

# HOBBS STATE PARK-CONSERVATION AREA

## ROCKY BRANCH ON BEAVER LAKE

With over 12,000 acres, Hobbs is the largest state park in Arkansas. The park boundary is 10 miles east of Rogers on state highway 12.

The visitor's center for Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area is located on highway 12 just east of the intersection of 12 and the War Eagle road. Hobbs visitor's center is a good place to see mature upland shortleaf pine maintained in an open condition with prescribed burning. While there are numerous places to explore this upland pine habitat, it's convenient to walk in the immediate area of the visitor's center.



The trail immediately adjacent the visitor's center includes a fully accessible, paved loop through native upland pine-hardwood habitat. The trail also includes a graded and graveled additional loop for an even longer walk a little deeper into the hollow. Birds typical of these upland habitats can be found on these trails. There are benches along the trail and picnic tables under big pines right where the trail takes off from the visitor's center. Hollows between pine-clad ridges mainly have deciduous trees. A free hand-out at the visitor's center (and online) provides information and directions for trails.

Van Winkle Hollow, particularly on the north side of highway 12, has high species diversity because of numerous habitats including forested slopes, moist thickets, old fields, a spring-fed stream and a highly variable Beaver Reservoir shoreline. The Van Winkle trail in the hollow is 0.5 miles in length and is fully accessible. Besides seeing a variety of birds, hikers in the hollow may also enjoy spring wildflowers in moist ravines and on the steep slopes that rise on either side of the hollow. Turkey Vultures nest under limestone ledges, Eastern Phoebe nests along the bluffs or under the bridge, Chuck-will's-widow nest on the ridgetops and Red-shouldered Hawks can be seen soaring overhead. Breeding warblers include Blue-winged, Kentucky, Hooded, Northern Parula, Black-and-white, Yellow-throated, Prothonotary, American Redstart, Ovenbird and Louisiana Waterthrush. (Swainson's Warblers were also present in this area in past years.) American Woodcocks have been flushed in thick growth near the stream in July.

Shaddox Hollow Trail (1.5 miles loop) offers a good representation of native flora and fauna, including blighted Ozark chinquapins on ridgetops, delicate showy orchids and wood frogs in a few moist ravines and some lovely fern-covered north-facing slopes. If time is short, you can just pull into the parking lot and bird the immediate big pines in this area without walking the trail itself. The trail was funded by the Benton County League of Women Voters in memory of conservationist Virginia Koen



Allured. It begins at a parking area on highway 303 with a fairly long hike along a ridgetop and a descent down a southwest-facing slope into the hollow. After a short hike near Beaver Lake, the trail makes ascends to the ridgetop. Breeding birds include Pine Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Acadian and Great Crested Flycatchers, Green-backed and Great Blue Herons.



Pigeon Roost Trail (8.4 miles in two loops) covers the wide habitat range in the area. All of the plant images in this guide are from a walk at Pigeon Roost on 15 April 2001.

We often visit the nearby the Corps of Engineers Rocky Branch recreation area on Beaver Lake during migration periods and in winter. Here are wide views of the lake. We have often found Common Goldeneyes, Horned Grebes, Ringed-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls and Common Loons (but the loons are common only in migration). Bald Eagles make regular appearances in

winter. Cedar thickets just above the lake are excellent places to find a variety of winter birds like Hermit Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. There is also native shortleaf pine habitat at Rocky Branch, a good place to find wintering Pine Warblers and to hope for Red Crossbills.

(This summary was prepared by Joe Neal in February 2012. Some of this material is adapted from an account written by Ellen Turner for a birding guide published in 1988 by Joe Neal and Mike Mlodinow).