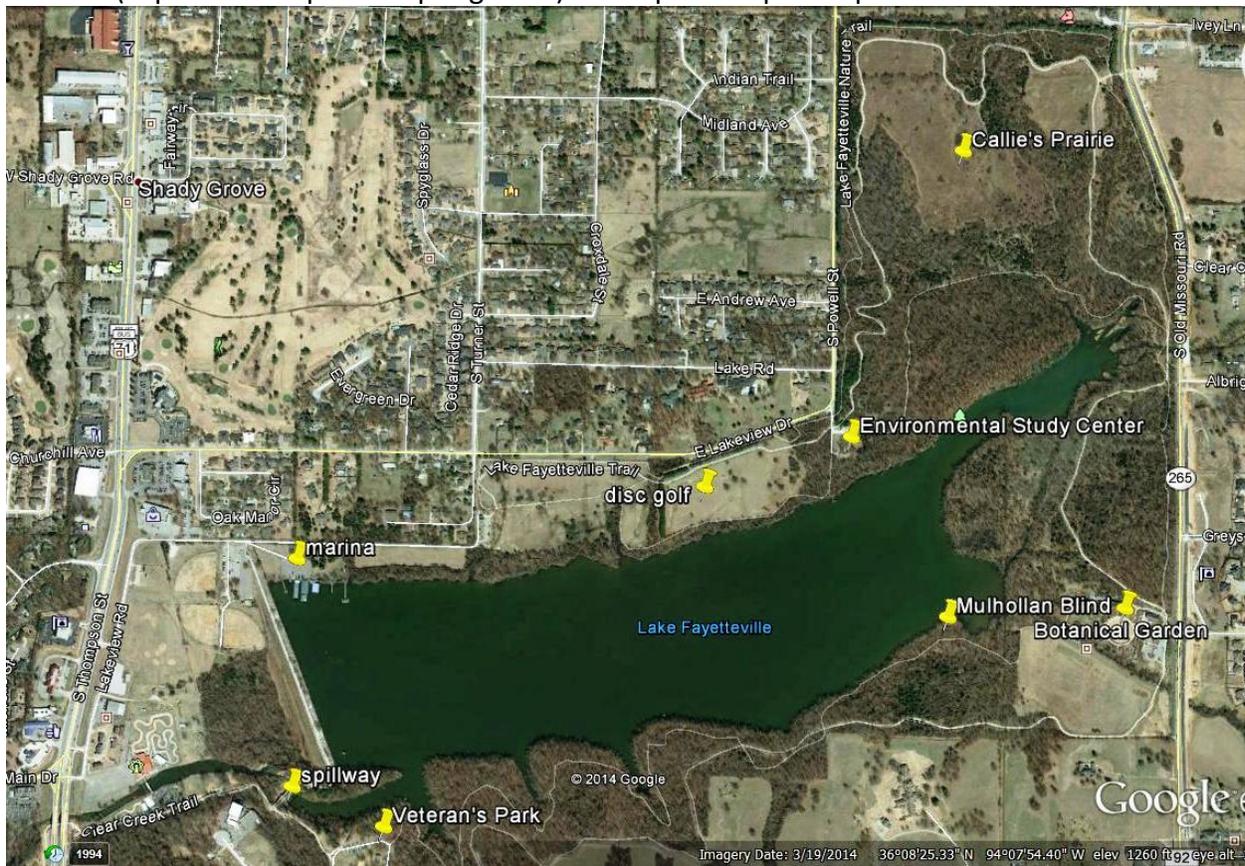


BIRDING Lake Fayetteville

Lake Fayetteville is an impoundment of Clear Creek, created as a water supply for Fayetteville in 1949. With development of other water supplies, especially Beaver Lake, Lake Fayetteville was no longer required for its original purpose. Subsequently, it has become one of the most popular public recreational sites in northwest Arkansas. Its ready access and variety of habitats also make it one of the premier places in Arkansas for watching birds.

Lake Fayetteville comprises 458 acres of land surrounding 194 acres of water. Public amenities include a boat dock and fishing pier, softball complex, disc golf course, volleyball courts, pavilions and children's play areas, numerous walking and cycling trails, Lake Fayetteville Environmental Study Center (and an associated observation deck on the lake), the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, Callie's Prairie, and the Mulhollan Waterfowl Blind (expected completion spring 2015). A map of the park is presented below.



