

# BIRDING AND TRAILS AT COMPTON GARDENS & CONFERENCE CENTER CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART



**LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS** Both places are in Bentonville in Benton County and adjacent to one another, with a short trail connection.

**Compton Gardens** is at 312 N. Main in Bentonville. From I-540, turn at Bentonville exit 88, turn west on E. Central Ave. toward downtown Bentonville, go north on Main St. three blocks. The garden entrance will be on your right.

**Crystal Bridges** is next door. The Museum is located on Museum Way, off NE J Street. From I-540 exit 88, go west on Central Avenue for about 0.3 miles to DeShields Boulevard. Right turn. After you cross J Street, DeShields will become Museum Way.

## **BIRDING (AND BOTANIZING) COMPTON GARDENS AND CRYSTAL BRIDGES**

These adjacent areas pack interesting habitat within an accessible package. Compton Gardens is full of native plants and highly varied habitat within a few acres.

Crystal Bridges trails includes outdoor art and native Ozark woodlands. Both have interesting streamside habitats. Overall, for woodland habitats in an urban setting, these are good places to visit. An easy walking-biking trail, accessible for those with mobility impairments, connects the garden with the museum.

These areas have been only irregularly birded, so there is more to learn about them. The habitat is bound to increase in value as more and more of northwest Arkansas is developed for housing, roads, and business.



Compton Gardens is built around the Compton family home. Dr. Neil Compton, founder of the Ozark Society, led the fight to keep dams from being constructed on the Buffalo River. Once the dams were stopped, he worked to create today's national park, the Buffalo National River.

The Compton home is built on land that was owned by his wife, Laurene Putman Compton, from her Putman family. She was as much involved with the gardens as her now famous husband. She was also

the birder in the family; she had a copy of the Peterson Guide signed by Roger Tory when he visited Arkansas. She was an avid gardener, member of garden clubs, and maintained a prized rock garden with wildflowers by the Compton home.

Trails in the garden's 6.5 acres provide intimate access to many habitats within the few acres. These vary from paved and completely accessible to those with walking impairments, to smaller unpaved trails. One accessible trail loops a sunny open native plant meadow.



Kenneth L. Smith and Kelly Mulhollan, celebrating 100th anniversary of Neil Compton's birth, 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Buffalo National River, 50<sup>th</sup> for founding of the Ozark Society. Compton Gardens , August 18, 2012.

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Trails within the garden are generally shady. They explore a small stream with vegetation including mature native trees (like white oak), small understory trees (like dogwood), and native shrubs right along the creek, including a nice stand of pawpaws. In some places the canopies of big trees are easy to view, whether from a deck at the Compton home or even from the parking area. Hummingbirds have been seen nesting in trees around the Compton home deck. There are many good perspectives from different angles that facilitate viewing birds. Most of the plants in the garden are species native to Arkansas. There are several State Champion Trees in the garden. Check out the enormous yellowwood near his home (see photograph on first page of this guide).



Habitats are varied and trail access is good. It adds up to the chance to see many species within a small area. Transients like Blackburnian Warblers have been found here. For example, a birding trip to the gardens during spring migration on 16 May 2011, was amazing: both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Magnolia Warblers, Philadelphia Vireo, Swainson's Thrushes, American Redstarts. There were young in a Red-shouldered Hawk nest and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was collecting spider silk for a nest.

During the nesting season we expect typical nesting woodland birds: White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Black-and-white Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager, Indigo Bunting, both Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos. Be sure and check the open habitats including the native prairie section, tree tops all over, and streamsides.

The trail to Crystal Bridges is completely accessible, quite birdy, and includes everything from soaring mature trees to dense shrubbery and is alternately sunny and shady.

The 3.5 miles of trails within Crystal Bridge's 120 acres allow exploration of a variety of habitats. This includes the hollow where the museum is built, from the spring run on the north side of the museum, the Rock Ledge Trail. There are some big mature trees along the Dogwood Trail on top and of course, many dogwoods in the midstory. As in the case of the trails at Compton Gardens, these provide a variety of experiences for everyone, including those with mobility impairments.

## **MORE INFORMATION ON THE WEB (including a Crystal Bridges trails map)**

<http://www.peelmansion.org/compton/>

<http://crystalbridges.org/>

– Originally prepared by Joe Neal, Joan Reynolds, and Scott Michaud June 2011. Revised and updated June 2013. Photos: state champion yellowwood, page 1. Spicebush after rain, page 2. Kenneth L. Smith and Kelly Mulhollan, page 3. Picture frame at Rock Ledge Trail, Crystal Bridges, page 4.