

## A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

### **NORTHWEST PARKWAY "OLD GIRL SCOUT CAMP AREA"**

**Tom Nagel, summer 2015**

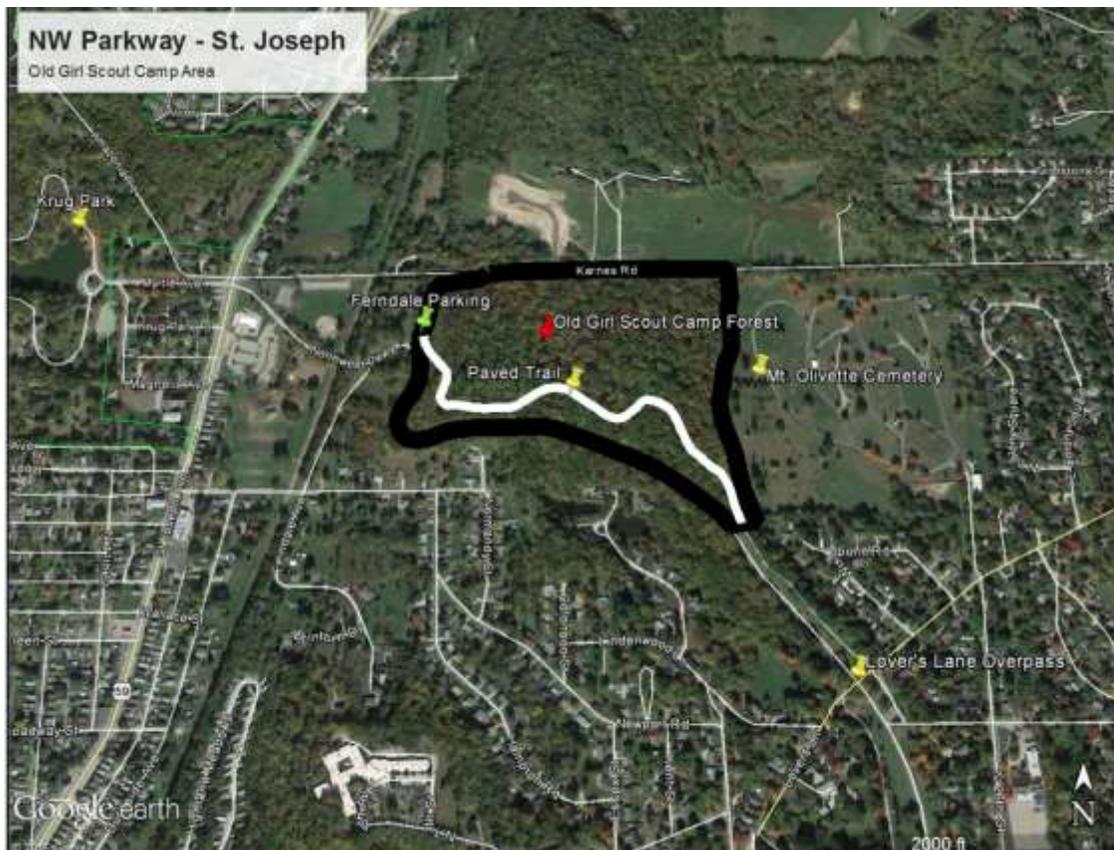
**45 acres Buchanan Co. DeLorme 19, G-8**

**GPS: 39.798134, -94.840563**

**Owned by City of St. Joseph**

**Directions:** Part of the extensive 26-mile Saint Joseph Parkway system, this 45 acre mature, upland, oak-hickory forest is locally referred to by birders as "The Old Girl Scout Camp Area", a name derived from an abandoned camp which once existed here. Located in north central Saint Joseph, it is bounded by Karnes Road on the north, Ferndale Avenue on the west, Northwest Parkway on the southwest & south, & Mount Olivette cemetery on the east. The trail head is located at latitude 39°47'53.67"N; longitude = 94°50'26.53"W on Ferndale Ave.

