

# Great River Birding Trail

Hardin, IL, Map — Louisiana, MO to Alton, IL (River Mile 283 to 194)

## 1. Ted Shanks Conservation Area

**Where:** This 6,705-acre area is located south of Hannibal on Highway 79 to Route TT, then east about one mile.  
**Birds:** Wetland habitats present include bottomland hardwood, shrub/scrub, emergent marsh and moist soil. Bald Eagles regularly pass through this major waterfowl stopover site. A fair number of shorebirds, large waders and a large number of songbirds frequent the area. Several rare wetland birds migrate through or nest here, including Trumpeter Swans, Least and American Bitterns, King Rails, and Common Moorhens. There is good automobile viewing from an internal road system that loops around wetland cells and along forest edges.

## 2. Lock & Dam 24 and Clarksville Visitor Center

**Where:** Located in Clarksville, east from Highway 79 on Howard Street, then north on Front Street to the lock and dam. The visitor center is located north of Howard Street on Highway 79. For more information, contact: Army Corps of Engineers, 573-242-3724.  
**Birds:** A viewing platform at the dam provides views of Bald Eagles (mid-November through March), Ospreys and several species of gulls and terns in migration. Canada geese and several species of ducks stop here during spring and fall migration, and Great Blue Herons flock to feed along the banks in summer. The Clarksville Visitor Center, built with Great River Road funds, has indoor viewing with spotting scopes and information on current bird sightings. An annual Bald Eagle viewing event is held in late January. Be sure to inquire about the development of two new birding & interpretive sites in Clarksville at the Holcim Concrete grounds and Silo Park.

## 3. Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge (U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

**Where:** This area is located in the Mississippi River floodplain adjacent to Pool 25. Access is one mile east of Annada on County Road 206.  
**Birds:** This 3,750-acre area is made up of permanent and seasonally flooded impoundments, forests, grasslands and crop fields. The refuge bird list contains 238 species, and October through November and March through April are the best months to see the large concentrations of migrating waterfowl. Spring shorebird and warbler migration usually peaks around the first week of May. The bird list contains 238 species. Bald Eagles have nested on the refuge since 1991, and secretive marsh birds such as Least Bitterns and King Rails also nest here and are sometimes seen during the summer months. The refuge is administered by the Great River NWR and the refuge headquarters is located here.

