

St. Louis Area Birding Hotspots

2022

There are many fine birding sites within 50 miles of the St. Louis City limits. Although this list is by no means complete, it contains some of the best public areas. The initial directions will get you to each area for birding on your own, while the directions for where to meet (and in some cases how to carpool) apply to scheduled St. Louis Audubon Society field trips.

CA = Conservation Area. Information and maps for all CA's are available on the web site of the Missouri Department of Conservation.

For State Parks and maps of those sites, see the web site of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Many of these locations are hotspots for eBird—i.e., lists from those sites are archived under one location name and are publicly viewable—but please check the exact name used by eBird to make sure your list is entered correctly. Then, on any list submitted for a given hotspot, please be sure to record only birds seen within its boundaries; don't use one hotspot to include birds seen at other sites.

Al Foster Trail

Take I-44 west to Eureka and go north on 109. In about 3 miles, make a right on Old State Road and then your first right again on Washington Ave. In about ¼ mile, park in the semicircular lot on your left with the Western Greenway sign.

Babler State Park

Take I-44 to Hwy 109 and go north past Manchester Rd. Angle left on Babler Park Drive to reach the park. From I-64, take the Long Rd. exit in Chesterfield Valley and go south to Wild Horse Creek Rd. Turn right and follow this road to Hwy 109. Go left on 109, then right on Babler Park Road to the park entrance. Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot.

Baldwin Lake (IL)

Take I-270/255 across the Jefferson Barracks Bridge to IL. Exit for Hwy 3 and follow it south to Redbud. From Redbud, go east on Hwy 154 to Baldwin. Follow the signs in town to Baldwin Lake (left turn at 5th Street/Baldwin Road). Meet at the parking lot inside the gate.

To carpool there, meet at the commuter lot at I-270 and Hwy 30 west (Gravois Road).

Blue Grosbeak Trail (Weldon Spring CA)

From St. Louis, take US-40/I-64 west across the Missouri River. Exit at MO-94 and go left. Less than a mile along 94 there will be a bike-trail parking lot and gate on your left. Meet in the parking lot.

BK Leach CA

Take I-70 west across the Missouri River and through St. Charles. At Exit 220, go north on route 79. Proceed through the towns of Winfield and Foley to county road M on the right. Turn right there and proceed about 2 miles to enter a portion of BK Leach CA. If you are unfamiliar with the area, get a map in advance from the MDC web site.

To carpool, take Exit 220 (route 79) and turn left. Go across the interstate and turn right into the parking lot for Dierberg's; meet there at the southeast corner of the parking lot at the scheduled time. Birding may also be done at other locations up route 79, such as Winfield Dam.

Busch CA

From St. Louis, take US-40/I-64 west across the Missouri River. Exit at MO-94 and go left. In just over a mile, turn right at the stoplight onto route D. Go about 2 miles to the Busch entrance on the right. Enter and turn left at the T to the Hampton Lake parking lot, or right to reach the Visitor Center. If you are new to the area, you will need a map. Meet in the Hampton Lake parking lot for scheduled field trips.

Carlyle Lake (IL)

Take I-64 east across the Poplar St. Bridge. Continue on I-64 when it diverges from I-70/55. Take Exit 19B, go north (left) briefly, and then east (right) at the light on US 50 toward Carlyle. Follow 50 through Lebanon and then about 25 miles to the T at route 127 on the outskirts of Carlyle. Turn left, then right to enter McDonald's. If new to the area, you will need a map. Much of the area is managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, but there is also an Illinois State Park on either side of the lake.

For field trips, meet at McDonald's at the scheduled time. Carpool information may be posted with the trip announcement.

Castlewood State Park

Take Big Bend Rd west beyond 141 to Ries Rd and turn south (left) and left again on Kiefer Creek Road. Meet at lot on right, just after park office.

Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge

Take I-70 west across the Missouri River and through St. Charles. At Exit 220, go north on route 79. Proceed about 30 miles through the towns of Winfield, Foley, and Elsberry to the crossroads at Annada; turn right there and follow the gravel road to the refuge headquarters. A map of the refuge is available online.

To carpool, take Exit 220 (route 79) and turn left. Go across the interstate and turn right into the parking lot for Dierberg's; meet there at the southeast corner of the parking lot at the scheduled time. Birding may also be done at other locations up route 79, such as Winfield Dam.

