

Hunting and Trapping

Hunting is allowed under statewide regulations with the following exceptions:

- All hunters must register at the area headquarters before hunting.
- Waterfowl hunters must have a valid daily hunting tag and may hunt only from an assigned blind or designated area.
- There is no admittance in the portions identified as “Waterfowl Refuge” during the dates listed on the area map.
- Non-waterfowl hunters are prohibited from the “Waterfowl Hunt Only Zones” during the waterfowl hunting season, unless they are properly licensed members of and remain with a party authorized to use the area.
- Waterfowl hunting is prohibited after 1 p.m. on designated portions of the area.
- Hunters must check out at area headquarters immediately after the close of their hunting trip and prior to processing their harvest.
- A drawing for blinds and units is held each morning during duck season.
- The area is closed to waterfowl hunting on Dec. 25.
- Only non-toxic shot, as defined and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, may be possessed or used while hunting, except rimfire or centerfire rifles firing single projectiles may be used when hunting small game or furbearers.
- Deer hunting by managed hunt permit only. Hunters must apply for a permit through the managed hunt drawing system. Application information is available on our website <https://mdc.mo.gov>.
- Turkey hunting is not allowed on the area.

- Decoys and portable blinds are permitted but must be removed from the area daily. Blinds may be constructed on site, but only from willows and non-woody vegetation.
- Furbearer trapping is permitted by special use permit.
- Trail and game cameras prohibited.

For information, contact:

Otter Slough Conservation Area
7001 County Road 675
Dexter, MO 63841
(573) 624-5821

Additional area information is posted on bulletin boards located in parking areas and area office

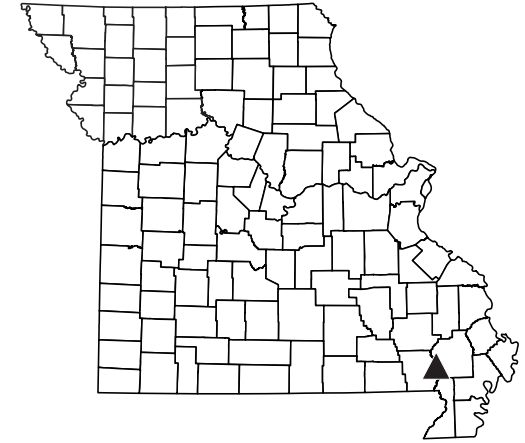


7/2024

(Regulations are from the Wildlife Code of Missouri and selected statutes of the State of Missouri. Special area regulations are in Chapter 11 of the Wildlife Code. A free printed copy of the Wildlife Code, which lists most area regulations, is available from the Conservation Department. Chapter 11 in its entirety is available at www.sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/3csr/3csr.asp.) Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Missouri Department of Conservation is available to all individuals without regard to their race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Questions should be directed to the Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, (573) 751-4115 (voice) or 800-735-2966 (TTY), or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203.

Otter Slough

CONSERVATION AREA



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

About This Area

Otter Slough Conservation Area is in Stoddard County, southwest of Dexter just off Highway ZZ. When early explorers were making their way across what would be southeastern Missouri, they saw a seemingly endless expanse of bottomland hardwood timber and an interconnecting complex of sloughs and St. Francis River oxbows.

The New Madrid earthquakes of 1811 and 1812 caused Otter Slough, Fish Slough, Lick Creek and the Glades Swamp to combine into the large wetland now visited by thousands of migrating waterfowl.

Amos Stoddard, whom the county was named for, described the region in 1812: "Nearly half of the lands... are covered with swamps and ponds, and periodically inundated. These swamps, filled with cypress, are mostly dry in the summer;... Many creeks or bayous take their rise in them, and... it is calculated that there are as many as 1 to every 15 miles." As the explorers moved on, westward expansion and settlement followed. Agricultural development was inevitable, and wetlands were converted to croplands.

During the 1960s and 1970s, much of the land on and around Otter Slough was cleared, drained and graded for crop farming, resulting in the decline of both resident and migratory wildlife. Of the estimated original 320,000 acres of wetlands that once existed in Stoddard County only 6,884 acres remain today.

Otter Slough is now one of only a few examples of a cypress/tupelo swamp left in Missouri. The cypress swamp, open marsh and flooded timber provide acorns, natural seeds, tubers, and invertebrates, all important waterfowl foods. Row crops are also used to maintain an open marsh condition and provide high energy food during winter months to sustain waterfowl during their long, migratory journeys.

Duck numbers have exceeded 60,000 and as many as 250,000 snow geese have been recorded in the past. Although the 4,859-acre area is managed primarily for migratory and wintering waterfowl, many wading birds, shorebirds, eagles, and wetland mammals make Otter Slough Conservation Area their home.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Camping — Canoeing — Fishing
Hiking — Hunting — Picnicking
Self-Guided Nature Trail — Wildlife Viewing

Conservation Areas are closed from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. except for authorized camping, fishing, and hunting activities. Special regulations apply to the use of this area. Portions of the area close seasonally. All hunters must check in. See regulations posted at area headquarters.

- No littering.
- No fireworks.
- Dogs must be leashed when not used for training or hunting.
- Nuts, berries, fruits, mushrooms, and wild greens may be taken for personal use. Taking of greens from locations designated as Natural Areas is prohibited. Cutting or removing other vegetation is prohibited.
- Vehicles are restricted to public roadways and parking lots unless otherwise allowed by area regulations.
- Bicycles and horses allowed on public roadways. Bicycles allowed on designated service roads. Seasonal restrictions apply. See Hunting and Trapping section. Service roads can be located at <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/places>.

- Primitive camping is permitted only in designated areas on the area map and stays are limited to 14 consecutive days in a 30-day period. Personal property must be removed at the end of the 14-day period. Total camping days on all department lands are limited to 30 days within one calendar year.
- Groups of 10 or more campers must obtain a special use permit.
- Target shooting is not allowed.
- Swimming is not allowed.

Fishing and Boating

Fishing and frogging are allowed under statewide regulations with the following exceptions:

- The area is closed to fishing starting Oct. 15 through the last day of the prescribed duck season.
- Fish may be taken only with pole and line. Not more than three poles may be used by one person at any time.
- Carp, buffalo, suckers, and gar may be taken by atlatl, gig, bow, or crossbow when the area is open to fishing; non-game limit is 20.
- Daily limit is 6 black bass, 30 crappie, 4 catfish (includes channel, blue and flathead), and 15 warmouth. Total number of all other fish taken by rod and reel may not exceed 20 in the aggregate.
- All black bass less than 15 inches must be released immediately after being caught.
- Bullfrogs and green frogs may be taken from sunset June 30 through October 14.
- Salvage seining of non-game fish for personal use is permitted only by special use permit.
- Seining or trapping live bait, including tadpoles, is prohibited in Cypress Lake.
- Boats may be used but may not be left unattended overnight.
- Motors over 10 horsepower must be operated at a slow, no-wake speed.