

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

SETTLE'S FORD CONSERVATION AREA-UPDATED 5/3/2010

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6,766 acres Bates and Cass counties . DeLorme 34, I-4,5

MDC owned; for information call 816-655-6250

Directions: The main entrance is off Cass Co. Rt. B, south on Index Rd. To reach Index Rd., go west on Rt. B from Hwy. 7 at Creighton, or east from US 71 at Archie. Index Rd. traverses the central portion of the area and will take you to five of the fourteen parking areas. Three parking areas and the headquarters, all in the northwest quadrant, are accessed via Wagner Rd., off Rt. B west of Index Rd.

The area north of the South Grand River (the Cass Co. portion) is designated as Unit 1. The five pools on this side of the river have "1" as a prefix.

The Bates County parking areas and pools are on the south side of the South Grand River. These are units 2, 3 and 4. Unit 2 is the westernmost portion; Unit 4 is on the east side. There are nine pools and 6 parking lots in these units.

The southwest portion can be entered by going south on Wagner Rd., then west on 355 St., then south on Pollard Rd. (becomes CR 8003 in Bates Co.), then east on CR15004.

To enter the southern units from points in Bates Co., go east from Adrian on Hwy. 18, then north on Rt. Z; the south central portion is reached from Rt. T; and the southeast corner via Rt. BB. These areas can also be accessed by driving west on Hwy. 18 from Clinton and turning north on the appropriate routes.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Anytime, but the draws of this area are waterfowl and migrating shorebirds, so a birding trip when these species are likely to be present should bring good results. However, the area should not be overlooked as a destination during spring passerine migration.

This is a large, underbirded area. Many surprises await birders who venture here and explore it thoroughly.

Features of interest to birders: The headquarters is a staffed office.

The area is roughly 55% upland and 45% bottomland. There are small glades, hardwoods, and old fields. The old channel of the South Grand, intermittent streams, ponds and the 14 wetland management pools make up 2,500 acres of wetlands.

The wetlands are designated "opportunistic." That is, there are water control structures, but no pumps. Water levels are dependent on rainfall. It is a good idea to check conditions when planning a waterfowl or shorebird focused birding trip to Settles' Ford.

A 3.4 mile loop hiking trail through bottomland woods is accessed from a parking area near the south end of McCulloh Rd. Birding can be good from along field roads (foot traffic only).

Toilets: 1 privy at Pool 1-2 off Index Rd.; 1 restroom at the area headquarters off Wagner Rd. (Wagner south, east on 355 St., south on McCulloh Rd.)

Camping: No camping permitted

Hazards/Limitations: Too little water on the area will cause birds to overfly it. Too much water (a real possibility in early spring) floods many of the low-lying access roads.

Most of the area is closed to birders during waterfowl hunting season.

Nearby Birding Sites: Amarugia Highlands CA, Poague (Haysler A.) CA, Montrose CA