



St. Louis Audubon Society



May 2, 2007

Missouri Wilderness Coalition
Mr. Scott Merritt
P.O. Box 377
Boss, MO 65440

Dear Mr. Merritt:

The St. Louis Audubon Society, with over 2000 members throughout the St. Louis area, is dedicated to the preservation of the natural world and the conservation of biological diversity. We are therefore pleased to learn of the Missouri Wilderness Coalition's proposal to designate four areas as federal Wilderness and three areas as Wilderness Study Areas.

The administrative provisions of the most recent Forest Plan for the Mark Twain National Forest are no longer adequate to protect the wilderness qualities of the seven areas. We therefore support the proposal to designate as Wilderness Areas:

Big Spring , in Carter County	7,600 acres
North Fork , in Ozark, Howell, and Douglas Counties	7,200 acres
Spring Creek , in Douglas and Howell Counties	6,400 acres
Swan Creek , in Christian County	9,200 acres

We also support the proposal to designate as Wilderness Study Areas:

Lower Rock Creek , in Madison and Iron Counties	13,800 acres
Smith Creek , in Callaway and Boone Counties	2,500 acres
Van East Mountain , in Madison and Iron Counties	2,500 acres

All of these sites lie within internationally designated Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The IBA program is a worldwide bird conservation program designed to identify, monitor, and protect those areas most important to birds. An IBA must meet one or more of the following ornithological criteria:

1. Provides habitat for species of conservation concern
2. Provides habitat for species with restricted ranges
3. Provides habitat for species closely tied to a rare habitat type
4. Provides habitat for species vulnerable because they congregate in large numbers

Big Spring is part of the Current River Watershed IBA. Of ornithological significance are Swainson's Warblers and Cerulean Warblers, both of which have experienced significant population declines due to habitat loss. The watershed also supports Wood

Thrush, American Redstart, Worm-eating Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush; this area currently provides enough suitable nesting habitat to possibly facilitate source populations of these species.

North Fork and Spring Creek are part of the North Fork Watershed Woodland and Forest IBA. Numerous forest interior birds breed and migrate through the large forest tracts of this IBA, such as Red-shouldered Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, and Kentucky Warbler.

Swan Creek lies within the White River Glades and Woodlands IBA. These glade complexes represent the stronghold for Bachman's Sparrows in Missouri.

Lower Rock Creek and Van East Mountain lie within the St. Francis River Watershed IBA. Of ornithological significance are Bald Eagle, Cerulean Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Bachman's Sparrow.

Smith Creek is part of the Central Missouri Hills IBA. This IBA provides wooded and shrubland habitats for migratory and breeding upland birds amidst a rapidly suburbanizing landscape. The habitat supports an exceptional diversity and number of migrating songbirds, in addition to high concentrations of Northern Bobwhite and some Henslow's Sparrows within the grasslands.

In addition to the aesthetic beauty that these areas provide to the citizens of Missouri, the protection of these areas is crucial to the ongoing biological diversity that such natural areas provide. We hope that our state and federal legislators will work for the protection of these areas as Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas.

Sincerely,



Karen Meyer
Vice President, Conservation
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