

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

MILLSTREAM GARDENS CONSERVATION AREA

Edge Wade, summer 2015

916 acres Madison Co. DeLorme 57, C-7

GPS: 37.5723487,-90.465530

MDC owned; for more information call 573-290-5730

Directions: From Fredericktown, Go 8 miles west on MO 72. Turn left (south) at the MDC sign onto PR 9534. From Ironton, go about 9 miles east on MO 72.

At .5 miles down PR 9534, a left (east) turn will take you to the parking lot for the paved Tiemann Shut-ins Hiking Trail discussed below. Stay straight on PR 9534 to continue to a fork where staying left leads to the pavilion and the right option leads to the archery range and the river access (canoe put-in).

About 60% of the area lies south of the St. Francis River. There is one parking lot on Rt. D. south of MO 72. The south portion is not discussed in this guide.

There is natural beauty here that will likely distract even the most avid birder from the intensity of birding. Millstream Gardens would be a solid contender for a top ten position in a scenic beauty contest among Missouri conservation areas, even without the Tiemann Shut-ins. The uplands have oak, hickory and pine, the lands toward the river support elm, maple and ash, all contributing to scenes worthy of the efforts of a most demanding artist's efforts to capture.



The pine with the curlicue trunk at the pavilion. St. Francis River shut-ins in the background.

ADA Information: Most of the area's best features are not accessible by vehicle. The trails have difficult portions.

Features of interest to birders: One birder's comments were "awesome habitat variation." The area is mostly wooded, with an open area around the pavilion overlooking the river at the 20 acres of shut-ins that are part of the 40-acre St. Francis River Natural Area. The St. Francis River crayfish is a species unique to this river basin.

Tiemann Shut-ins, the heart of the St. Francis River Natural area, is a smaller version of the stream-narrowing igneous rock-strewn river gorges found at Castor River Natural Area, also in Madison Co. (an MDC property), and Johnson's Shut-Ins SP (a DNR site) in Reynolds Co., and are similar to the granite and sandstone shut-ins of Pickle Creek in Ste. Genevieve Co. When experiencing these shut-ins, the intake of the senses of sight, smell, and hearing may evoke thoughts of landscapes of western states

The 1-mile paved Tiemann Shut-ins Hiking Trail follows a fairly gentle grade from the parking area on the first left-hand road off PR 9534 down to an overlook at the St. Francis River with a view of the shut-ins in the natural area. The paved portion is not a loop. Unless you are keen for a long hike, when you reach the overlook, the shortest route to your car is to retrace your steps to the trailhead.

At the overlook, the east-west natural surface Turkey Creek Trail parallels the river. Heading west for 1/3 mile will bring you to the privy and parking lot near the pavilion at the end of the left fork (still a good distance uphill to return to the Tiemann Shut-ins trailhead). Heading east from the overlook, the trail continues for a half-mile within the conservation area then connects with another half-mile trail leading to the Silver Mines Recreation Area within the Mark Twain National Forest, managed by the U.S. Forest Service (call 573-364-4621 or see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/mtnf/recarea/?recid=21840> for additional information)

When to Visit/Species to Expect: This seldom-birded area would be visited daily if it were close to avid birders. The natural beauty awaits any time of year. The birds are there, too, and the potential for a good variety is present any time of year. The checklist (as of summer of 2014) of 86 species includes many that are found only in limited habitats or timeframes in Missouri.

Even on a chilly, rainy January day a birder may be rewarded with Winter Wren, Fox Sparrow, Belted Kingfishers and Bald Eagles. March trips have included Wood Ducks, American Woodcock, Barred Owl, Hermit Thrush, Fox, Savannah, Swamp, Field, White-throated and Song Sparrows. Birders visiting in late June have found as many as 51 species in a 3-hour trip. Species reported in June include Acadian Flycatcher, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush Prairie, Pine, Kentucky and Yellow-throated Warbler, Blue Grosbeak and Henslow's Sparrow, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed, White-eyed and Warbling Vireos. A late November trip report includes Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, and Hermit Thrush. December birds include Golden-crowned Kinglet, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Hermit Thrush.

Toilets: 3 privies, near main parking lots

Camping: No designated facilities

Hazards/Limitations: Birders may wish to avoid the hubbub of the Missouri Whitewater Championships based at Millstream Gardens CA, typically held in March. Check the date for the annual event.

The field archery range provides an area of good birding, but do not enter the archery trail if bowmen are present.

Nearby Birding Sites: Roselle Access, Thompson Ford Access, Fredricktown City Lake, Iron Mountain City Lake, Bismarck Lake, Elephant Rocks SP.