## 4. Prairie Slough Conservation Area

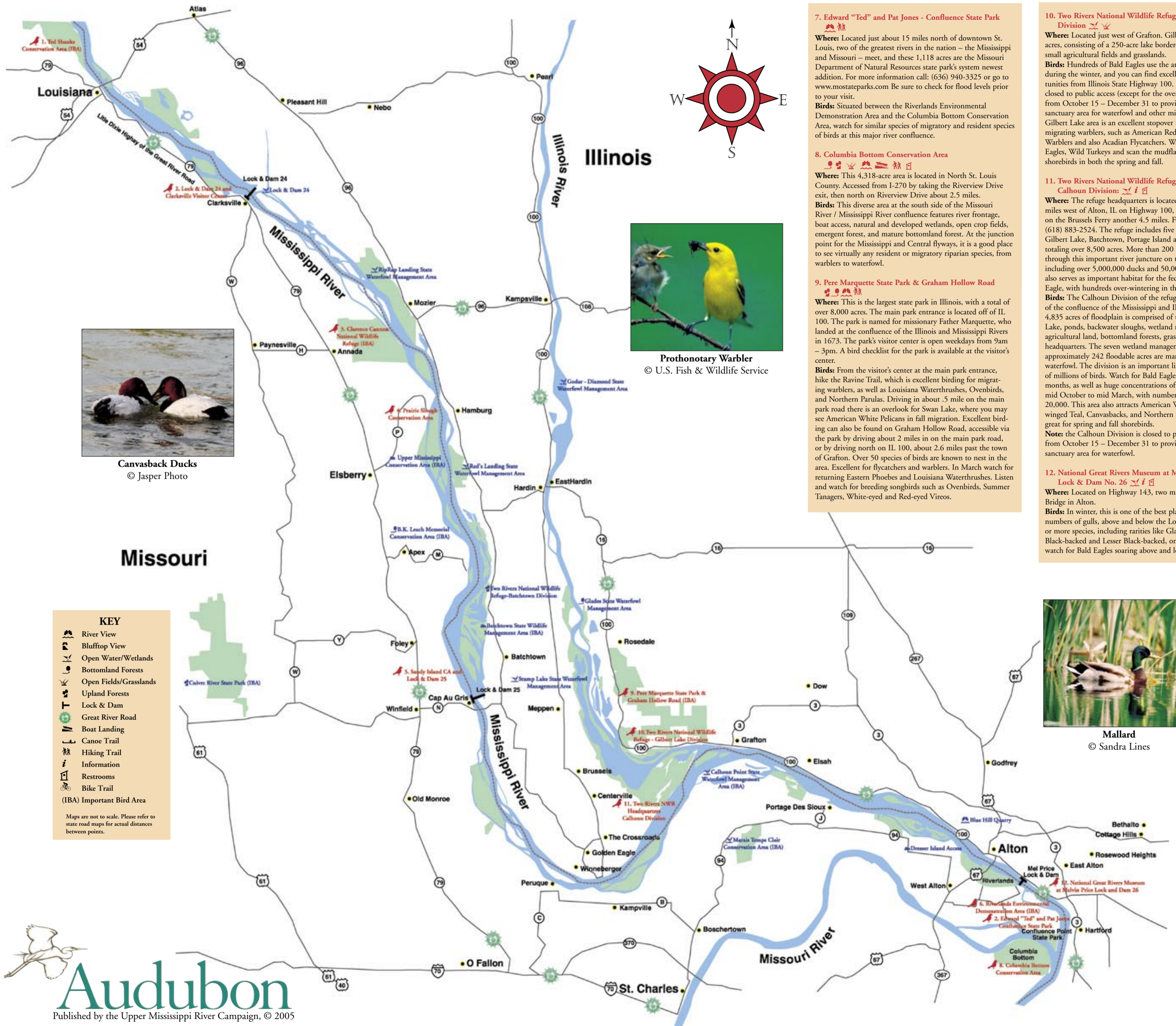
**Where:** This 584-acre area is best accessed from Highway 79 at Elsberry: take Route P east 3.3 miles to gravel road, then east 0.7 miles.  
**Birds:** The area consists of mature bottomland forest with small wooded sloughs and a 406-acre natural area. 125 bird species are on record, including Sora, Marsh Wrens, Least Bitterns, King Rails, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Prothonotary Warblers, Fish Crows, Merlins, Mississippi Kites, Black Terns and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Continue up Route P to Hamburg Ferry Access a 25-acre area where similar species may be enjoyed.

## 5. Sandy Island Conservation Area and Lock & Dam 25

**Where:** Accessed via Route N east from Highway 79 near Winfield. For more information contact: Army Corps of Engineers, 573-242-3724.  
**Birds:** A viewing platform makes it easy to watch for eagles, ducks, geese, terns and gulls feeding along the river in the winter and spring. Sandy Slough, located near the picnic area, is a good viewing spot in spring and summer for Killdeer, Great Blue Herons and egrets. Walk up the levee along Sandy Slough (300 yard walk) upstream to the 308-acre conservation area, and you might see Canada Geese, white-tailed deer, beaver, muskrat or raccoons. Wintering Bald Eagles cluster at the river's edge to feed and roost.

## 6. Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

**Where:** This 1,200-acre area is located along northbound US 67, along Riverlands Way (the last road before the Mississippi River). For more information, call: 618-462-6979.  
**Birds:** Area wildlife is accustomed to vehicles so your automobile is a good viewing blind. Snipe, yellowlegs and American Golden-plovers can be seen on the marsh mudflats, while gulls and waterfowl swim and feed along the river and in Ellis Bay. Thousands of Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup migrate through here, along with sea ducks such as Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye. Also watch for Northern Harriers and Short-Eared Owls. During the coldest part of winter when the river freezes over, Bald Eagles line the banks just below the dam, taking advantage of the open water and upwelling currents. Rare Glaucous, Thayer's, Iceland, or Lesser-backed Gulls may also be present.



Canvasback Ducks  
© Jasper Photo



Prothonotary Warbler  
© U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Mallard  
© Sandra Lines

**KEY**

- River View
- Blufftop View
- Open Water/Wetlands
- Bottomland Forests
- Open Fields/Grasslands
- Upland Forests
- Lock & Dam
- Great River Road
- Boat Landing
- Canoe Trail
- Hiking Trail
- Information
- Restrooms
- Bike Trail
- Important Bird Area

Maps are not to scale. Please refer to state road maps for actual distances between points.

