



DEER CREEK WILDLIFE AREA

Fayette, Madison, and Pickaway Counties

DISTANCE FROM MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

14 miles from Washington Court House
34 miles from Chillicothe
35 miles from Columbus
57 miles from Dayton

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The 4,085-acre wildlife area is in central Ohio, four miles south of Mount Sterling on State Route 207 and adjacent to the 1,277-acre Deer Creek Lake. It can be reached from the east and west by U.S. Route 22 and State Route 56, and from the north and south by U.S. Route 62 and State Routes 3, 104, and 207.

The topography is flat to slightly rolling. The soils are mostly well drained and of medium to high productivity. Approximately 1,000 acres of row crops and small grains are under cultivation annually. Controlled burning and native warm season grass plantings have also been introduced as part of the wildlife management program.

About 25 percent of the wildlife area consists of second growth hardwoods and brush in advanced stages of succession. The timber stand is mainly on the east side of Deer Creek. It includes oak, hickory, elm, black walnut, ash, maple, locust, sycamore, and cottonwood. The uncropped remainder of the area is in permanent meadow, reverting crop fields, wildlife food plots, and prairie grasses.

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Deer Creek Lake construction began in 1965 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control, and was completed in 1968. Of the 7,575 acres, 6,875 are leased to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for fish, wildlife, and general recreation purposes. Deer Creek State Park lies to the south and east of the lake and provides camping, picnicking, and boat launching facilities for the hunter and angler. Public hunting is permitted on some of the undeveloped 3,165 acres controlled by the Division of Parks and Recreation, and on all property controlled by the Division of Wildlife.

Wildlife management plans provide for the maintenance and protection of existing woodlands, establishment of field sizes and crop rotations beneficial to wildlife, improvement of open fields for wildlife nesting, and establishment of annual food patches for general wildlife use. Permanent wildlife cover has been provided through the planting of switchgrass, a native prairie grass. Waterfowl nesting structures erected on the area have helped increase waterfowl production, especially of wood ducks.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Major sport fishes in Deer Creek Lake include bluegill, white crappie, channel catfish, saugeye, white bass, largemouth and smallmouth bass, rock bass, carp, bullhead, and flathead catfish. The tailwaters support a seasonal fishery for saugeye, crappies, white bass, and an occasional American eel.

Upland game species are ring-necked pheasant, mourning doves, cottontail rabbit, and woodchuck. The two major forest game species are fox squirrel and white-tailed deer. Furbearers include raccoon, opossum, muskrat, mink, weasel, red fox, gray fox, and skunk.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

Waterfowl are found on the lake, stream, and marsh. Late winter and spring are the best times to view waterfowl. Of interest to birders are the many species of waterfowl and songbirds which can be seen during the spring migration. Red-tailed hawks, Northern harriers, and American kestrels are common sights. Large numbers of turkey vultures also congregate to roost on the area. Some rare and unusual birds which have been seen include the Cooper's hawk, osprey, great egret, short-eared owl, and sandhill crane. Bluebird nest boxes have also been erected to attract and increase the presence of these colorful birds. Watch for beaver along Deer Creek and its tributaries.

HUNTING, TRAPPING, AND FISHING

Deer Creek Wildlife Area is popular for ring-necked pheasant hunting because of its growing population of wild pheasants. Rabbit hunting is excellent especially during the late season. The lake provides waterfowl hunting, and the stream offers jump shooting for ducks. At the extreme south end of the wildlife area, a 75-acre marsh was constructed in the spring of 1994. This marsh was designed by Ducks Unlimited and funding was provided by the Division of Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, and Pheasants Forever. This marsh provides additional waterfowl hunting opportunity. Restrictions on hunting hours and construction of duck blinds are in effect (information may be obtained at the wildlife area headquarters).

Squirrel and deer hunters do well in the forested and brushland areas. Trapping along the stream and various drainage ditches on the area is often productive, and night hunting for raccoon and fox is popular.

Crappies, bluegills, channel catfish, and saugeyes make up the bulk of the fishery. Crappie fishing is productive along brushy shorelines in the stream channel above the lake, mainly in April and May. Channel catfish are caught mostly in the upper lake, especially in June and July. The best saugeye areas are the tailwater pool below the dam and the stream above the lake. Smallmouth and rock bass fishing is most productive in Deer Creek upstream from Yankeetown Road. The tailwater pond below the dam is always attractive to anglers, as large numbers of fishes congregate there year-round.

PUBLIC USE FACILITIES

Parking lots are located throughout the area. Several areas offer easy access for launching small boats and canoes. Dog training and exercise is only permitted on the wildlife area from September 1 to April 30 each year.

A supervised Class A rifle and pistol range is available. Access to this range is by paid permit only. Additionally, an unsupervised Class C shotgun range is provided. No permit is necessary to use the shotgun range. Handicap accessible shooting stations and walkways are provided. Additional information on permits and hours of shooting range operation may be obtained from the wildlife area headquarters. An archery range is also available at Deer Creek Wildlife Area. No permit is required.

DUCK BLIND PERMITS

Permission to erect duck blinds on Deer Creek Lake during the waterfowl hunting season must be obtained from the state park manager through a special drawing held at the Deer Creek State Park headquarters during the month of August of each year. Contact the Division of Parks and Recreation for more information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further information on the wildlife area may be obtained from the Area Supervisor, Deer Creek Wildlife Area, 12552 Post Rd., Mt. Sterling, Ohio 43143; telephone (740) 869-2365 or from Wildlife District One Office, 1500 Dublin Road, Columbus, Ohio 43215; telephone (614) 644-3925.

TURN IN A POACHER

Ohio's TIP, "Turn In a Poacher," program is helping to curtail poaching throughout the state. TIP is designed to involve the public in reporting wildlife violations. Citizens who observe wildlife violations should call the TIP toll-free hotline at 1-800-POACHER.