

FIERY FORK CONSERVATION AREA

Edge Wade, Della Rhoades, 2018

1608.95 acres Camden Co. DeLorme 44, 5-E

GPS: 38.0817494,-93.0202767

MDC owned; for information call 573-346-2210

Directions: From Camdenton (20.6 miles), take MO 5 north to a left onto MO 7 at Greenview, and follow it to a left (south) onto Granger Lane (Camden Co. 7-17 on some maps) for 2 miles. Stay straight to enter the area; do not turn onto Fiery Fork Rd.

From Warsaw (32 miles) take US 65 south and turn east onto MO 7 toward Climax Springs. From Climax Springs, continue east 4.3 miles, then take Granger Rd. south.

To reach the parking area giving access into the upland western portion described below, turn off Granger Lane onto Fork Park Dr. (a.k.a.7-17K). The first part of this road is through private land. Not far from the turn off Granger Rd. is an improved low water crossing (some damage as of spring 2018, but very passable) Continue to a less improved crossing at the base of the hill where the road enters the conservation area. This crossing might give difficulty to low clearance vehicles. The parking lot is at the top of the hill.

ADA Information: The two privies are accessible. Birding can be good from or near a vehicle. The Toby Hollow primitive campground/picnic area has a flat, grassy surface and is surrounded by good habitat for a variety of species. Time spent sitting or walking slowly here should be well rewarded.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: This is very good birding area with decent access to a variety of habitats via road and trail. It is underbirded, largely due to its distance from other birding sites. A visit in any season will be worthwhile.

The few reported migration period visits indicate Fiery Fork, with its river frontage and good mix of lowland and upland, is a good migration corridor for songbirds. Breeding season records are lacking, but the potential is excellent.

Typical Ozark permanent and seasonal residents are abundant. Woodpecker and sparrow species are well represented.

In Toby Hollow expect woodpeckers, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, warblers and vireos, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, and Indigo Bunting. See the "Features" section for more detail.

Features of interest to birders: The area has about 1,500 acres of mostly oak-hickory forest, much of it even-aged, the result of timbering and poor management with

uncontrolled wildfires in the 20th century private ownership period. Active improved management practices are underway.

Flooding and the resultant gravel build-ups have required a great deal of infrastructure work in recent years. Low water crossings are now much improved. The main campground has been relocated slightly uphill.

On entering the area, the road in has grassland on the right, wooded hills on left. In the lowland area, grassland and forest are easily birded from the main road.

The small parking area just past the first (short) low water crossing is a good place to get out of the car to watch and listen for birds in and near the small riparian/wetland habitat at the crossing.

A little farther, on the left at the first privy, is the entrance to a short road into the Toby Hollow parking/camping/picnic area. This is a great ecotone with wooded hills and open area.

A trail leads uphill from the picnic area (look for the trailhead on your left as you near the end of the road. Maintenance may be minimal. It's a fairly steep climb from the valley at about 720' elevation to the top at about 960'.

The mile-long River Glades Trail, rated difficult because of the steep portions, is reached from the small parking area at end of the short road going uphill near the privy (where the main road makes a sharp right). Even a short walk along it allows birders to encounter species on the hill and slopes not easily found in the valley below.

The short road, just after it leaves the privy, crosses a small spring-fed creek flowing from the base of the bluff on the left (1,000 gallons per day). Here is a small wetland, summer home of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Yellowthroats and others.

On the main road, after the two long water crossings, a short road on the left to the Little Niangua ends at the gravel bar river frontage. Sycamores and other riparian species host warblers and vireos; herons haunt the shallows. Birding can be very good for the length of the road and on the gravel bar.

The upland, western portion at the end of Fork Park Drive (7-17K) often hosts species not seen in the main section. The elevation, fragipan soils, and land use (old fields/grassland) give a distinct character to it that attracts birds not commonly found below. Mature trees are at the parking area; three very small ponds are nearby (the closest just east of the lot). Paths and an old two-track lead into the grassy area.

Toilets: 2 accessible privies at camping areas.

Camping: Primitive, year-round in two areas. Some sites are graveled and have picnic tables and fireplace grates.

Hazards/Limitations: Low water crossings may be gravel choked. Check for undercutting from flood events. There is a steep angle on the small crossing on Fork Park.

Nearby Birding Sites: Climax Springs Towersite*, Ha Ha Tonka SP*, Mule Shoe CA.
* Birders' Guides available.