

## A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

### **HOLLY RIDGE CONSERVATION AREA-JULY 2011**

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**991 acres Stoddard Co. DeLorme 68, D-1**

**MDC owned; for information call 573-290-5730**

Directions: From US 60 at Dexter, go north on MO 25; take Rt. E east from Bloomfield, then south two miles on CR 517. The south side of the area can be reached via gravel roads going north off US 60 or west from Rt. FF

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Holly Ridge CA, like General Watkins CA, is perched on the edge of the high, forested land to the west and north of the flat, virtually featureless lowlands planted in rice and cotton. It has all the characteristics of a "migrant trap" that make a trip during spring or fall an adventure in seeking passerines.

More finds at Holly Ridge are likely, but the current checklist of 135 species includes a good mix of woodland birds--woodpeckers, flycatchers, vireos and warblers. Eastern Screech-Owl and Chuck-will's-widow can be found.

Rusty and Brewer's Blackbirds occur in good numbers among the very plentiful Common Grackles, especially in January and February. Wintering sparrows are plentiful. Eastern Towhees are here year-round. Winter Wren can be expected from October into early April.

American Woodcock display here in February and March and are present in fall.

Summer Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Blue Grosbeaks, and both orioles may be found in spring migration and some during the summer.

Features of interest to birders: 770 acres of forest, 60 acres of warm season grasses, and 101 acres in old fields.

Two ponds (one of 1.8 acres) are accessible by trail from the horse trailer parking area across from the entrance to the archery range parking. Waterfowl and waders may be found near them.

East of parking lot A in the far northeastern section, there is a small patch of moist wetland area where a Sora was observed in the spring of 2011. It should be checked for migrating rails in wet springs.

Of special interest are the two designated Natural Areas. 84-acre Holly Ridge NA is easily accessed by trail from parking lot F on CR 527 (reachable from the west by taking CR 517 south, then going right (east) on CR 517A, then right (north) on CR 519. It was donated by The Nature Conservancy in 1975, protects 26 rare or endangered plant species, including the namesake American Holly. 35-acre Beech Springs NA, includes a perched, a.k.a "hanging" bog, a natural pond on an upland site, surrounded by a stand of large red, black and white oaks. It is reached by

trail from parking lot G on CR 533A, going north from CR519 along the railroad.

For birders with appetites for seeking additional fauna and flora, Holly Ridge is a special place for insects and plants, with new discoveries awaiting the lookers. In the spring of 2011, a find of a *Cicindela scutellaris*, probable *lecontei* sub-species (a Tiger Beetle intergrade) is a record early season report for MO. And on the botany scene, it is well-known for hosting several hard-to find species. In 2009, a genus new to Missouri was discovered in the form of a single plant of *Listera australis*, Southern Tway-blade Orchid

Toilets: 1 privy at the archery range and shelter on the west side, accessed from CR 517 south of Rt. E.

Camping: Primitive camping near the archery range.

Hazards/Limitations: Field archery range.

Nearby Birding Sites: Crowley's Ridge CA, Dexter City Lake, Aquilla Access.