

Spring & Summer Birding at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary

How to Find Us

The Audubon Center at Riverlands is located on the 3,700-acre Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, public lands managed the Rivers Project Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District. The Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary is open daily from dawn to dusk. It is a popular Midwest birding hotspot, an Important Bird Area, and part of the Great Missouri Birding Trail.

We are easy to find, located at 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, MO 63386! The entrance to Riverlands is right off HWY 67 before you cross the Clark Bridge over the Mississippi River to Alton, IL. The Riverlands Way turn-in is where the Phillips66 gas station is located. The Audubon Center at Riverlands is about a half mile from the gas station on Riverlands Way.

Birding at Riverlands Now

Each season at Riverlands offers a rich birding experience. Right now birders can expect late spring migrants and summer residents.

Right now, many birds at Riverlands are either rearing young, nesting or starting the process of pairing up before nesting. Few others are still trickling in from their southern wintering grounds and migrating through to more northern sites.

The best times for late spring/summer birding at Riverlands: Mornings before 10 a.m. or Evenings from 6 p.m. until dusk.

Trails

Three trail systems at Riverlands offer excellent birding experiences. Since Riverlands is located in a floodplain, the area and trails are flat, however some trails can be muddy in some places, although all are mostly in full sun. The Audubon Center at Riverlands is very visible from all trails, making it easy to orientate. There is plenty of space to maintain safe social distancing!

Prairie Marsh / Heron Pond

Three marked trailheads to the prairie marsh are visible from Riverlands Way. The most popular is the Heron Pond trail, which connects to an Avian Observatory designed and constructed by the Washington University School of Architecture.

Parking: There is a small parking lot at Heron Pond with two trailheads traversing the prairie marsh. There is also a small parking area at the Avian Observatory, located off Orton Road.

Spring & Summer Birding at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary

Birds: Common Yellowthroat, Dickcissel, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Great Crested Flycatcher, Indigo Bunting, Orchard Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Willow Flycatcher, Great Egret

Birds on Heron Pond: Black-crown Night Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Mallard, Great Blue Heron

Audubon Center Trail / Two Pecan Trail

Find a mile of paved accessible trail around the Center that connects to Two Pecan Trail, which crosses Riverlands Way to through a section of the prairie marsh.

Parking: Center parking lot, or the small Two Pecan parking lot just down from the Center on Riverlands Way.

Birds: Blue Grosbeak, Brown Thrasher, Bobwhite Quail (call), Eastern Bluebird, Indigo Bunting, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Song Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Bell's Vireo, Red-winged Blackbird

Ellis Island

A perennial favorite, and one of the few walking and hiking trails in the StL Region that touch the main stem of the Mississippi River!

Unfortunately, Ellis Island is currently closed for trail upgrades and natural resource management activities. We expect to reopen this trail at the end of June.

Parking: When entering the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary take the first immediate left onto the service road just across the road from the Phillips 66 gas station. The service road leads to the Ellis Island parking lot and trailhead. If you follow the service road under the Clark Bridge it will take you briefly along the Mississippi River to the Lincoln Shields area. Lincoln Shields offers stunning views of the Mississippi River and Great River Road.

Ellis Island Birds: Baltimore Oriole, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Wood Peewee, Great Egret, Orchard Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird

Lincoln Shields Birds: American White Pelican, Ring-billed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Osprey

Wait, There's More!

Spring & Summer Birding at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary

Ellis Bay from the Center to the Lock & Dam: American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants

Lock & Dam parking lot: Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Gulls, Heron Gull and Ring-billed Gull among the most popular.

Teal Pond: The large pond behind the Phillips 66 gas station has a Least Tern nesting barge, which is becoming active now.

Check the trees across ***Ellis Bay from the Audubon Center*** for Bald Eagles.

Nest Boxes:

American Kestrel: Spaced across Riverlands Migratory Sanctuary on utility poles

Eastern Bluebird: Trail system around the Audubon Center at Riverlands

Purple Martin: Just off the Audubon Center at Riverlands

Other Important Info:

The Audubon Center is closed until further notice, but we expect to reopen later this summer. Bathroom, pit toilets, are at the pavilion overlooking Ellis Bay just down the road from the Audubon Center at Riverlands.

There are picnic tables around the Audubon Center at Riverlands. Rocking chairs are on the Center's "back deck" overlooking Ellis Bay and downtown Alton.

Check E-Bird and <https://www.facebook.com/audubonriverlands> for latest bird sightings at Riverlands.

Bring binoculars, hat, picnic meal, scope, sunscreen, and water

Birding from car windows is common, so be on the lookout for distracted birders.

Check out the Least Tern nest cam:

<https://www.earthcam.com/usa/missouri/westalton/tern/?cam=motern>

The Audubon Center at Riverlands
301 Riverlands Way
West Alton, MO 63386
riverlands.audubon.org