

A BIRDERS' GUIDE TO MISSOURI PUBLIC LANDS

PERRY COUNTY COMMUNITY LAKE

Mark Haas, March, 2012

310 acres Perry Co. DeLorme 58, A-1

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

Directions: The lake is at the west city limit of Perryville. To enter at the north end, near the dam, take Rt. T to CR 700. The upper end is reached from CR 702 off the I-55 West Outer Road.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: As of March, 2012, there are 127 species on the checklist. Waterfowl are well represented, with 14 species of ducks seen on the lake during this past fall through early spring. Canvasback and Ruddy Duck were among those most frequently observed. Double-crested Cormorant, Horned Grebe, and Bonaparte's Gull were also observed during this period.

Resident woodland birds have been joined over winter by Yellow-rumped Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Winter Wren. Eastern Phoebe and Belted Kingfisher are among the summer residents likely to linger through the winter. Eight sparrow species, including Fox, Savannah, and Chipping Sparrows, were seen near the lake during the fall through early spring.

An American Woodcock was displaying on January 30, 2012, and was joined by several others in courtship displays through February and March. Late last summer, a few small mudflats were exposed in the upper end of the lake, and attracted migrating shorebirds.

A nice mix of raptors has been seen around the lake. There's a good chance to see Osprey in fall and spring and Bald Eagle fall through spring. The potential of finding migrating warblers, vireos and other passerines has only been lightly tapped.

Features of interest to birders: The 103-acre lake can be viewed from the 4 parking lots, the fishing dock at the north end, the 2 boat ramps (north end and east side), and the four fishing jetties on the east side. The parking lot between the dam and north boat ramp is, by far, the best birding spot. Besides a great view of the lake, it's adjacent to the grassy field attractive to American Woodcock, raptors, and most sparrows. The pine trees lining the lot attract warblers, Red-breasted nuthatch, and a host of other species. This lot is also most popular with non-birders, so come early in the morning or on a day the weather discourages anglers.

The south fishing jetty (near the east boat ramp) has the best view of the upper end of the lake for Wood Duck, other dabblers, and shorebirds. The short entrance road, from CR 700, is definitely worth a walk. It passes between brushy or grassy fields with scattered pines, shrubs, and hardwoods—a diversity of habitats that means good birding.

Another great way to view the lake, and also see woodland birds, is the 4-mile-long loop shoreline trail. The trail goes through mature hardwoods, cedar groves, brushy areas, and (on the west side) past a small pond/marshy area. There are five lake-side benches along the trail, which is easy walking, and it passes through all four parking lots.

A good way to walk the trail, especially when viewing waterfowl, is to cross the dam, follow the trail around the two major coves on the west side, and then retrace your steps back to the dam parking lot. This tactic often results in new sightings for the day—coming and going.

Toilets: One privy near each of the two boat ramps

Camping: None; 2 small picnic areas. A private campground is nearby on the I-55 Outer Road.

Hazards/Limitations: Fishing and sightseeing activity can be heavy. A small archery range is at the south end. Housing developments adjoin the area boundary at several locations.

Nearby Birding Sites: Ball Mill Resurgence, Red Rock Landing CA, Tower Rock CA, Seventy-Six CA, Maintz Wildlife Preserve, Apple Creek CA, Hawn SP, St. Joe SP.