Columbia Bottom CA

From I-270 in north St. Louis County, take Exit 34 (Riverview Drive) and turn north (left). Go about 3 miles to the entrance on the right and make an immediate left for the Visitor Center, which is no longer open to the public. Meet in the Visitor Center parking lot.

Cora Island unit, Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

From I-270 in north St. Louis County, take Exit 31B for route 367 north to Red School Road (the second road after crossing the Missouri River). Travel about 3 miles on Red School Road to Cora Island Road at the corner of Ebenezer cemetery. Follow Cora Island Road just over a mile, across the levee to the refuge parking lot. During floods this road may be under water. Do not drive into flooded spots.

This area is often visited in conjunction with Riverlands and/or Confluence State Park.

Cuivre River State Park

Take I-70 west across the Missouri River and through St. Charles. At Exit 220, go north on route 79. As you are approaching the town of Winfield, turn left on route 47 and travel west for 10+ miles to the park entry road (route 147) on your right. This will take you to the office/visitor center. Alternatively, continue west on I-70 and then take Exit 210 to proceed north on US 61. Exit at Troy and turn east (right) on route 47. The park entry road will be on your left in about 3 miles.

To carpool, take Exit 220 (route 79) and turn left. Go across the interstate and turn right into the parking lot for Dierberg's; meet there at the southeast corner of the parking lot at the scheduled time. Birding may also be done at other locations up route 79, such as Winfield Dam.

Emmenegger Nature Park (City of Kirkwood)

From Watson Rd., just west of Lindbergh Blvd., turn right onto Geyer Rd. Cross over I-44 and make the first left onto Craigwood Rd. Follow this past the entrance to Powder Valley, cross over I-270, and turn left. Proceed to the entrance of the park on the right.

Forest Park (City of St. Louis)

From the corner of Skinker & Clayton Rds, go north on Skinker 1/2 block to Wells Rd. and turn right into the park. Go past Government Dr. on Wells till you reach the sign for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Forest and a triangular MDC sign on your left. Turn left and proceed back to the parking area with restrooms and a picnic shelter. We will meet there for field trips.

Hawn State Park

Take I-55 south and take Exit 154 onto route O west (right). Follow O to route 32 and turn right. From 32, turn left on 144, the Hawn SP entry road, and follow it to the park office.

To carpool, meet at the MODOT commuter lot closest to the highway on the southwest side of I-270 & Hwy 30.

Hilda Young Conservation Area

Take I-44 to Eureka; exit at route 109 and go south (left). At the first junction, turn right on route FF and follow it to the parking lot for Young CA on the left.

To carpool, meet at the MODOT lot for commuters in the southwest corner of I-44 and Hwy 109.

Horseshoe Lake State Park (IL)

Take I-64/70 east across the Poplar St. Bridge. Take Exit 6 and turn left onto route 111 north. Go about 2 miles to the State Park entrance on the left. Meet at the first parking lot on the right.

Lost Valley Trail (Weldon Spring CA)

From St. Louis, take US-40/I-64 west across the Missouri River. Exit at MO-94 and go left. Proceed on 94 about 5.7 miles to the Lost Valley parking lot and trailhead on the right.

Mallard Lake Trail

To meet at the Lake House Restaurant parking lot, go west from I-270 on Hwy 364 (Page Ave.) to the exit for the Maryland Heights Expressway (route 141). Go north (right) past River Valley Drive to Creve Coeur Mill Rd. Turn right and go south, cross under Hwy 364, and look for the restaurant/parking lot on your left.

Marais Temps Clair Conservation Area

From I-270 heading east, take exit 31B (route 367) north toward Alton and cross Missouri River bridge. At junction with MO-94, turn left and follow 94 about 10 miles to county road H. Turn left on H and proceed across train tracks to the first intersection, with Mertz Road on the left; turn right there and follow Powers Road, which becomes Island Road as it approaches a large wooded area (which is Marais Temps Clair). Continue to main parking lot on left, with mobile-unit headquarters. MTC can only be covered on foot, from the entry point opposite this lot or three others, each with a small parking lot (use area map from website).

From St. Charles, follow 94 northeast to junction with H; proceed straight on H for about two miles, turn left on Island Road, and follow about two more miles to the main parking lot described above, on the right.

Meramec State Park

Take I-44 west to Exit 226 near Sullivan. Exit and turn left on route 185 into the state park.

To carpool, meet at the MODOT lot for commuters in the southwest corner of I-44 and Hwy 109.

