

## A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

### **MERAMEC STATE PARK**

**6,896 acres Franklin Co. DeLorme 48, C-1**

**DNR owned. Contact 573-468-6072 for additional information**

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Directions: From I-44 Exit 226 at Sullivan, follow MO 185 south for three miles to the park entrance on the right.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: The Meramec River is recognized as an unusually highly diverse midwestern biological area. Spring and autumn are especially good for migrating passerines. Many species nest in the park or nearby, including Great Blue Heron, Cliff Swallows on the MO 185 bridge, Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Eastern Phoebe in the entrance of Fisher Cave, and a good suite of owls, raptors, flycatchers, wrens, warblers, vireos, tanagers and orioles in the park's diverse habitats.

Features of interest to birders:

Park maps are available at the visitor center. Be sure to get one to help you become acquainted with the many trails and special features of this large park.

River Trail (.8 mile loop) begins at the southern end of the campground near showerhouse #3. Part of the route is along a slough of the Meramec River. Green Herons and kingfishers may be seen. Check out the high earth riverbank for nest holes.

Bluff View Trail (1.5 mile loop) is moderately difficult with access points near picnic shelter #3, the dining lodge, and at the trail shelter on River Trail.

Natural Wonders Trail (1.3 mile loop) begins at the visitor center. It passes through glades, mature forest and overgrown beaver meadows, a diverse habitat spread sure to produce some rewarding views of several species. The wildlife viewing area near the trailhead overlooks a one-acre beaver pond. Be sure to check it for stopover waterfowl, and seek Winter Wren in season.

Wilderness Trail is a 10-mile moderately difficult loop with the 4-mile northern section and 6-mile southern section joined by a connector trail. The trail also crosses MO Spur Rt. 185 twice, so a shorter loop can be walked.

The southern section provides access to a shortleaf pine plantation planted in the 1930s. Summer breeders include Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks and Pine Warbler. In winter, look for Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls, and Pine Siskin, and cross your fingers for erratic Evening Grosbeaks.

In the mature forest along most of the Wilderness Trail, look for Eastern Screech-Owl, Carolina and Bewick's Wren, Great Crested Flycatcher, Ovenbird, Worm-eating Warbler and tanagers in the breeding season.

Cane Bottom is reached from the first road within the park off MO 185 near the park's west

boundary. This is MO Spur Rt. 185, about a mile toward Sullivan from the visitor center. Follow this road to the gravel Cane Bottom Rd., which ends at the Meramec River on the eastern edge of a 50-acre floodplain forest. The river can be viewed from this point, and an old road can be walked into mature bottomland, mid-succession bottomland and a mature toeslope forest. Breeding species include Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Cerulean and Hooded Warblers, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Warbling Vireo.

The large campground area can provide excellent birding when no campers are present. Parking areas near the park store and the boat launch are often good for easy access birding.

Toilets: Flush toilets are in the visitor center, near the cabins and in the campground, and at the camp store.

Camping: There are 210 campsites (some reservable, some first come-first served), see the park website for specifics. Also available are 20 rental cabins, a motel, restaurant and store (in season).

Hazards/Limitations: The Meramec River floods, often causing park closure. Check the status before you go. This popular park may be full of campers and picnickers in the height of summer or on spring and autumn weekends. Ticks and chiggers, common banes for Missouri birders, should be expected here in summer.

Nearby Birding Sites: Meramec CA (adjacent), Little Indian Creek CA, Pea Ridge CA, Washington SP, Long Ridge CA