, ridge-valley area. Trails (largely old two-track roads) are rated moderate. They are chat/gravel or dirt/grass surface with some fairly steep sections. Birding from or near a vehicle along the road and in parking lots will provide opportunity to see/hear most of the expected species.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: The several small ponds and waterholes don't provide enough water habitat for waterfowl or shorebirds; only Canada Goose, Mallard, Wood Duck, Killdeer and a flyover Lesser Yellowlegs have been reported. This makes the species list of 128 as of spring 2016 all the more impressive for an area mostly upland woodland, bottomland and upland forest, old fields and cropland, and glades accessible with some effort.

As with most areas with narrow ridge/valley topography dominated by deciduous trees and shrubs, passerine migration, both spring and fall, can be very good times to bird here. Wintering sparrows can be fairly abundant, especially in brush piles and in tree/grass ecotones.

Eastern Wood-pewee and Acadian Flycatcher are among the breeders; Olive-sided Flycatcher migrates through. Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos nest; Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireos have been reported in May and June. Both kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper have been found in the cooler months. Thrushes are well-represented, with Gray-cheeked and Swainson's passing through, Hermit showing earlier in spring and later in fall, and Wood Thrush nesting. Also breeding here are Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Blue Grosbeak and Summer Tanager.

The diversity of riparian, woodland and glade habitats makes this an excellent milieu for a birder seeking warblers. Nineteen species have been found here. Yellow-breasted Chats are joined by Blue-winged and Prairie Warblers on and near the glades. The creek areas are good for Louisiana Waterthrush, Prothonotary, Kentucky and Hooded Warbler, Northern Parula and Common Yellowthroat. Oddly, through 2015, no Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian or Bay-breasted have been recorded here—surely due to lack of birder presence at the correct time, rather than lack of birds, for the habitats and location should host these species in migration.

Sparrowing can be fun in a place like this! Fourteen species plus Dark-eyed Junco and Eastern Towhee can be pished up or stumbled upon here by a sparrow-savvy birder over the course of a birding year.

Features of interest to birders: The roads pass brush/tree lines and grassland. Turkey Ridge Rd. to the east goes through a ridge top camping area and then descends through woods to give good views into riparian habitat. Staying straight from Rt. RB, the road goes through an area being cleared of trees and brush in 2016. To the west on Turkey Ridge Rd., more clearing is underway. An active management program of controlled burns, cedar removal and pond improvements will bring some major changes.

Danville Glades Natural Area is in two sections. The 313-acre east section is accessible along the moderately

rated 3-mile loop Danville Glades Trail with a trailhead at the parking lot at the east end of Turkey Ridge Rd., 1.4 miles from the entrance. Take the trail with a narrow, shallow (usually can be crossed with dry feet) creek just beyond the lot. The trail is an elongated loop, going clock-wise. It comes back to the road about 250 yards from the trailhead lot.

The first section of the trail generally follows a creek that looks ideal for Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush and Louisiana Waterthrush. There's an outcropping of blue clay in the creek bank as you come to the first of two points where the trail crosses the utility right-of-way about halfway up the left half of the loop. There are old clay pits on the far side of the trail loop.

The trail diverges from the creek and goes upslope with woods and open areas along the way. At the point the trail nears the power lines again there is a fork. The left fork leads to the north boundary and a field/food crop area. There are some woods that might be productive in migration, but no unusual habitat along the way. The right fork is the continuation of the loop trail.

Unless you are looking especially for grass-loving sparrows, are in the correct season for glade-preferring species, or really like to hike, you may optimize your time and birdfinding potential by backtracking at this point and giving the creek side portion a second look, rather than completing the loop. From this second crossing of the utility right-of-way, the trail follows the ridge top through old-field grassland for a long way before beginning the descent to the road.

The last section of the trail starts downhill through a bit of glade and woods to stream level again. There is a good look at a large glade to the right that begs to be explored. A fork goes left just before reaching the road. It's good for checking for birds along the creek bottom. You must turn around to rejoin the main trail. Staying right at the fork will return you to the road (and another crossing of the shallow creek) with some good woodland and brushy areas along the way. Walking this part of the trail counterclockwise (the lowland and the ascent from this east side) beginning at the road, then backtracking, may be more productive, birdwise/timewise, than reaching it by walking the full loop.