Monroe County (IL) Driving Tour

Meet at the MODOT commuter lot closest to the highway on the southwest side of I-270 & Hwy 30. We will caravan/carpool from there.

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

From Lindbergh Blvd., go west on Watson Road, turn right onto Geyer Rd., cross over I-44, and make the first left onto Craigwold Rd. Follow this to the entrance to Powder Valley on the right.

Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary

From I-270 in north St. Louis Co., take Exit 31B to go north on route 367 toward Alton. Cross the Missouri River Bridge and proceed to the last road before the Alton Bridge. Turn right there, go past the gas station, and turn right again at the far corner of the pond on your right, on Wise Road. A short distance down Wise is the Teal Pond parking lot, where field trips often meet. For the Audubon Center, continue on the main road instead of turning on Wise. The Center is on your left.

Route 66 State Park

From St. Louis, take I-44 west to Eureka and exit 264, for route 109. Get in the leftmost exit lane, turn, and get back on I-44 heading east about a mile, to exit 265 (Williams Rd). Exit there, swing around briefly on Williams Rd, and make the first available left (S. Outer Road East). Follow this as it parallels I-44 for a mile and turns left underneath it. Continue looping around, make a right, and proceed to the first main parking lot. If already coming east on I-44, follow these directions for exit 265.

Shaw Nature Reserve (Missouri Botanical Garden)

Take I-44 west to Exit 253 at Gray Summit. Exit; go left over the highway, then right. The Reserve is on your left; if you arrive before 8:00, park across the road and wait for the gate to open. There is an entrance fee if you do not have Missouri Botanical Garden membership.

To carpool, meet at the commuter parking lot at Hwy 44 & Hwy 141, the northwest corner off the north outer road.

St. Stanislaus CA

From I-270 heading northeast, exit at McDonnell Blvd and go left; continue as McDonnell turns into Howdershell Rd. At Teson Rd., turn left and follow to a "T" at Aubuchon Rd. Turn right and follow to the conservation area; there is a parking lot on the left as the road curves right and a second one a little farther on the right. Meet in first lot on left.

Tower Grove Park (City of St. Louis)

Take I-44 east to Kingshighway. Go south on Kingshighway to Magnolia, about 1/2 mile. Turn left onto Magnolia and park on the right side of Magnolia where convenient within the first few hundred yards. The Gaddy Bird Garden is up the slope to your right. OR continue along Magnolia to the entrance to the park, Tower Grove Ave. Turn right on Tower Grove Ave. and turn right again onto Northwest Drive. Take Northwest Drive to park near the Gaddy Bird Garden, which will be about 1/2 mile on your right.

Either way, meet at the entrance to the Gaddy Bird Garden.

Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge (IL)

From I-270 in north St. Louis Co., take Exit 31B to go north on route 367 toward Alton. Cross the Missouri River Bridge and proceed to the Alton Bridge (Mississippi River). Across the bridge, turn left, continue past the casino and make a left onto the River Road (route 100). Follow this about 12 miles to Grafton and continue through town and beyond. Just past the entry to the Brussels Ferry, turn left into the parking lot for the Gilbert Lake division of the refuge (signed on road).

To reach the Swan Lake division, return to the ferry landing and cross the Illinois River on the ferry (free). Across the river, go straight for about 5 miles and follow the signs to the Headquarters/Visitor Center.

To carpool, meet at Riverlands, either Teal Pond or the Audubon Center as directed (see Riverlands above).

Voelkerding Slough (carpool)

Meet at Busch CA (see above) at the field trip meeting time.

Winfield Dam and Sandy Chute (Sandy Slough)

Take I-70 west through St. Charles to Exit 220. Go right (north) about 15 min to the town of Winfield. Just past the town center, turn right on route N and proceed 3 miles to the left turn for the dam. You will cross Sandy Chute on a small bridge; check it for various water birds, and possibly shorebirds where muddy. Continue to the parking lot for the dam, walk west along the levee, and scan the river for waterfowl, larids, etc. Sandy Chute can be checked further by re-crossing the bridge and turning right on a narrow gravel road; at about 1.5 miles you get a good view of a shallower part of the chute. Continue along the gravel road back to the town of Winfield.

To carpool, take Exit 220 (route 79) and turn left. Go across the interstate and turn right into the parking lot for Dierberg's; meet there at the southeast corner of the parking lot at the scheduled time. Birding may also be done at other locations up route 79, such as BK Leach CA and Clarence Cannon NWR.