It is best accessed from either the west via Saint Joseph Avenue/Hwy. 59, or from the southwest via the Northwest Parkway. Via the west, from St. Joseph Avenue, directly across from the entrance to Krug Park on St. Joseph Avenue, go east on NW Parkway ¼ mile to Ferndale Ave. on your left. Via the Northwest Parkway from the southwest, from the point it passes beneath Lover's Lane overpass, go 7/10ths mile to Ferndale Avenue on your right.



Hikers & bicyclists using this area typically park on and parallel to Ferndale Avenue between the Northwest Parkway and the trail head a short distance north on Ferndale (room for 5-6 vehicles) with a small gravel parking lot immediately beyond the trail head to the north between Ferndale Avenue & Karnes Road providing additional parking for about 3 cars.

**ADA Information:** The trail though paved, rises 80 feet in a quarter mile from the parking area described. Someone athletic in a sports wheel chair, or someone in a regular wheel chair with assistance could make it. Without assistance, the grade on this part of the trail would be too steep to meet ADA guidelines.

**When to Visit/Species to Expect:** This site is known to local birders as one of the top areas within the St. Joe city limits to look for migrating spring warblers. In recent years 24 warbler species have been recorded here including Ovenbird, Black-and-white, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, and Wilson's. The uncommon Golden-winged, Kentucky, Bay-breasted, Mourning, Blackburnian, Yellow-throated (pines across from parking) & Canada have also been seen here along with such rarities as the Connecticut and Hooded Warblers. The peak time for finding migrating warblers in this vicinity is the first three weeks of May.

Five species of vireos, both Summer & Scarlet Tanagers, the occasional Olive-sided Flycatcher and Gray-cheeked Thrush, along with the much more common Swainson's Thrush and a variety of other migrating forest songbirds can make this a productive birding area at this time of the year. Cooper's Hawks regularly nest here while broad-winged hawks nest here intermittently.

Among the summer residents are Summer Tanagers, Yellow-throated Vireos, Wood Thrush, and Hairy Woodpeckers. The beginning and end of winter is a good time to look for Golden-crowned Kinglets and the occasional Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

**Features of Interest to Birders:** A 10-foot wide paved trail traverses a half mile through this forest and is the northern end of a much more extensive parkway walking and biking trail to the south and east. From the parking area on Ferndale Avenue, the trail rises approximately 80 feet over the first quarter mile with a convenient bench at the top of the ridge for those needing a break when they reach this point. From there, the next quarter mile to the end of the wooded area is gently rolling with a second bench 150 yards or so down the trail from the first. Visitors will need to back track as the paved trail does not loop back to the starting point.