Access

Lake Fayetteville lies between the cities of Fayetteville and Springdale, east of highway 71B and west of highway 265 (Old Missouri Road and Crossover Road). The west end of the lake can be accessed from off 71B

(about 0.5 mile north of the Northwest Arkansas Mall). There is a parking lot by the ball park and at the bait shop. The southern section of Lake Fayetteville can be accessed from Veterans Park. From 71B take Zion Road and turn north on Vantage. To get to the east end of the lake continue on Zion and turn north on highway 265, from here drive north to the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. A fee is charged to enter the garden but the parking lot is free. From here trails run north and west around the Lake.

The Environmental Study Center can be reached by turning east from 71B onto Lakeview Drive. After about one mile, pull off the road where it makes a 90 degree turn at the intersection of Lakeview and Powell. Parking at the Environmental Study Center is OK during posted open hours.

Public transportation includes a stop within ½ mile of the lake.

Lake Fayetteville Park now has a completed hardtop trail of approximately 6 miles. In addition, there is an unpaved “nature trail” around the lake often used by cyclists; all users are welcome. Trail maps are available on the City of Fayetteville website.

Birding locations



Birding can be good anywhere around the lake but the following areas are particularly worth visiting:

Boat dock, dam, spillway, Veterans Park

Mature pine trees by the boat dock bait shop attract species that may be difficult to find elsewhere. The dam is the best location to observe water birds at the west end of the Lake. The spillway area is excellent

for migrants and the hardtop Clear Creek Trail provides easy access to the stream and riparian area below the dam. Veterans Park provides access to mature deciduous woodland.

North shore, Environmental Study Center, bottomland woods



The narrow fringe of woodland along the northern shore is often good for migrants in spring and fall. The woodland, clearings, and lake edge by the Environmental Study Center is perhaps the best area for birding at Lake Fayetteville because anything can turn up, especially during migration. A short asphalt trail leads to a platform with excellent views of the water birds that frequent the lake's eastern portion. Most of the lake is visible with a telescope.

It is possible to follow three trails in an easterly direction to bottomland woods. One trail winds around the northern side of a hill east of the environmental center. This trail passes through woodland, edge, and overgrown shrub type habitats. Another trail goes directly over the hilltop and a third follows the rocky edge of the lakeside.



Callie's Prairie

Callie's Prairie is located in the northern loop of the Lake Fayetteville Trail, north of the Environmental Study Center. It is named for Callie Henson, a member of the pioneer Henson family that owned the land for the 77 years before it was purchased by the City of Fayetteville in 1949. As a young woman in 1865, Callie Henson admired Clear Creek, associated springs, and beautiful grassland fields. This is the landscape viewed along Butterfield Overland Mail Trail as described by a traveler in 1859. The trail forms the eastern boundary of Callie's Prairie.

Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association took on the task of restoring 27 acres of the old Henson Farm to original upland prairie starting in 2009. Volunteers removed invasive plants and the City of Fayetteville began controlled burning. Existing Tallgrass Prairie plants like Indian grass, big bluestem grass

and others were encouraged. Native seeds have been used to restore areas overwhelmed by non-native species.

Thickets within the restored grassland are attractive to many open country species. For example, it is one of the better places to find Field Sparrows and Painted Buntings in summer.

Mulhollan Waterfowl Blind

The Mulhollan Waterfowl Blind is located on the southeastern shore of Lake Fayetteville, adjacent the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. It is accessible from the Lake Fayetteville Trail. Its use is free and open to the public. The blind honors the memory of Dr Paige Mulhollan, a Fort Smith native and former professor at UA-Fayetteville, who was a member of the Board of Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, early Director of the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO) and an avid birder. Upon retirement, he and wife Mary Bess became active in Audubon at Hilton Head Island in South Carolina, then in Fayetteville with NWAAS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: “The History of Lake Fayetteville” by H. David Chapman in Flashback, volume 61, number 3, fall 2011, pages 83-115. (Winner of the fifth annual Walter J. Lemke Prize). AND “The birdlife of Lake Fayetteville” also by H. David Chapman. (Manuscript on file at UA-Mullins Library).
--Prepared by H David Chapman and Joe Neal, December 2014

