

BALLARD WMA WILDLIFE VIEWING TRAILS

Ballard Wildlife Management Area is located in Ballard County and is part of the Mississippi River floodplain. It contains approximately 8,200 acres comprised of bottomland hardwoods, interspersed with numerous oxbow lakes, tupelo and cypress swamps, grasslands and agricultural fields. The management emphasis for the area is to provide wintering habitat for migrating waterfowl. However like all natural wetland ecosystems it is rich in wildlife diversity.

The area is closed to visitation from October 15 to March 15 annually. It contains **25 miles of maintained gravel roads** where visitors may access the area March 16 to October 14 to view wildlife. There is a **2 mile driving loop** that is open year round that takes you to elevated viewing platforms and photography blind located on Goose Trap Slough. A **1/2 mile interpretive walking trail** with an elevated wetland walkway accesses Beaver Dam Slough and an adjacent native grass field provides visitors with a glimpse of native grass prairie that was once a larger part of the landscape in Kentucky.

VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES at Ballard are numerous for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Nesting bald eagles in spring and summer, migrating bald eagles in winter, migrating and nesting neotropical songbirds in spring/summer/fall, large concentrations of migrating waterfowl in fall - late winter and transient white pelicans in spring can be seen here. Wild turkey and mourning doves are also abundant.

White-tailed deer and raccoon are some of the most common mammals at Ballard. Persistent viewers may catch a glimpse of a coyote, bobcat, or beaver.

Eight species of frogs and toads are known to occur here including the Cricket frog, Fowler's toad, Cope's gray treefrog, Green treefrog, Upland chorus frog, Bullfrog, Green frog, and Southern leopard frog. **2 species of lizards** are found here including the Five-lined skink

and Broadheaded skink. **13 species of snakes** are known from the area including the western cottonmouth, Mud snake and Rough green snake. **3 species of salamanders** are known from the area including the Smallmouth salamander and Western Lesser Siren. The Three-toed Amphiuma is now extremely rare or absent from the area. **12 species of turtles** including Smooth and Spiny softshell turtles, Painted turtle, Mississippi map turtle and Ouachita map turtle can be found here.

BEAVER DAM SLOUGH:

Beaver Dam Slough is an excellent example of Cypress Slough and Bottomland Hardwood Forest habitat. It contains tree species typical of both including Baldcypress, Tupelo, Willow Oak, Swamp White Oak, White Oak, Pin Oak, Cherry Bark Oak, Shumard Oak, Red Maple, Sweet Gum, Black Gum, Shellbark Hickory, Pawpaw, River Birch, Persimmon, Sassafras, Hackberry, Tulip Poplar, Sycamore, and Honey Locust. Wetland plants including Buttonbush, Arrowhead, Duck Weed and Lizard's tail are also abundant. **The 1/2 mile interpretive trail is located here.** Parking is available and a portion of the trail leading to the walkway into Beaver Dam Slough is accessible to the physically challenged via a hard gravel surface. Caution is suggested on the remainder of the interpretive trail due to the soft earth surface. Access to the walkway is restricted to 10 viewers at a time.

Here you will find Prothonotary warblers that have taken up residence in nest boxes in spring and summer. Listen for the "Sweet, Sweet, Sweet, Sweet" song of the male. Also listen for the Bzzzzzz, Bzzzzz, Bzzzz, Zip song of the male Northern Parula. Wood ducks and their broods can be seen here in spring through early fall before migration. Look for other puddle ducks during fall and winter migrations. Don't forget to look for the other wildlife species listed in the **VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES** section of this brochure while visiting Beaver Dam Slough.

GOOSE TRAP SLOUGH:

The 2 mile driving loop provides opportunities to view wildlife from your vehicle and access to Goose Trap Slough. The man-made

impoundment is maintained to provide resting habitat for wintering ducks and Canada geese. It was once the site for goose trapping/banding on the area. Now it provides the wildlife viewer with opportunities to view nesting bald eagles in spring and summer and waterfowl in fall through late winter when the impoundment is flooded. There is an elevated, covered viewing deck provided that is accessible to the physically challenged. Also a metal viewing deck and a photography blind are available to the wildlife viewer at the site.

BIRDING ON INTERIOR ROADS:

The 25 miles of interior maintained roads give birders an excellent opportunity to access some of the best birding in the state as well as viewing of other wildlife. During spring and summer grassland and wetland bird species abound. The habitat varies from natural wetlands to man-made wetlands, native grass plantings to maintained fields for hay production and agricultural fields of wheat, corn and soybeans. Dickcissels are common in the native grass stands, hay fields, crop field borders and along the edges of empty sloughs and wetlands. Prothonotary warblers, Acadian flycatchers and Northern parulas can be found in the woodlots and bottomland hardwoods adjacent to natural sloughs and oxbows. **Mitchell Lake** can provide excellent opportunities to view shorebirds and wading birds including Great blue herons when water levels are low during late summer and fall. Also Fish crows and Mississippi kites can be seen West of Mitchell Lake along the gravel roads.

ACCESSIBILITY:

It is advisable to obtain a map of the area before your visit by contacting the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources at 1-800-858-1549 or pick up a copy at the Ballard WMA office. Ballard is susceptible to flooding during high water events. **The area may also be closed for special hunting events.** Contact the Ballard office for information concerning area accessibility by calling 1-270-224-2244, Monday -Friday, 7:00AM to 3:30 PM Central time.