



Kaler Bottoms WMA

THE NORTHERNMOST EXTENSION of the Gulf Coastal Plain occurs in the Jackson Purchase Region of far western Kentucky. The region, which has the lowest elevation found in Kentucky, contains the slough, swamp and slow-moving stream habitat not found elsewhere in Kentucky.

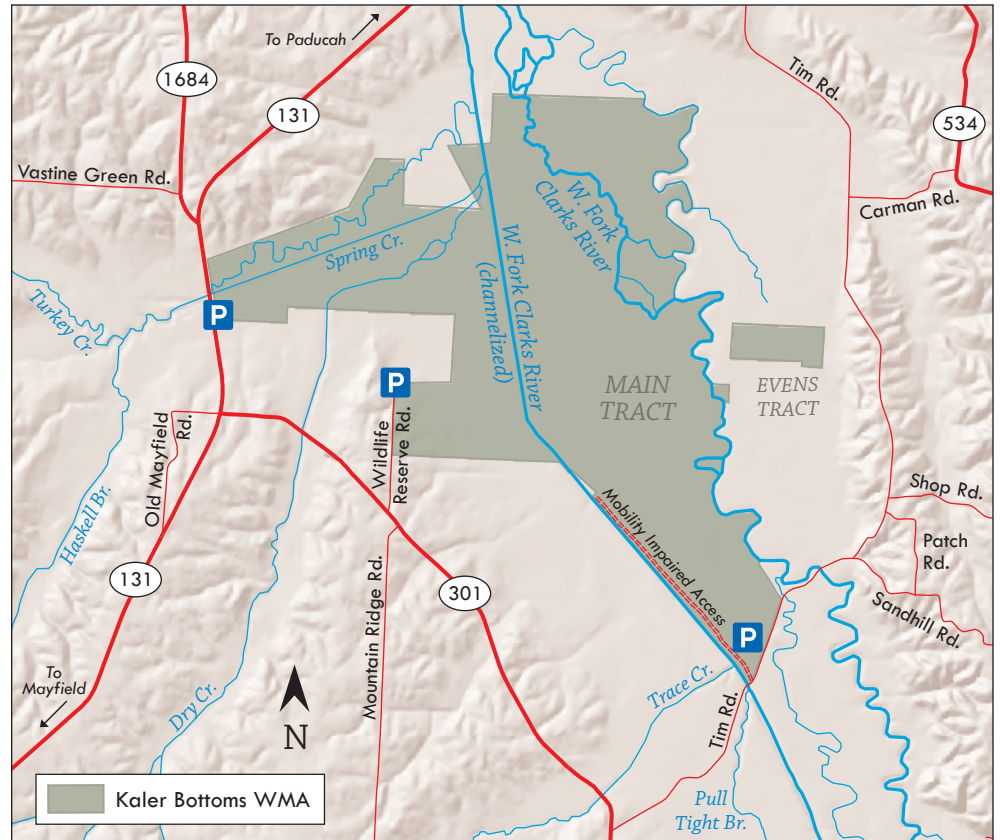
The 1,852-acre Kaler Bottoms Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Graves County is about as close as a modern visitor can get to what the Purchase region looked like when Chickasaws used it as their hunting ground.

“There is a pretty good-sized cypress slough on Kaler Bottoms,” said Tony Black, Purchase Region public lands biologist for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. “It hasn’t been logged in a long time as far as I know.”

Kaler Bottoms WMA isn’t for the weak-hearted. No roads traverse the area. It is rough. Damaging ice storms several years ago brought a lot of tree tops to the ground, increasing the ruggedness factor. The West Fork of Clarks River flows along the eastern boundary, while a channelized section of the river cuts through the western part of the area.

This makes Kaler Bottoms WMA classic swamp rabbit habitat. “It’s always been known for swamp rabbits,” Black explained. “Since I was little, people have hunted it. I talk to a lot of old guys who’ve hunted it for swamp rabbit. These rabbits are on the increase a little bit on the area.”

The swampy, wet area in the interior of the WMA is waist-to-knee deep most of the time. “People have duck hunted the big slough right in the middle of the area for



ADRIENNE YANCY ILLUSTRATION

years and years,” Black said. “Wood ducks are always on the area. You could get a couple of guys and a dozen or so decoys and stand by a tree and do pretty well. It is pretty thick in there. It’s a challenge.”

The area is also good for birding. “Several warbler species such as the cerulean warbler use it,” Black said. “It also has American redstarts, yellow-breasted chats and thrushes.”

Turkeys also inhabit Kaler Bottoms WMA. “It’s always been pretty decent for turkeys,” Black said. “Sometimes, you’ll find one in the slough up in a tree and can’t get to it. There are some old fields on the area that have regenerated and there are turkeys on those sections.”

Three parking lots serve the area: two on the western side and one on the extreme southern end. The parking lot on the southern section grants access to a mobility-impaired trail along the channelized section of the West Fork that offers hunting and birding opportunities.

A map of the area is available online at fw.ky.gov; click the “maps and online services” tab, then “wildlife management areas.” ■

HOW TO GET THERE

From Benton, travel southwest on the Julian M. Carroll Purchase Parkway to exit 27, then north on KY 131 to area.

GPS Coordinates

North parking area: 36.861217, -88.572222
 Middle parking area: 36.857039, -88.557122
 Mobility impaired parking area: 36.840972, -88.529732

