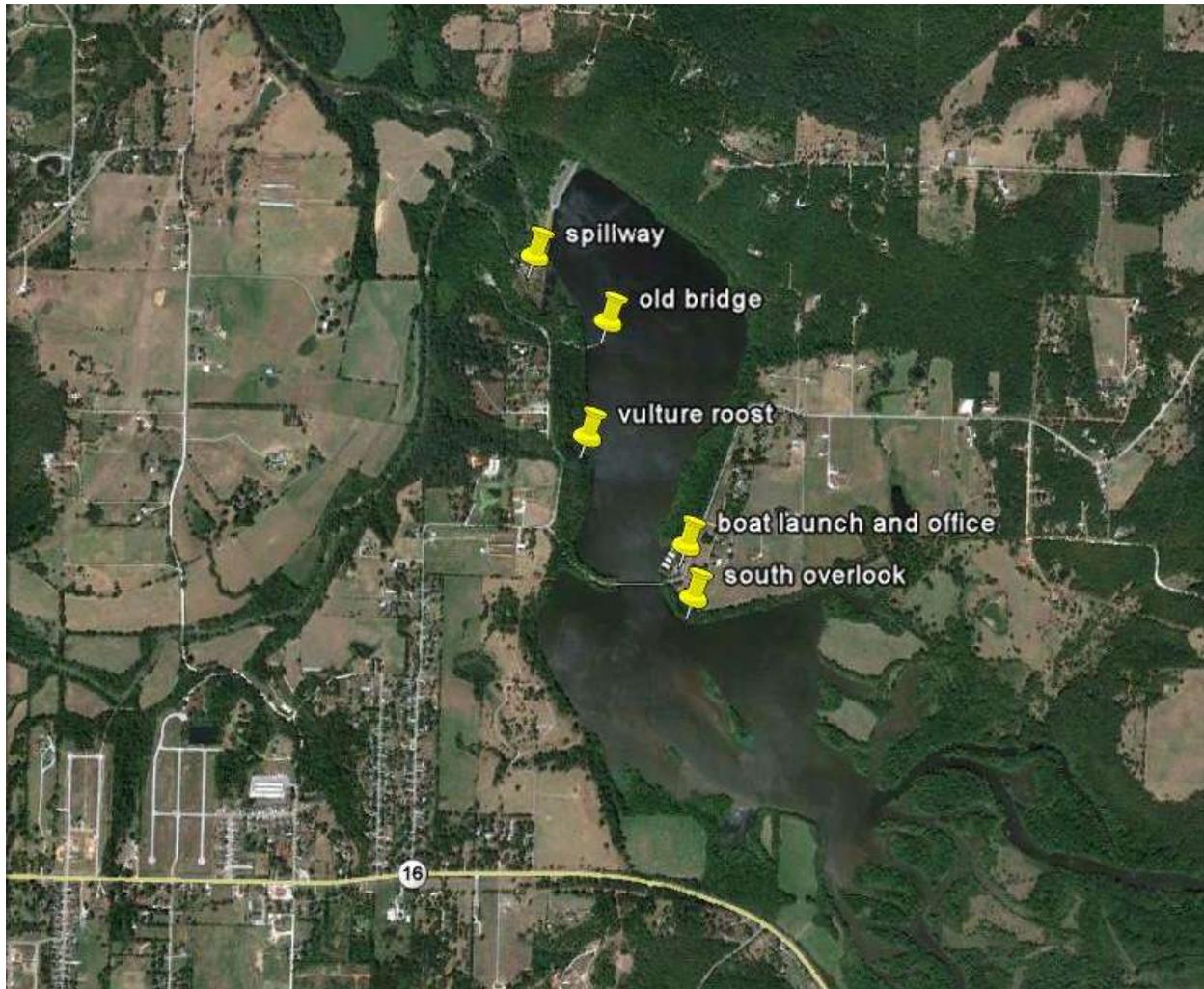


## BIRDING LAKE SEQUOYAH

**Location and directions:** Fayetteville's Lake Sequoyah Park is about 4.5 miles from the intersection of highways 265 and 16 in southeast Fayetteville. From this intersection, travel Highway 16 east (Huntsville Road) until you reach the old Baldwin community. Look for a sign indicating a left turn onto Lake Sequoyah Drive and continue a mile or so to the one lane bridge.



Lake Sequoyah was formed by impounding the Middle Fork of the White River and the eastern stem of the White River to form a water supply for the city in the time before construction of Beaver Lake. The resulting 495 acres of water are generally shallow and swampy with numerous cattail-lined sloughs and extensive amounts of flooded willow forest. The surrounding 1005 acres of public land includes a variety of habitats.

From November through April, the land on either side of the bridge is good for scanning for water birds and occasional gulls. You can walk across the bridge on foot and scan from there, too, though because

the bridge is a single lane, this can be risky. The park office and boat launching area (former boat dock) is where for a small fee you can launch your own boat, because during fall the lake's level may become low, exposing mudflats and very shallow waters attractive to shorebirds, puddle ducks, cormorants, and pelicans. Across the road from the park office there is a handy limestone bluff overlook where you can scan the lake's southend. Fishermen's trails lead down toward the lake in the area of the information kiosk. Bald Eagles are present in the winter, often perching on the lake's south side.

The dam site and spillway offers good birding. Instead of taking the road down to the bridge and office, look for the north turn just above the slope that goes down to the bridge. This is Lake Sequoyah Spur and it follows the lake's western edge. Go about one-half mile and find a place where you can park. An old bridge that is now a fishing pier provides a fine place to scan this section of the lake. Underneath in summer there are nesting Cliff Swallows. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Green Herons and Great Blue Herons have all been seen flying over the lake from this point. The trail that leads south from the base of the pier is often good for land birds, including a mixed species vulture roost. Winter birders look for Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher and even late House Wrens. In late summer, look for the many species of herons that feed in the shallow waters on the southeast end of the dam. The woods, scrub and water edge below the dam have in summer produced Painted Bunting, Hooded Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush.

The south side of the lake is accessible from highway 16. First, you should stop in at the park office and let them know you want to go there. The land is public and if you are not carrying a gun you can probably enter. On 16, travel about three-fourths of a mile east of Lake Sequoyah Drive. In the bottoms, look for the big fields and a rusty gate with a no trespassing sign. Park in front of the gate. Once beyond the gate, cross the field to the edge of the lake. If you are very very careful, you can get close looks at ducks, grebes, cormorants, etc. during migration and winter. Red-shouldered Hawks have been seen here and probably nest in this part of the lake. Many warblers typical of open field and edge can be expected in the proper season.

Trail development is still occurring in the park, courtesy of volunteers. Kingfisher Trail takes off at the office parking lot and covers about 1.5 miles north along the east bank of the lake, or roughly three miles round trip. South and just across the road from the office, a trail leads passes an informational kiosk and the south overlook, then east about 1.4 miles along the bank. Habitats include woods, fields, and swampy back sloughs. Unfortunately it also passes by a Great Blue Heron nesting site; we encourage folks to avoid this area to limit disturbances during the nesting season (February-June). A trail used by horseback riders on the lake's east side provides an easy way to view that part of the lake. We encourage folks to avoid disturbing the vultures in their roost there.

– Joe Neal November 2011