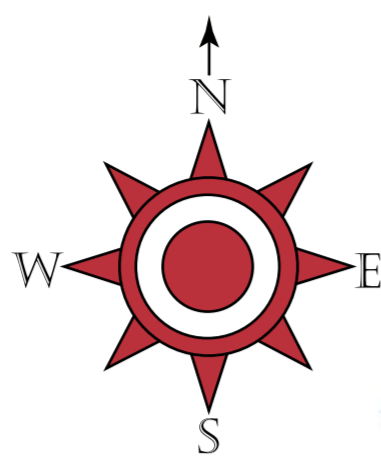


Great River Birding Trail

Cairo, IL Map — Cape Girardeau, MO to Arkansas Border (River Mile 54 to 0 (upper) to 0 to 830 (lower))



1. Big Oak Tree State Park

Where: Located 14 miles south of East Prairie on Highway 102.
Birds: This 1,007-acre birding hot spot consists of bottomland forests and swamps. A diverse variety of neo-tropical migratory songbirds are possible, especially vireos and warblers. Waterfowl and shorebirds can also be observed, and Mississippi Kites are often seen in the area. Most of the park is protected as a Missouri Natural Area and a National Natural Landmark that includes several state and national champion trees.

2. Donaldson Point Conservation Area

Where: This 6,000-acre area is contained inside a big loop of the Mississippi River. To get there, take Route U east from New Madrid to Route WW, then east 3.2 miles to Route AB, and 4 miles on Route AB to the entrance.
Birds: The area has river on two sides and a forest of cottonwood, sycamore and maple in the middle. Bald cypress trees are found in the sloughs, and oak and walnut grow on higher ground. Watch for Mississippi Kites flying above treetops, songbirds in the woodlands and shorebirds along the river. The endangered Interior Least Tern may also be viewed over the river. In the ponds and sloughs watch for beaver, muskrat, mink and other aquatic mammals.

3. Wolf Bayou Conservation Area

Where: To access, take the Wardell exit off I-55. Follow the east outer road to Route BB. Follow Route BB several miles to where it crosses the levee.
Birds: Wolf Bayou is one of the state's only natural lowland lakes. The 263-acre area has four bays totaling 43 acres of surface water and features an oxbow lake carved by the Mississippi River. Because of the unique habitat provided by the Mississippi River lowlands, the area is home to Mississippi Kites, as well as several rare and endangered species of wildlife, including swamp rabbits, alligator snapping turtles, and a plant called primrose willow. The Conservation Department manages the area to protect these species and to provide outdoor recreation. For further information contact 573/290-5730.

4. Horseshoe Lake Conservation Area

Where: Located in Alexander County just east of Illinois Rt. 3, seven miles north of Cairo. Probably the best tactic for birding this area is to drive and stop as you go around the lake. Go south on the Miller City blacktop from Olive Branch, which is located on Rt. 3 between Cairo and Thebes.
Birds: With habitats similar to the deep-south, here you will find spectacular scenery of bald cypress, tupelo gum, swamp cottonwood trees and wild lotus. This area has been managed for wintering Canada Geese, and now supports up to 150,000 geese. In addition you may see Greater White-fronted, Snow and Ross's Geese, as well as Bald Eagles. During the summer months watch for several species of herons including Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron and the Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Watch and listen for Fish Crows, Black-necked Stilts, egrets, Mississippi Kites, Least Terns, woodpeckers, flycatchers, Northern Mockingbirds, Eastern Bluebirds, shrikes, vireos, orioles, tanagers and breeding warblers. For more information: (618) 776-5689.

5. Cache River Wetlands

Where: Over 30,000 acres is managed by the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and the Cache River State Natural Area. These areas offer birding possibilities that are truly remarkable. It is recommended that you call or visit the Refuge Headquarters for specific information on the best birding sites through the different seasons. The refuge is located between the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, approximately 22 miles north of Cairo, IL and 35 miles south of Carbondale, IL. To get to the refuge headquarters, take Interstate 57, and exit at #18, Shawnee College Road. Travel approximately 7.1 miles east to the refuge office, located on the Shawnee Rustic Campus, Building D. For more information, call the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge at (618) 634-2231.
Birds: The half-million acre Cache River Watershed, with its forested hills and ancient cypress swamps, looks more like Louisiana than Illinois. Its unique landscape results from the intersection of four major geographic regions of the United States. East meets West and North meets South creating an unusual area with a rich natural history. Designated a "Wetland of International Importance", the Cache River/Cypress Creek area supports an amazing diversity of wildlife, especially birds; over 250 species of migratory and resident birds nest, nest, or feed in the area. Birding is good year round. During spring migration watch for bitterns, osprey, shorebirds, a multitude of waterfowl, rails, flycatchers, sparrows and a diversity of warblers – which include Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated, Prairie, Cerulean, Black and White, Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Kentucky, and Hooded warblers to name a few. During the breeding season, watch for Bald Eagles, Red-shoulder Hawks, Pileated Woodpeckers, Loggerhead Shrikes, Short-eared Owls, Scarlet Tanagers, and Little Blue Herons. Look for Eurasian-collared Doves at the feeders at the Cypress Creek NWR headquarters.