## 7. Edward "Ted" and Pat Jones - Confluence State Park

**Where:** Located just about 15 miles north of downtown St. Louis, two of the greatest rivers in the nation – the Mississippi and Missouri – meet, and these 1,118 acres are the Missouri Department of Natural Resources state park's system newest addition. For more information call: (636) 940-3325 or go to [www.mostatoparks.com](http://www.mostatoparks.com) Be sure to check for flood levels prior to your visit.  
**Birds:** Situated between the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area and the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area, watch for similar species of migratory and resident species of birds at this major river confluence.

## 8. Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

**Where:** This 4,318-acre area is located in North St. Louis County. Accessed from I-270 by taking the Riverview Drive exit, then north on Riverview Drive about 2.5 miles.  
**Birds:** This diverse area at the south side of the Missouri River / Mississippi River confluence features river frontage, boat access, natural and developed wetlands, open crop fields, emergent forest, and mature bottomland forest. At the junction point for the Mississippi and Central flyways, it is a good place to see virtually any resident or migratory riparian species, from warblers to waterfowl.

## 9. Pere Marquette State Park & Graham Hollow Road

**Where:** This is the largest state park in Illinois, with a total of over 8,000 acres. The main park entrance is located off of IL 100. The park is named for missionary Father Marquette, who landed at the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers in 1673. The park's visitor center is open weekdays from 9am – 3pm. A bird checklist for the park is available at the visitor's center.  
**Birds:** From the visitor's center at the main park entrance, hike the Ravine Trail, which is excellent birding for migrating warblers, as well as Louisiana Waterthrushes, Ovenbirds, and Northern Parulas. Driving in about .5 mile on the main park road there is an overlook for Swan Lake, where you may see American White Pelicans in fall migration. Excellent birding can also be found on Graham Hollow Road, accessible via the park by driving about 2 miles in on the main park road, or by driving north on IL 100, about 2.6 miles past the town of Grafton. Over 50 species of birds are known to nest in the area. Excellent for flycatchers and warblers. In March watch for returning Eastern Phoebe and Louisiana Waterthrushes. Listen and watch for breeding songbirds such as Ovenbirds, Summer Tanagers, White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos.

## 10. Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge - Gilbert Lake Division

**Where:** Located just west of Grafton. Gilbert Lake totals 736 acres, consisting of a 250-acre lake bordered by brush, trees, small agricultural fields and grasslands.  
**Birds:** Hundreds of Bald Eagles use the area quite extensively during the winter, and you can find excellent viewing opportunities from Illinois State Highway 100. Note: Gilbert Lake is closed to public access (except for the overlook road) annually from October 15 – December 31 to provide an undisturbed sanctuary area for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The Gilbert Lake area is an excellent stopover for spring and fall migrating warblers, such as American Redstarts, Prothonotary Warblers and also Acadian Flycatchers. Watch for egrets, Bald Eagles, Wild Turkeys and scan the mudflats for a variety of shorebirds in both the spring and fall.

## 11. Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters - Calhoun Division

**Where:** The refuge headquarters is located near Brussels, IL 17 miles west of Alton, IL on Highway 100, then across the river on the Brussels Ferry another 4.5 miles. For more information: (618) 883-2524. The refuge includes five divisions – Calhoun, Gilbert Lake, Batchtown, Portage Island and Apple Creek – totaling over 8,500 acres. More than 200 species of birds funnel through this important river juncture on their fall migration, including over 5,000,000 ducks and 50,000 geese. This area also serves as important habitat for the federally threatened Bald Eagle, with hundreds over-wintering in the area.  
**Birds:** The Calhoun Division of the refuge is located just north of the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. This 4,835 acres of floodplain is comprised of the 2,600 acre Swan Lake, ponds, backwater sloughs, wetland management units, agricultural land, bottomland forests, grasslands, and the refuge headquarters. The seven wetland management units totaling approximately 242 floodable acres are managed for migratory waterfowl. The division is an important link in the migration of millions of birds. Watch for Bald Eagles during the winter months, as well as huge concentrations of Snow Geese from mid October to mid March, with numbers peaking around 20,000. This area also attracts American White Pelicans, Green-winged Teal, Canvasbacks, and Northern Pintails. Swan Lake is great for spring and fall shorebirds.  
**Note:** the Calhoun Division is closed to public access annually from October 15 – December 31 to provide an undisturbed sanctuary area for waterfowl.

## 12. National Great Rivers Museum at Melvin Price Lock & Dam No. 26

**Where:** Located on Highway 143, two miles south of Clark Bridge in Alton.  
**Birds:** In winter, this is one of the best places to view large numbers of gulls, above and below the Lock & Dam. Expect 7 or more species, including rarities like Glaucous, Iceland, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed, on a good day. Also watch for Bald Eagles soaring above and looking for fish.