

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

LOCUST CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

June Newman and Edge Wade, May, 2012

3,451 acres Sullivan County DeLorme 22, B/C-3

Owned by MDC; for additional information contact 660-785-2420

Directions (4 access points):

River Road, on the west side of Milan, off MO 5 and MO 6 (running together), is the only entrance route marked with an MDC sign. It provides access to six parking areas (labeled A through F) and some trails in the northern part of the area. At the northwest corner of the area, River Rd. connects with Delta Rd to run south along the west side to reach three lots (G, H and I), then east on Range Rd. to Lot O in the south end near the bank of Locust Creek.

The west and south sides may also be reached from the west side via Creek Ave., going one mile south from Rt. PP to the intersection with Delta Dr. and River Rd. at the northwest corner of the area.

The area may be accessed at the southwest corner, by taking Delta Dr. north from the hamlet of Reger (at the intersection of MO 6 and Rt. Z) to reach the lots listed above.

Ribbon Road, south of Milan along MO 5, is the access point for four additional lots (K, L, M, and N) and trails in the eastern portion of the area.

When to Visit/Species to expect: This is an under-birded area. The potential for warblers, vireos, and flycatchers has not been tested. Spring migrants and summer nesters are lacking from the checklist due to lack of visits by birders, not because of lack of suitable, accessible habitat.

The potential for sparrows has been shown by 12 species on the list as of early 2012.

Features of interest to birders: The area has a good mix of habitats. About one-third is woodland and bottomland and upland forest, including some climax hardwood. Cropland, grassland (many acres planted in native grasses and forbs), old fields and seasonally flooded wetlands make up the rest.

Areas of cedar near oaks may be good places to seek Saw-whet Owls in winter.

A walk along a mowed area from Lot A quickly gives options of access to woods and creek bottom for birders seeking migrants and summer residents.

Several wide, mowed trails into grasslands are accessible by motor vehicle to handicapped persons holding a special permit that may be obtained at the area office.

Note that the five "pools" indicated on the area map are seasonally flooded wetlands. They may be bone dry for extended periods. These are not the same as the 5 ponds. The largest pond is #3 (7 acres) near lot G. Pond #3 can also be viewed with a spotting scope from above, near Lot H.

The 5.7 miles of Locust Creek bisecting the area is a remnant, unchannelized stretch of what was once a typical north Missouri prairie stream. Three experimental management areas along the creek will provide information useful for future channel restoration projects.

Many of the wide, mowed trails into grasslands are accessible by motor vehicle to handicapped persons holding special permit from area office.

Toilets: One, at the north end along River Rd. at lot D.

Camping: Primitive camping allowed on or adjacent to area parking lots. Walk-in, float-in and backpack camping is allowed except during firearms deer and turkey seasons.

Hazards/Limitation: Although some sources list Locust Creek in this area as a canoe stream, low water makes the 5.7 miles of Locust Creek in the area unfloatable most of the time.

The area is managed for dove hunting.

Nearby Birding Sites: Union Ridge CA, Rocky Ford Access, Elmwood Lake (Milan), Morris Prairie CA, Dark Hollow NA, Green City Lake, Sears CL.