

# MADISON COUNTY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

OZARK NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER  
BEAR HOLLOW NATURAL AREA  
KINGS RIVER



McIlroy Madison County Wildlife Management Area is a project of Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Within its 14,435 acres is Bear Hollow Natural Area, administered by Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. Within Bear Hollow is the campus of Ozark Natural Science Center, a private facility providing programs for children and families with a focus on natural history education.



The WMA is located adjacent Highway 23 in northern Madison County, 12 miles north of Huntsville (just north of Forum on 23) and 13 miles south of Eureka Springs. It encompasses a series of ridges and hollows typical of the Ozarks in northwest Arkansas. Ridgetops (up to 1600 feet) are dominated by stands of native shortleaf pines that are managed with timber harvest and prescribed burning. The hollows (1100 feet)

feature mixed hardwood species and small streams, tributaries to the Kings River which borders on the east. Bluff lines outcrop in these areas.

The land within this WMA was purchased with fees paid by hunters. Hunting is the primary activity here. Turkeys, Deer, bears, bobwhite quail, squirrels, and crows may all be hunted in season. There are also 23 primitive camping areas and 136 wildlife openings. Everyone is welcome in these areas, not just hunters.

For more information about the WMA, contact AG & F's Russellville Regional Office toll free: 877 967 7577. Birders are welcome, of course. It is wise to consider hunting seasons and take precautions when necessary. A handy map can be downloaded from the AG & F web page for this WMA.

The area can be explored from graded public roads that provide good access to all typical habitats. AG & F has also constructed a series of gated roads for administrative purposes. These are closed to general vehicle traffic, but can be explored on foot. Again, take special precautions during hunting seasons.



If you visit the WMA, consider a trip out to the Kings River Overlook and Trail. This is one of the most spectacular landscapes in Arkansas. And also pretty spectacular is what is going on down along the river itself. Starting in 2010, The Nature Conservancy has acquired 7 river miles along the Kings, forming the Kings River Preserve. With its scenery, high water quality, and wild landscape, the Kings has become one of the region's best rivers for floating, fishing, and probably in future years, birding. Water quality is high enough to support good



populations of smallmouth bass, a much prized game fish, and northern hogsucker, a fish very sensitive to water quality. A float trip of only 5 miles near Madison County WMA in June 2013 produced a list of 54 bird species, including Louisiana Waterthrushes all along the river and a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in a small tributary.

One of the main roads through the WMA is Madison County 1250. At one point it branches north, towards Bear Hollow and Ozark

Natural Science Center on Road 1305. From this intersection, ONSC is about 1.8 miles. This is a good section to explore the many interesting habitats within the WMA.

Bear Hollow NA includes 397 acres and over 7 miles of primitive trails. Access to Bear Hollow is administered by ONSC.

ONSC was established in 1990 to provide environmental education opportunities for the people in the Ozarks. It is a private facility with students and families coming for various periods, from single day school trips, to longer overnight stays on campus. After more than 20 years, ONSC has hosted over 14,000 students.

Because of the presence of students, visitors must receive permission to use the trails associated with the campus (no such permission is required on the rest of the WMA).

You can call ONSC (479 789 2754) and request permission to visit the campus. Check out ONSC and its many programs at [www.onsc.us](http://www.onsc.us).

Adam Schaffer, birder and an instructor at





ONSC, found at least 5 Red Crossbills on the Conifer Trail at ONSC in February 2013. Subsequently, additional flocks of Red Crossbills were observed elsewhere within the WMA. Analysis of audio recordings showed they were Ponderosa Pine Crossbills (Call Type 2).

Birders working as instructors at ONSC have put a lot of their field data in Audubon's ebird program, with ONSC listed as an Arkansas "hotspot". You can check these data for birding opportunities throughout the year.

Joanie Patterson, Adam Schaffer, and other instructors have documented presence of over 100 bird species on the ONSC campus. Nesting season birds include Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Whip-poor-will, all woodpeckers breeding in the state, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Wood Thrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Pine Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and many more.

Birds recorded on the ONSC campus reflect bird diversity generally within the WMA.

--Joe Neal, with Joanie Patterson and Adam Schaffer, March 2013 (revised June 2013)