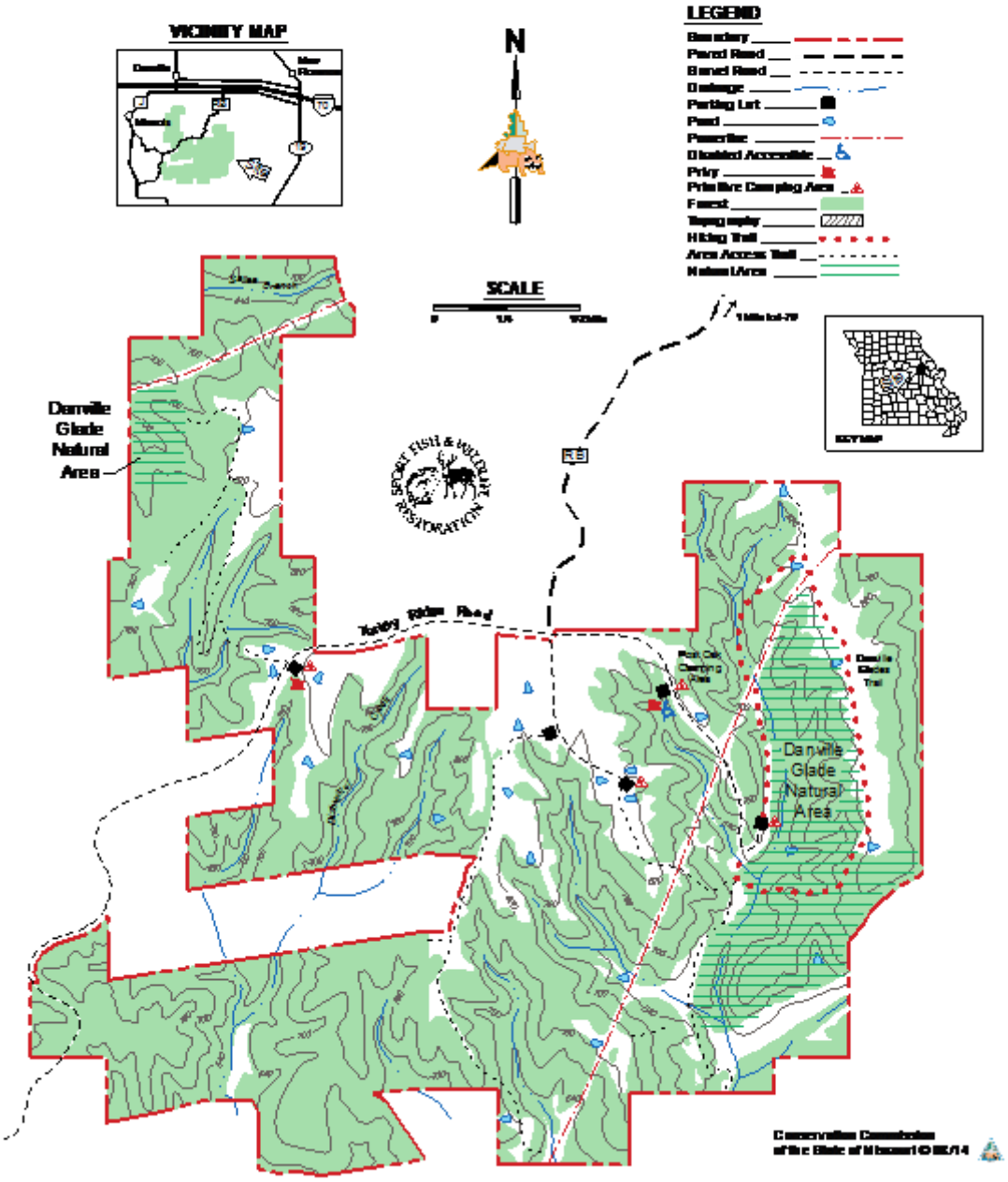
The 48-acre west section of the Danville Glades Natural Area is across Turkey Ridge Rd. from the west most parking lot. Go through the cable/gate at the road and continue through the old pasture and through a second (open) gate. The graveled road/trail makes a right curve soon after reaching the tree line at the far end of this pasture. The trail here gives a very good treetop view of the narrow valley below. Migrating warblers, vireos, etc., will be at eye level for a birder making this short hike. The full trail is 1.5 miles one way (not a loop).

Toilets: Two privies. One is at the primitive Pin Oak camping area along Turkey Ridge Rd. east of Rt. RB; the other in the parking lot on Turkey Ridge Rd. west of Rt. RB. Both are ADA compatible.

Camping: The sites at Pin Oak camping area have fire rings and are on graveled, tree-shaded pull-ins. Two additional designated camping areas are at large parking lots. One, with no facilities, is at the end of the road going straight (south) from Rt. RB; the other, with a privy, is to the west along Turkey Ridge Rd.

Hazards/Limitations: This is a popular deer, turkey and small game hunting area.

Nearby Birding Sites: Graham Cave SP, Loutre Creek Access, Whetstone Creek CA, Reform CA, Daniel Boone CA, Little Lost Creek CA.

DANVILLE CONSERVATION AREA

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
3,136 ACRES