

Tenkiller Ferry Lake, Oklahoma

GOING FOR WINTER LOONS AT TENKILLER

(version of January 15, 2017)

REALLY IMPORTANT! For best results, pick a day with low wind (certainly < 10 mph). This will make a LOT of difference in terms of what can be seen. You can see a lot with binoculars, but a spotting scope is a great help, especially for that far away Pacific Loon.

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These suggestions for birding Tenkiller (10K) are based upon driving from northwest Arkansas, so the focus is on 10K's east side. If you have more time, there's more to check than what's suggested here.

Our trips start just before Caney Ridge-Dry Fork bridge on 100 and just before the X with 82. Park on the south side of the road, walk across 100 to an overlook - lots of 10K spread below this point.

After that, cross the bridge to the X with 82, then go just a few miles N to Cherokee Landing State Park. This is a good view of 10K. The bay is extensive and open. It looks across to the old Standing Rock Park area. Also, there is a country store between 100 X 82 and Cherokee Landing with few, snacks, and bathrooms.

Now heading N on 82, we bypass Cookson Bend Park because it has been closed in winter. So skip that and keep going north to ... Six Shooter Resort (look for sign on highway). 6-shooter makes up for some problems with closed Cookson. Big open water area makes you appreciate your scope. Then return to 82 and keep going N ...

Chicken Creek Park. This park is also closed, but the Corps of Engineers (COE) has developed a boat launch marina site nearby that also provides good views. Notice the closed store near where you would go into the park. Turn south there on to 520 road - this goes to the boat launch. There is a fee for use of this area. With a Senior Pass (formerly Golden age passport) you don't have to pay. Good views of 10K here.

Next stop, Snake Creek Park, but this is also closed. So instead of going into the park, go to the marina. From here you can see quite a bit of 10K.

Continuing S on 82, you get to an intersection with 100 again. Go W toward Blackgum. There is another X, with 82 going S towards Vian. There is grocery and

gas here. Continue W on 100 to an X where there is a church along the highway. Blackgum Road goes N here, a few miles out to the lake. It's often worth driving there, but a little complicated to describe, so get on Google Earth and find Blackgum Landing.

Next stop after Blackgum is Tenkiller State Park. Turn into the park. Several years ago they started charging \$5 just to drive into Fisherman's Point where we use to scan for loons (the fee is probably mainly for boat launch, but everyone must pay). So now we skip that. Instead, drive through the park and around a cove full of marinas to a picnic area called Hickory Flats (this is all in the park). Less convenient, but a similar view of 10K.

From the state park, make a slow as possible and safe drive across the dam, watching the waters for loons and enjoy the vultures. Then on across the dam to a T. Go right, onto 10 A, which courses around the west side of the lake. A few miles from the T you get to the turn to Strayhorn Landing, another COE Park that is closed. However, just when you get to the gate, take the left for a road that overlooks the marina and bay. There are extensive views of 10K. If there are a LOT of loons in the bay that could be better seen from within the closed COE park, park and walk the park loop.

From Strayhorn, there is one more possible stop at the marina below Paradise Hill. The cove is sometimes good for reasonably close looks at loons. Look at Paradise Hill on Google.

If you have time, and crave more loons yet, there are more good spots on 10K's west side (Burnt Cabin area, etc). More spots you hit, more loons you'll see.

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There is something for everyone in the Greater Tenkiller Area. From the natural beauty of the outdoors to theatre and gourmet dining you will find The Greater Tenkiller Area provides the very best recreation around!