6. Mermet Lake

Where: Located west of U.S. Rt. 45, approximately 15 miles north of Metropolis, along the Ohio River, but within a 20-minute drive of the Cypress Creek NWR and Cache River Natural Area. Birders visiting this region must include a stop at Mermet Lake! Numerous pull-offs allow for good viewing of the lake and to get out and explore.
Birds: This spot has hosted nesting Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen, Osprey, Least Bittern, Fish Crow, Bald Eagle, and Red-shouldered Hawk. Excellent location for waterfowl, loons, geese, cormorants, gulls and terns. Very good in spring for neo-tropical migrants.

7. Fort Defiance Park / Mississippi River & Ohio River Confluence

Where: located at the end of Rt. 3 in Illinois
Birds: The merging of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers is one of America's great confluences and is an impressive sight. If you spend some time here, you may see Least Terns, migrating herons and waterfowl. For more information, call the City of Cairo: (618) 734-4127.

8. Ballard Wildlife Management Area

Where: Located about 12 miles north of Wickliffe, KY just north of Barlow. From Wickliffe, take U.S. Highway 60 north to Barlow. From Barlow, take Highway 1105 for about 8 miles to the intersection of Highway 473 (look for WMA sign). Bear left (northwest) onto Highway 473 (Refuge Road) and follow it to the site.
Birds: The area contains a very diverse mix of forested and open habitats. The area is noted for its large populations of wintering waterfowl and contains numerous sloughs, lakes, agricultural bottomlands, moist soil management areas, and scattered stands of bottomland hardwoods and cypress. Riverfront habitats along the Ohio River are also present and accessible by road. In addition to thousands of Mallards, Black Ducks, and Canada Geese, wintering Bald Eagles may be seen. During the warmer months, the Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Mississippi Kite are present. Shorebirds and wading birds may also be seen. Notes: Primitive camping is permitted but most of the area is closed from October 15 through March 15 to serve as a wildlife refuge. A two-mile driving loop is open all year around. An observation tower and a walkway through a bottomland hardwood wetland area for wildlife viewing are present and easily accessible from the driving loop. Numerous boat launches provide access to area lakes. Maps are available at the WMA Headquarters Building. Wintering eagles may be viewed, in January, through special arrangements made with the KY Dam Village Gathering of Eagles Program. (<http://www.ky.gov/agencies/parks/events/kdeagle/htm>). Area roads are mostly gravel and may be subject to flooding at times.



Red-tailed Hawk
© Hope Rutledge



Mallards
© 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 |
| | (IBA) Important Bird Area |

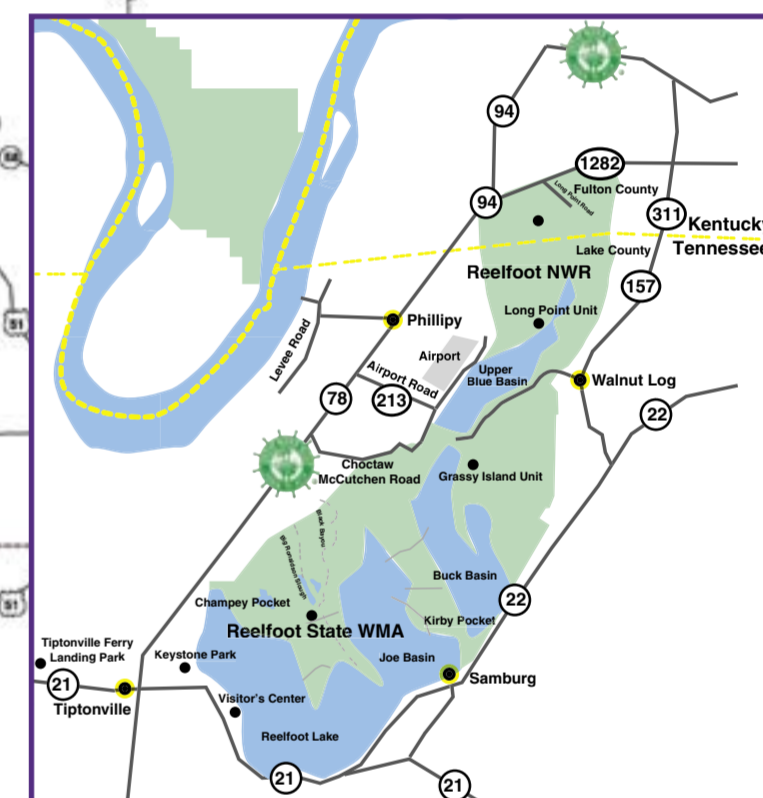
Maps are not to scale. Please refer to state road maps for actual distances between points.

