

## GENTRY, INCLUDING FORMER ROUND PRAIRIE, SAFARI, AND FLOYD MOORE ROAD



**LOCATION:** Gentry is in Benton County along 59, the major N-S highway in the area. Eagle Watch Nature Trail is just W of Gentry on highway 12. The former Round Prairie includes much of the open grassland landscape west and northwest of Gentry all the way to the Oklahoma state line.

**DIRECTIONS:** From highway 59 at Gentry, turn WEST on 12 (Main Street) and travel about 0.35 miles to North Collins and turn NORTH onto Collins. Stay on this paved road for about 2 miles to the T intersection with Safari Road. Turn WEST on Safari and travel about 0.6 miles to **Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari**. Then continue WEST on Safari Road for about 0.5 miles to the county road (23) and turn SOUTH and travel another 0.5 miles to the intersection with Floyd Moore Road. Now turn WEST. This graded road cuts straight across former Round Prairie for just under 4 miles. It eventually junctions with highway 43 just south of Cherokee City.

A visit to the Gentry area includes many options. You can start with the Eagle Watch Nature Trail off highway 12 west of Gentry (EWNT is subject of another guide). A second trip is the subject of this guide: the former Round Prairie.

Start just north of Gentry at **Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari**. Safari includes 400 acres, a 4 mile road loop road, some big ponds, and an amazing host of birds, mammals, etc. Admission is \$10 adults. We usually aren't interested in seeing all of the animals, so we don't go into Safari, but rather stay on the public road (Safari Road) and scan for Great-tailed Grackles (they nest here and are also present in all seasons). In winter, a big pond visible from the road often has Ring-billed Gulls and other waterfowl. There is a black-tailed prairie dog town adjacent the pond; surely, we will see a Burrowing Owl here some lucky winter day! Feeding operations associated with

bison and other large mammals attract many sparrow and blackbird species, especially in winter. Bald Eagles are often in the immediate area in winter.

After Safari, the next step is the almost four miles of Floyd Moore Road. This includes big open fields of various kinds, including pastures, soybeans, and hayfields, and scattered woodlots and thickets. This is slow-drive, stop here, stop there, kind of birding. Don't hurry because if you do you are bound to miss stuff.

A plowed beanfield in summer is a good place to scan for Horned Larks. Overhead, anywhere along the road, watch for a soaring Swainson's Hawk. Also in summer, Painted Buntings sing from overgrown fencerows with scattered tall trees. Big fields sometimes host Grasshopper Sparrows. We have found Bewick's Wrens on a few occasions along the road.



Winter roadsides have lots of Savannah and White-crowned Sparrows, and the occasional Harris's Sparrow. A big open plowed field may have American Pipits or Lapland Longspurs. When, in the middle of winter, snow covers the fields, flocks of hungry Horned Larks and Lapland

Longspurs crowd roadsides where they find some open ground and grain spilled from passage of poultry feed trucks. A January storm often brings down American Tree Sparrows. A couple of small feedlots along the road attract Brewer's Blackbird and Rusty Blackbirds in winter. You can expect Bald Eagles from late November to early February.

Floyd Moore junctions with highway 43. If you still have some birding left, turn north toward Maysville (subject of another guide), or south toward Siloam Springs (see guide for Chesney Prairie Natural Area).