

GENERAL WATKINS CONSERVATION AREA

Mark Haas & Edge Wade--Updated spring 2015

1,107 acres, Scott Co., DeLorme 68, A-3

GPS: 37.0753806, -89.6071972

MDC owned. For information, call 573-290-5730

Directions: About half-way between Cape Girardeau and Sikeston. 3 miles south of Benton on Highway 61 or 1.5 miles south of Oran on Highway 77. Additional access is provided by traveling 0.5 miles on County Park Road.

ADA Information: Other than 0.3 miles of gravel road through the woods (between parking lots A and B), the best birding by vehicle is at the nine parking lots, which provide rare pieces of open ground on this heavily forested area. These woodland edges can be very attractive to migrants in spring and fall. Parking Lot A, at the primitive camping area, has a nice stand of pines to view. From Lot E, you can see all of fishing pond #3. Parking Lot I has a good view of hay fields and pasture across the highway. There are no ADA accessible trails.

When to visit/species to expect: Expect a full array of Neotropical migrants during spring and fall migration. Twenty-five warbler species have been sighted here and another 8-10, such as Cape May and Mourning Warblers, are possible for birders visiting during migration.

Summer residents include Prothonotary Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush near the largest lakes, Yellow-throated Warbler in pine stands, and Kentucky Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Acadian Flycatcher in the deep, wooded hollows.

In addition to permanent-resident woodland birds in winter, you can expect Hermit Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, kinglets, and a chance for Red-breasted Nuthatch in the pines.

All of the ponds and lakes on the area have steep wooded shorelines; therefore, they attract no shorebirds and only a few wading birds. The larger lakes will attract a few dabbling ducks during spring migration.

Features of interest to birders: The area is at the south end of a north/south ridge surrounded by Mississippi River delta farmland. It is a natural migrant trap. Neotropical species, notably warblers, thrushes, and vireos, will rest here.

Trees typical of the Appalachians like sweetgum, American beech, cucumber tree, and tulip poplar are mixed with more typical Missouri species in the 1,000 acres of forest.

On the east side of the area, eight parking lots (7 on the perimeter) allow easy access to woods, small lakes, and trailheads. These lots provide open areas for good birding in this densely wooded area. The camping area parking lot, with its stand of pines, is an excellent birding spot.

Two designated trails: Cemetery Ridge is a moderate 1.5-mile one-way through mature hardwoods. Schlosser Loop is an easy 1.5 trail through pines, hardwoods, open areas, and along pond dams. It may be the best birding spot on the conservation area.

The only access to the west side of the area is from a small parking lot on Highway 77. From there, a steep quarter-mile trail will connect you with a ridge top complex of service roads and trails for birding the best open land on the area. This part of the area is good for winter resident and migrant sparrows. Also, there is a signed, mowed path that takes you through the woods to the south side of Lookout Mountain Lake (the largest lake on the area). This quarter-mile path has been especially good birding for migrant warblers.

Picnic Areas: Two areas with grills and tables

Toilets: A portable privy will be maintained at the camping area April 1-December 31 if there are no serious vandalism issues. Convenience stores in Benton are three miles away.

Camping: Five primitive campsites with fire rings, picnic tables, BBQ grills, and gravel pads.

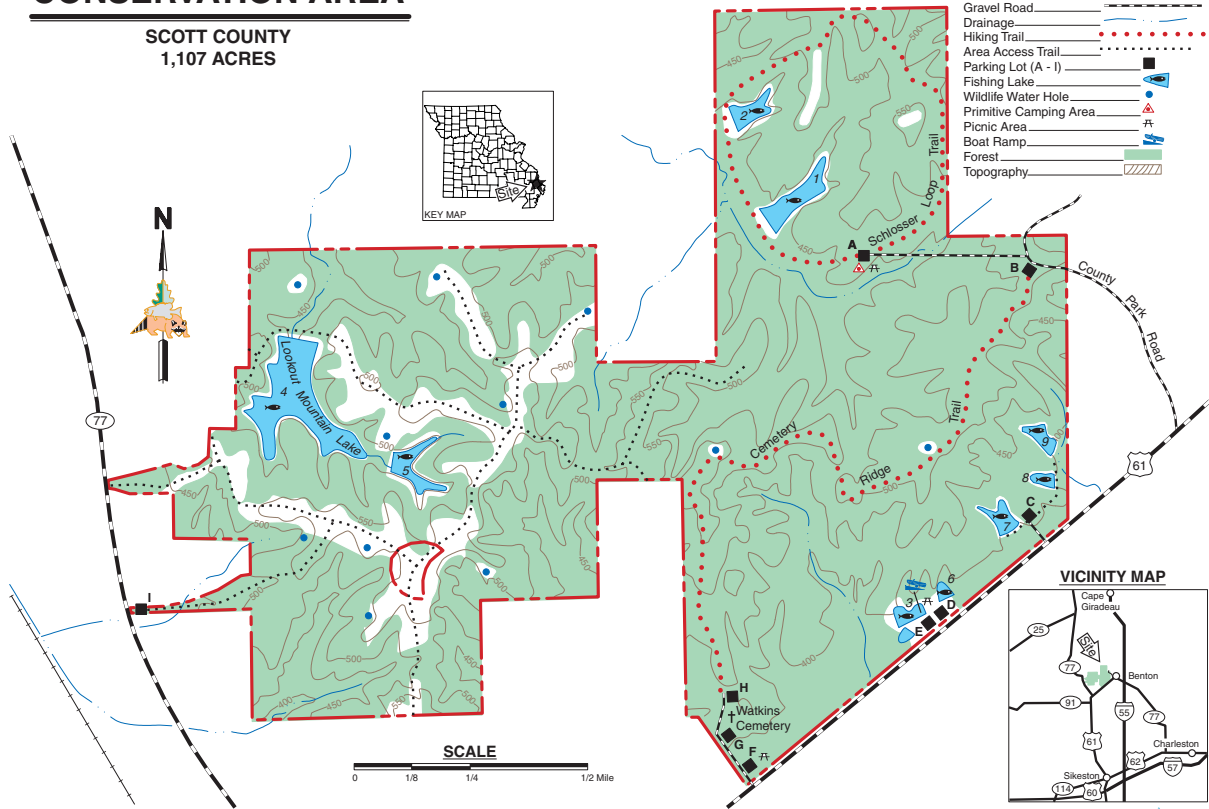
Hazards/Limitations: Caution is urged when walking near steep-sided canyons (some 50-foot deep) eroded in the loess soil. Typical precautions should be heeded, as this area is quite popular with squirrel, deer, and turkey hunters. The area map shows a second access trail from Highway 77 into the west side of the area. Avoid using this trail because there is no trailhead/parking on the highway and the trail can lead you to unintentional trespass onto private land.

Nearby Birding Sites: Sand Prairie CA*, Tywappity Community Lake, Delaney (Robert G.) Lake CA*.

*Birders' Guides online at <http://www.mobirds.org/Locations/SiteGuides.aspx>

GENERAL WATKINS CONSERVATION AREA

SCOTT COUNTY
1,107 ACRES



- LEGEND**
- Boundary
 - Paved Road
 - Gravel Road
 - Drainage
 - Hiking Trail
 - Area Access Trail
 - Parking Lot (A - I)
 - Fishing Lake
 - Wildlife Water Hole
 - Primitive Camping Area
 - Picnic Area
 - Boat Ramp
 - Forest
 - Topography