9. Westvaco-Columbus Bottom Wildlife Management Area

Where: Located south of Wickliffe, KY along the Mississippi River. From Wickliffe, take U.S. Highway 51 S to Bardwell, KY. Then, about 0.5 miles past the center of Bardwell, take Highway 123 south for about 7 miles to Berkeley, KY. Look for a sign that directs you to the area via local road 1217 (Berkeley-Fish Lake Road).
Birds: Mississippi River bottomland hardwood forest, sloughs, floodplain lakes and main stem river habitats (a large sand bar area may be accessed at the Laketon Boat Ramp area—see notes). A variety of waterfowl, Wild Turkey, shorebirds, and neo-tropical migrants may be seen. This area may be accessed via Highway 1203 and Laketon Road off Highway 123. From Bardwell, take Highway 123 south about three miles to Highway 1203. Then take Highway 1203 north about one mile to Laketon Road. Laketon Road leads to the river.
Notes: Roads are gravel and may be subject to flooding at times. The area is closed November 1 through March 15. The Laketon Boat Ramp area at the north end of the WMA is a good location to observe sandbar habitats. This area may be accessed via Highway 1203 and Laketon Road off Highway 123. From Bardwell, take Highway 123 south about three miles to Highway 1203. Then take Highway 1203 north about one mile to Laketon Road. Laketon Road leads to the river.

10. Columbus-Belmont State Park

Where: Adjacent to and just west of Columbus, KY off KY Highway 80, with a spectacular view overlooking the Mississippi River (at the end of Cheatham Street).
Birds: Mississippi River bluff and riparian habitats, upland hardwood forest, and developed park habitats are present. A variety of birds may be seen including raptors during migration.
Notes: This 156 Acre Park occupies the site of a Civil War battlefield where a massive chain was placed across the river in an attempt to prevent passage of Union gunboats. It affords excellent views of the main stem Mississippi River and adjacent bottomlands. Picnic areas, a trail following Civil War trench lines through the forest, a boat launch and a campground are present. From the boat launch area, it is possible to walk along the bank of the Mississippi River.



Reelfoot Lake Complex

11. Reelfoot Lake Complex

Where: Located about 10 miles SW of Hickman, KY, 30 miles north of Dyersburg, TN and 20 miles west of Union City, TN between TN Highways 78 and 22 and to the west of TN Highway 78. The town of Tiptonville, TN is located at the SW corner of the area.
Birds: The U.S. Dept. of the Interior has designated the Reelfoot area as a National Natural Landmark. Birders will find floodplain lakes, cypress swamps, bottomland hardwood forests, marshlands, and managed moist soil and cropland areas in various locations around Reelfoot Lake proper. To the west of the lake may be found various Mississippi River floodplain habitats subject to river overflow. Much of the area surrounding Reelfoot Lake is in public ownership within the Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge, Tennessee's Reelfoot Wildlife Management Area, or the Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park. Neo-tropical migrants, wading birds, waterfowl, raptors and shorebirds may be observed. At least 14 rare bird species occur including the Bald Eagle, Swainson's Warbler, Peregrine Falcon, and Mississippi Kite. More than 230 species have been documented using the Federal refuge. Up to 200 Bald Eagles winter at Reelfoot along with up to 400,000 Mallards and 100,000 Canada Geese.
Notes: Reelfoot Lake was formed as a result of the most violent earthquakes ever recorded in North America that took place in late 1811 and early 1812. The earthquakes created a depression in the landscape that filled with water to create the lake. Food and lodging is available in nearby Union City and Tiptonville, TN. Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park located in Tiptonville, provides sites for tent and trailer camping, cabins, and facilities for picnicking and boating.

