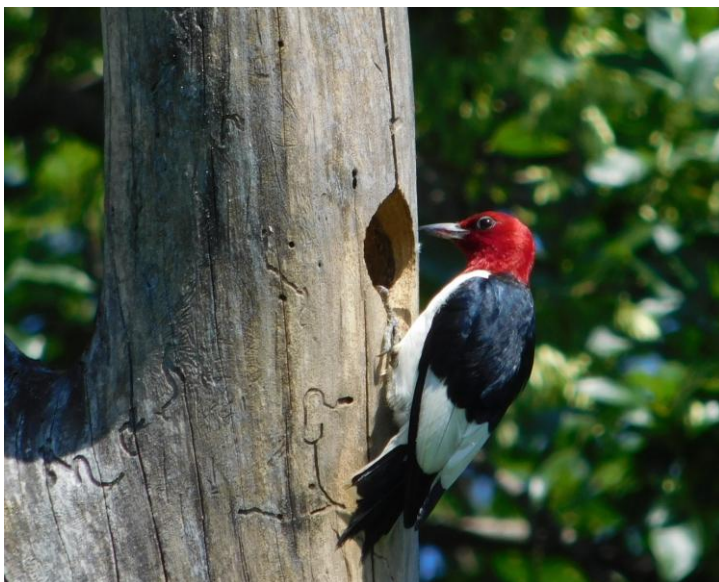


## BIRDING SILOAM SPRINGS CITY LAKE



Siloam Springs City Lake is located in the Flint Creek valley on the north side of Siloam Springs. The main parking area is just off Dawn Hill East Road on the lake's south side. If you use GPS: 36 13 21.12 N and 94 32 21.83 W. However, there is also parking immediately north of the dam, plus some informal pull offs on Taylor Orchard Road along the lake's north side. It is a popular bank-fishing spot for locals and an easy place to slow walk and look at birds.



Some of the big attractions during nesting season including nesting Baltimore Orioles, Warbling Vireos, and Red-headed Woodpeckers. There are also typical nesting birds of eastern forests and open habitats like Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Eastern Bluebird, Indigo Bunting, Summer Tanager, Eastern Kingbird, etc.

The lake is within a few miles of Eagle Watch Nature Trail just west of Gentry, so it would be easy to make a bigger and more interesting day by visiting both.

Baltimore Orioles and Orchard Orioles made quite a showing in the fringe of trees along Siloam Springs City Lake during a May 21, 2016, field trip sponsored by Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society. In terms of impact, everywhere we walked orioles were closely followed by Warbling Vireos in full song. During the 3 hours, one or the other or all three were singing. We also spotted two active Baltimore Oriole nests, though maybe “spotted” is not such a great word choice. The first nest was where we parked, 20 feet up on an outer limb and functionally invisible in a clump of black walnut leaves. We knew it was there, though, because both female and male flew to it and disappeared. By careful looking, we could see a bit of woven basket. Looked like the orioles wove in colorful fishing line, discarded by anglers on the lakeshore.

Of Orchard Orioles, maybe the biggest impression was made by a first breeding season male, immaculate gold with gray wings and that amazing black throat.

There were several families of Canada Geese with young out on the lake, plus Tree Swallows, likely nesting in snags abundant in the northeast corner of the lake. Most numerous in terms of swallows were Cliffs, nesting under the bridge over Flint Creek on the dam’s northwest corner.

Migrants also make use of the lake. During the May 21 field trip – somewhat “late” in terms of spring migration peak -- we picked up Swainson’s Thrush, probable Gray-cheeked Thrush, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Spotted Sandpiper, and quite a few Alder Flycatchers. Mike Mlodinow pointed out that we are now in the usual peak migration period for Alders, so the relatively high number is not that unusual.

Cedar Waxwings were also prominent during the May 21 trip. Most or all of these are also migrants. They tend to remain in late May- early June, taking advantage of ripening fruit, like mulberries, before moving north. One large, spreading mulberry tree out in a pasture just north of the dam was full of red fruit and waxwings.

Wood Ducks nest in the swampy Flint Creek bottoms and are often seen on the lake. Great Blue Herons and Green Herons are a common sight. The lake gets a fair amount of use by water birds during both migration and winter. This includes Bald Eagles, Ospreys, Double-crested Cormorants, and Ring-billed Gulls. A flock of Trumpeter Swans spent several weeks on the lake in January 2011. Ducks like Mallards, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, and others are common in winter, as are Pied-billed Grebes.



The southeast side of the park includes extensive open grassy fields. A Blue Grosbeak was singing in the fields on May 21. The park is currently undergoing development that will impact these low grassy fields. Currently it is easy to gain access to a relatively “wild” part of the shoreline in this area, including good views of the swampy upper end of the lake rich with snags, cat tails, etc. Local folks have been involved in making sure sensitive habitats here (and elsewhere) are made known to decision-makers in hopes the negative impacts can be minimized. Come August, down in wetland fields alongside the lake, there will be more brilliant oriole-like color: Swamp Milkweed and pollinators, like Monarch Butterflies.

The lake's northeast side, along Taylor Orchard Road, is woodland where there are informal trails that reach the swampy wooded upper end of the lake. In winter this is a good place to look for Rusty Blackbirds, Hermit Thrush, kinglets, etc. Formal nature trails are under consideration for this area.



One unique habit adjacent the lake's south side is a long strip of virgin hardwood forest dominated by mature native trees (e.g., white oak). According to Siloam native Joe Woolbright, this is a long strip of forest that runs for three miles in the valley of Flint Creek. Wild hydrangeas and other native shrubs and plants bloom on the north slope facing the lake. Walking along the road in this area, it is not so surprising to hear the song of Acadian Flycatchers.