Great River Birding Trail

St. Louis Map — West Alton, IL to Arnold, MO (River Mile 200 to 164)

1. 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.

2. 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.mostateparks.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.

3. 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.

4. Creve Coeur Lake (St. Louis County Parks)

Where: This area consists of over 1,000 acres near the junction of interstates 70 and 270, found by traveling south 3 miles on 270 to Dorsett Rd. Travel west on Dorsett for 1 mile to the second park entrance at Marine Ave. on the north side of the road. For more information, contact: 314-889-2863.
Birds: This 300-acre remnant oxbow lake, left when the Missouri River changed channels, attracts migratory waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. Winter is the best time to see Bald Eagles and many species of ducks including Mallards, Wood Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Buffleheads, teal and mergansers. A few migrating loons stop at the lake each winter. In the woods and throughout the park, watch for Bluebirds, warblers, woodpeckers, swallows, Belted Kingfishers, Wild Turkeys, American Kestrels and Red-tailed Hawks.

5. Forest Park (St. Louis City Parks)

Where: This area consists of 1,370 acres, making it the nation's 7th largest urban park. To access, Take the Hampton exit from I-64/US 40, or access it from any of Kingshighway, Lindell or Skinker Boulevards.
Birds: Forest Park provides varied habitats, including lake, marsh and forest. The St. Louis Zoo has some outstanding birds on exhibit, both in and out of doors. Fifty acres of woods at the southwest corner of Forest Park is known as Kennedy Forest, an outstanding migrant trap in the spring. The woods and trails along Valley and Government drives can yield excellent varieties of warblers and other migrating passerines during early May.

6. Tower Grove Park (St. Louis City Parks)

Where: To access, take Kingshighway south from either I-44 or I-64/US-40 to Magnolia, turning east.
Birds: This 289-acre park is one of the best migrant traps in St. Louis, and can potentially provide all of the species of warblers, thrushes, and other passerines found in the area. The best areas in the park are from the Northwest end (The Gaddy Bird Garden, NW corner of park) east to the horse stables, and near the Cypress circle at the eastern end of the park. Just north of the park is the Missouri Botanical Gardens, with diverse landscapes and gardens of nectar producing flowers that attract an interesting array of birds.

7. Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

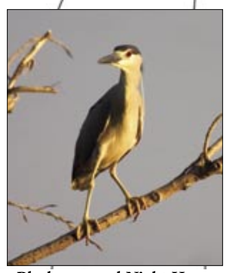
Where: Located near the intersection of I-44 and I-270, access from I-44 to Watson Road, to Geyer Road north 200 yards, then west on Cragwold to the entrance.
Birds: 127 different bird species have been noted at this site, and interpretive staff and a birding library are available. Habitat consists primarily of oak/hickory forests on gently rolling hills, which serve as a stopover for migrating and resident warblers and other songbirds, woodpeckers and Wild Turkeys. Waterfowl and Bald Eagles are also sometimes seen flying overhead. A bird feeding station is maintained year round.

KEY

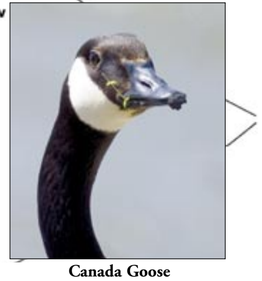
- River View
- Blufftop View
- Open Water/Wetlands
- Bottomland Forests
- Open Fields/Grasslands
- Upland Forests
- Lock & Dam
- Great River Road
- Boat Landing
- Canoe Trail
- Hiking Trail
- Information
- Restrooms
- Bike Trail
- (IBA) Important Bird Area

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

Red-bellied Woodpecker
© Jasper Photo



Black-crowned Night Heron
© Jasper Photo



Canada Goose
© Jasper Photo

8. 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.
Note: The museum features interactive displays and exhibits that help the visitor understand the many aspects of the Mississippi River and how it affects our lives, as well as tours, movies and a gift shop. The natural ecosystem of the Mississippi River and how humans interact with it is one of the major themes of the museum. A large model of the bluffs of the region is in the center of the museum and provides information on the various wildlife from prairie plants and trees to birds and other animals. An aquarium displays the various species of fish that inhabit the Mississippi River.