There are many, many excellent locations around Reelfoot Lake to observe birds and other wildlife. Some of the more noteworthy are:

- Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge (Grassy Island and Long Point Units)**
Where: Located about 15 miles west of Union City, TN off TN Highway 157 and KY Highway 311. From Union City, TN, take TN Highway 22 west about 14 miles to the intersection of TN Highway 157. Turn right onto TN Highway 157 and go about 1 mile to the Refuge Headquarters. The Refuge has boat-launching ramps, observation towers, hiking trails, and a wildlife drive. The Grassy Island Unit is just west of the Refuge Headquarters and is accessible by a paved wildlife drive off of highway 157 (maps are available at the Refuge Headquarters). This is an excellent place to observe woodland birds during migration and owls are frequently seen and heard here. The drive ends at a boardwalk and observation platform at a scenic cypress dominated lakeshore site. To access the Long Point Unit, continue past the Refuge Headquarters on TN Highway 157 until reaching the KY State Line (at this point the Highway number changes to 311). Go about 2.5 miles into KY to the intersection of Highway 1282. Turn left onto Highway 1282 and go around 3 miles to access the Long Point area lying to the left of Highway 1282 along both sides of Long Point Road. This is a good location to observe migratory birds in fall and spring and to observe waterfowl in winter. An observation tower is provided on Long Point Road.
- Reelfoot Wildlife Management Area**
Where: This state owned area containing a mix of farmland, shrub, and forest habitats is located about three miles NE of Tiptonville, TN just east of TN Highway 78. The Black Bayou area is an especially good location for birding and may be accessed by taking Choctaw-McCutchen road east of Highway 78 (paved) or a lesser traveled gravel road about a mile to the south of Choctaw-McCutchen road. There is a trail through old growth cypress along the old Black Bayou channel that may be accessed from the parking area at the end of the gravel road. Other access roads leading east from Highway 78 can also be taken to enter the southern parts of the WMA. An observation tower is provided off Choctaw-McCutchen road. In winter, watch for eagles and waterfowl. In spring and summer, wading birds, rails, and neo-tropical migrants may be seen. Shorebirds may also be seen at times when mudflats are present.
- Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park**
Where: Located along the southern and southwestern shore of Reelfoot Lake along TN Highway 21. Opportunities to observe birds frequenting open water areas may be had at numerous access points along the State Park lakeshore and elsewhere along the shoreline (cormorants, loons, gulls, pelicans, diving ducks). There is a hiking trail along the shoreline of the Lake at the Keystone Day Use Area that passes through bottomland hardwood and cypress groves and that provides good views of the lake and opportunities for birding. During the winter, State Park employees lead public tours to observe Bald Eagles and waterfowl (phone the State Park at 713-253-7756 or 800-250-8617 for information or access the State Park Web Site at <http://www.state.tn.us/environment/parks/reelfoot/>). There is also a live Bald Eagle display at the Reelfoot Lake Visitor's Center.
- Phillippy Road at the Mississippi River Levee**
Where: Take TN Highway 78 north for about 9 miles NE of Tiptonville to the town of Phillippy. Turn west (left) onto Cates Landing Road and follow it about two miles to Levee Road at the Mississippi River levee. At Levee Road, turn south (left) or north (right) and drive along the base of the Mississippi River Levee. From Levee Road it is possible, when water conditions are right, to see numerous wading birds and shorebirds at close range in borrow pits or natural depressions at or near the base of the levee (Note: the borrow pits are in an area of farmland and may be planted with crops when not flooded). At times, rarities such as ibis may be seen in this general area. (Note: Land along Levee Road is privately owned but birds may be seen from the public road at the base of the levee without the need to trespass.)
- Tiptonville Ferry Landing (Marijac Memorial Park)**
Where: Take TN Highway 21 west of Tiptonville and follow it about one mile to the park at the river (the ferry no longer operates). This site provides good views of Mississippi River main channel and sandbar habitat when water levels are not too high (generally in summer and fall). Rarities such as Jaegers and Sabine Gulls may, on occasion be seen along with more common birds such as the Interior Least Tern. Picnic tables are provided at the park.