

GRAVETTE WILDLIFE OBSERVATION TRAIL

A FULLY-ACCESSIBLE ADA OPPORTUNITY



LOCATION: City of Gravette in western Benton County. The trail is within Pop Allum Park, 835 Eighth Ave. SW, Gravette 72736.

ABOUT THE TRAIL: The paved, fully accessible trail is 10-foot wide loop for a total of 3/8-mile. In addition, there is an unpaved extension of the trail for an additional 1/2-mile. The main source of funding for the trail was \$72,000 from the Arkansas Fish and Game Commission (Wildlife Observation Trail Grant) from

funds collected from state gas revenues. Additional trail enhancements were made with city general funds and help from local volunteers.

This trail takes advantage of natural topography. The fully accessible paved loop is level, typical of the former prairie in this part of Benton County. It follows habitats including both woods associated with a shallow ravine and open grassland. The wooded ravine will host birds and flowers typical of the area and the open areas make it easy to see open country species. Several benches and nest boxes invite visitors to relax along the trail. The 1/2 mile unpaved extension goes downhill and winds through a woodland ravine. Future plans include an extension, which will go under an existing KCS railroad trestle.

The peace and solitude will appeal to birders. The convenience will be a draw for those with walking impairments, families with small children (strollers), and those just seeking a comfortable place for an outdoor experience.

The woodland section should prove bird-rich depending upon the season. Northern Cardinals are present all year. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks migrate through such woodlands in spring (I heard one there during the trail dedication on April 28, 2012). Summer Tanagers and Yellow-billed Cuckoos nest in this type of habitat in summer. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Eastern Bluebirds are also local nesting species as are American Goldfinches. Three bluebird pairs had nested successfully in boxes along the trail by June 2012.



Benton County is famous for its wintering population of Bald Eagles. Trail users can expect to see them soar over anytime between mid-November and early February. In addition, mammals including a herd of White-tailed deer, bobcats and foxes have been seen in the area of Pop Allum Park.

The project has been made possible, not only by the AG & F grant, but by a host of local volunteers, civic groups, the Gravette High School shop class

and EAST Lab, Gravette Gleaners 4-H Club, plus participation by the Gravette Senior Center.

MAIN CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION: Allyson Ransom, Director of Communications/ Resource Efficiency/Farmers' Market, City of Gravette, 604 First Ave Se, Gravette, AR 72736, 479-787-5368, aransom@cityofgravette-ar.gov. She will be interested in hearing about birds or plants seen or heard during trail visits.

--Joe Neal June 2012