9. Old Chain of Rocks Bridge

Where: From Missouri - Take 270 East, exit Riverview south, entrance on left (St. Louis City). Take 55/70, exit Adelaide, go right to Hall Street, go left, to Riverview, entrance is just before intersection of Interstate 270 and Riverview. From Illinois - Take 270 West, exit Route 3 South, then west on Old Chain of Rocks Road. Parking is available at the entrance to the Bridge on the Missouri side and along the street on the Illinois side.
Birds: Great for winter viewing of Bald Eagles over the Mississippi River. At one time, this 1.1-mile bridge was part of legendary U.S. Route 66, which ran between Los Angeles, California, and Chicago, Illinois. The bridge served automobile traffic between 1929 and 1968. In 1967, the nearby Interstate 270 bridge opened to automobile traffic and the U.S. Route 66 Bridge was no longer needed. After closing for thirty-two years, the bridge reopened in 1999 as the Route 66 Bikeway. Today, all trail users can enjoy a ride or stroll across the Mississippi River and a wonderful view of the St. Louis City skyline.
For more information on area bike and walking trails, go to TrailNet at www.trailnet.org.

10. Horseshoe Lake State Park

Where: Horseshoe Lake is located off Highway 111 in Madison County, which lies in the southwestern part of Illinois, and is one of the most easily accessible birding locations from downtown St. Louis. Take I-55 / I-70 east from downtown. The lake lies just north of I-55 / I-70, 3-4 freeway miles east of the Mississippi River. It can be accessed from either the east or west side.
Birds: Horseshoe Lake is situated in a low floodplain, and is one of the most well known places to see a diversity of herons and egrets. Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons occur in large numbers, especially in July and August. Watch also for Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons. This is an excellent spot to see Eurasian Tree Sparrows as well. Late July and early to mid-August can be good for shorebirds on the south pool at the causeway when water is pumped out of the pool to encourage most soil plant germination. During fall migration, this is a great place for waterfowl and shorebirds, including loons, grebes and cormorants. In winter, watch for a variety of gulls.

11. East St. Louis

Where: Front Street in East St. Louis, just north of the Casino Queen gambling boat is home to some very rewarding birding. Best birded from the road with nice views of the Mississippi River and downtown St. Louis as your background.
Birds: Illinois' only nesting Painted Buntings have made their home here since June, 2000 and Western Kingbirds have also expanded their range into the area. Other notable species to look for include Peregrine Falcon, Fish Crow, Bell's Vireo, Blue Grosbeak, swallows, gulls, and numerous passerines during migration.

12. Sauget Wetlands

Where: Easily reached by taking the Mousetle Lane exit off of I-255 just south of Cahokia exit, and less than 10 minutes away from Frank Holten State Park.
Birds: Despite being a heavily industrialized area, several small wetlands attract large numbers of wading birds, including Great, Snowy and Cattle Egret and both Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Herons. Peregrine Falcons can sometimes be seen perched on top of the transmission poles. A large heron / egret rookery is located on private property just to the north of the Sauget Business Park.

13. Frank Holten State Park

Where: This park is easily reached from downtown St. Louis. I-64 east, past East St. Louis to Exit 6. Turn right, and go south on IL-111, which ends at Lake Drive after about 1.5 miles. Turn right on Lake Drive (the northwest boundary of the park) and watch for the park entrance.
Birds: Located within sight of St. Louis Gateway Arch, Frank Holten is a 1,080-acre park almost entirely surrounded by East St. Louis. This is a good place to see herons, egrets and other water birds. This park remains one of the best place to find Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Cattle Egrets, and Little Blue Herons. Watch for terns during migration. Frank Holten has two lakes - Whispering Willow Lake and Grand Marais Lake - with a combined water surface of 208 acres and five miles of shoreline.

Audubon

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