

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

CANAAN CONSERVATION AREA

Edge Wade edgewatmchsi.com (spring 2013)

1,435 acres Gasconade Co. DeLorme 47, A-6

MDC owned; for more information call 573-884-6861

Directions: The main entrance is 9.3 miles south of Mt. Sterling at the Rt. A/US 50 junction, or about 4 miles north from Bland (there is a large sign), then east 1.5 miles along Boettcher Rd. Boettcher runs along the north side of the area, then turns north just beyond the first parking area. To reach additional parking areas, stay straight onto Bock Rd.

Entrance to the south portion is off Rt. A, 11 miles south of the Rt. A/ US 50 junction at Mt. Sterling. This is about 1.2 miles north of Bland. This road is not well marked. There is a mailbox with large numbers: 3684. The small brown road sign behind the mailbox is A2 280. The road goes through private land before reaching the western boundary of the conservation area.

A third access point is well to the east from Rt. A, off CR 432, a.k.a. Rehmert Rd.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: This area is sadly underbirded. The limited number of visits reported to the CACHE database indicate fine potential for exciting spring and fall passerine migration birding. Many summer nesters may be found along the extensive trail system. Winter birding can also be rewarding.

Walking along the roads, the trails, or the stream banks brings one to a fine diversity of habitats hosting a full array of Missouri species awaiting the exploring birder. Look for Winter Wrens in season, a full suite of migrating and nesting warblers, flycatchers, vireos, tanagers, and sparrows.

Features of interest to birders: Canaan has a very good trail system, amounting to more than 10 miles of designated trails, and many more miles of paths.

Much of the area was once in farms, part of the German resettlement movement of the 1850s. Taking a 2-track old road may lead to a small cemetery or abandoned homestead, and the habitat niches they provide.

The land is mostly forest and woodland (more than 1,100 acres). There are few acres of really large tree, but the variety is broad enough to support niches that attract diverse birds. Cropland is about 150 acres, old fields about 100 acres, and non-prairie grasses make up about 50 acres. There are two fairly large creeks, two fairly large springs (200 and 500 gallons per day), and a small fen.

Any of the trails can be rewarding to birders. Note that none make short loops. The trails

and paths from the lots on the north side lead to springs and creeks, into old fields, and uphill into woods.

Short walks from any of the parking lots on the north side of the area (along Boettcher and Bock roads) lead to creeks, springs and woodland.

The portion of trail accessed from the first lot on the south road (A2 280), .4 miles east of Rt. A, skirts woods and old fields, providing easy access to that interface of habitats and the many species that frequent the ecotone.

A favorite is the Clear Creek Trail that begins from the end of the south access road (A2 280), at .7 miles from Rt. A. There is a parking area/turn around. This trail is flat, runs along the creek and gives easy access to bottomland, including the small fen. If rain has fallen recently, the ford of Clear Creek can present challenges to divert attention from the many birds present. An alternate route is available by taking the first right fork onto an old two-track to walk through large trees and open areas (Blue-winged Warblers and tanagers abound).

A path from the lot at the southeast corner of the area along Rehmert Rd. leads downhill to the last lot on Bock Rd.

Toilets: None

Camping: Two designated primitive camping areas are at parking lots. One is at the second (large) parking area along Bock Rd. The last lot off Bock Rd. is also used for camping, although it is not so designated. A more developed (gravel pull-ins) camping area is at the end of the road that runs along the south side. It is near the trailhead for the Clear Creek Trail.

Hazards/Limitations: There are no short loop trails from parking areas, so retracing a walk or having a vehicle at the far end of a hike may be necessary. The official trails are multi-purpose and horse riding is popular here. Past problems with ATVs have led to signage advising they are not to be used on the area.

Nearby Birding Sites: Cooper Hill CA, Mint Spring CA and Access, Spring Creek Gap CA, Freeburg Towersite, Paydown Access.