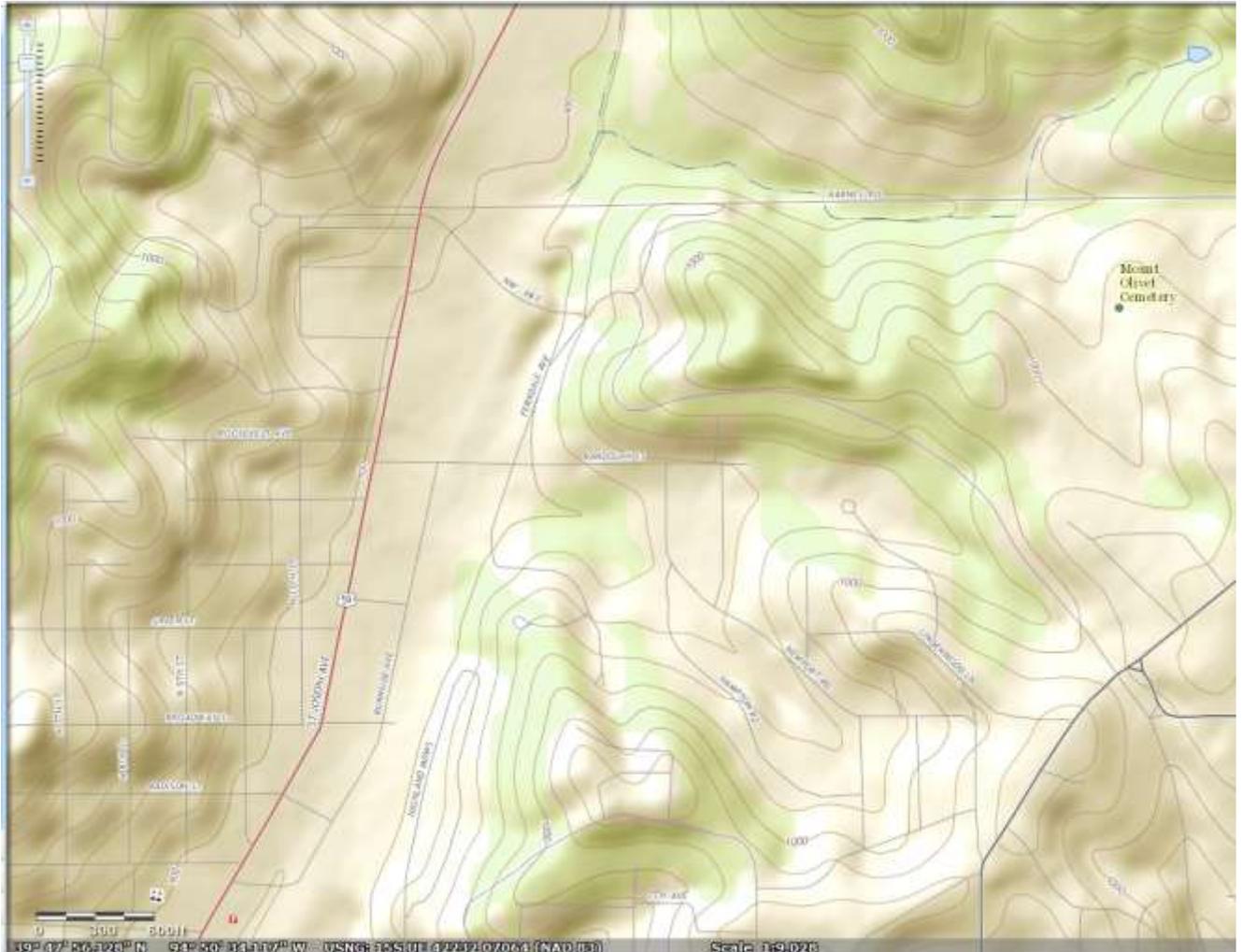
The Saint Joseph Mountain Biking Club has built an extensive mountain bike trail (3+ miles) that does a good job of following the contours of this forested terrain on both sides of the paved trail, intersecting the paved trail at several points. Those deciding to venture from the paved trail to the mountain bike trail system should be cautious as it has many blind corners, though it is generally lightly used when muddy after rains.

**Toilets:** There are no toilets on the area.

**Camping:** There is no camping on the area.

**Hazards/Limitations:** Poison ivy occurs on the mountain bike trail and the wooded edge along the paved trail. Ticks occur here but are not abundant during the spring songbird migration season.

**Topo map of area:**



**Nearby Birding Sites:** To the north, Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge is 35 to 40 minutes away; Honey Creek Conservation Area is about 20 minutes away just to the west of I-29 at exit 65, the Fillmore/RA/Hwy. 59 north exit.

To the south, Bluffwoods Conservation Area is on the east side of Highway 59 about 25 minutes away while a number of oxbow lakes on private land (visible from nearby county roads) are in the Missouri River bottoms on the west side of Highway 59

between Saint Joseph and the turnoff to Bluffwoods CA. Also to the south, Weston Bend State Park is about 45 minutes away via I-29 - take the Highway 273 Weston exit (exit 20) north of Platte City.