

## **DONALDSON POINT CONSERVATION AREA**

**Mark Haas, July 2017**

5,945 acres, New Madrid Co., DeLorme 68, I-5

GPS: 36.555562, -89.418403

MDC owned. For information, call 573-290-5730

Donaldson Point CA is within Audubon's Southeast Missouri Bottomlands Important Bird Area and in MDC's River Bends (bottomland forest) Priority Geography

**Directions:** From New Madrid, take Highway WW east. Go 4.5 miles and turn right on County Road 404 to enter the west side of the area. Or continue past CR 404 for three miles and turn right on Highway AB to enter the east side of the area.

**ADA Information:** The best birding by vehicle is on eleven miles of county and MDC roads and at eight parking lots. Two of the lots overlook lakes and one provides a good view of the Mississippi River. The remainder of the lots are in the forest interior. There are no ADA facilities on this conservation area.

**When to visit/species to expect:** This area is definitely under-birded, with nearly half of the weeks of the year lacking data. Late summer and fall are especially under-represented. Any time of year can be good for woodland birds. Expect all of the resident woodpeckers year-round and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers in winter. Also in winter, look for Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren, kinglets, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Fall and winter are probably excellent for waterfowl, given the flat waters on the area and being surrounded by the Mississippi. But only nine duck species have been reported here—surely a result of the light birding activity at this time.

In summer, expect Least Terns, Mississippi Kites, and all of the resident woodland vireos and flycatchers. Also, you'll have a good chance for Prothonotary Warbler, American Redstart, and Yellow-throated Warbler. Swainson's Warbler was found here in the past, but none have been reported since 2008. Only 17 warbler species have been seen here and 11 of those are summer residents. Other migrants are certainly stopping at this vast, wooded area, but have been missed due to minimal birding effort.

Among the year-round residents are Black Vulture, Bald Eagle, and possibly Fish Crow (more data needed).

**Features of interest to birders:** This area is at the north end of Donaldson Point, which is formed by a loop of the Mississippi River. The river forms the east and west boundaries of the area, with seven miles of river frontage. Construction of a levee along the north side of the area created several water bodies of various sizes that total 92 acres. There are about 275 acres of crop land; the remainder of the area is bottomland forest.

There are eleven miles of county and MDC roads to travel on the area. From Highway WW, County Road 404 starts in agricultural fields with the potential for open-land birds. Then it climbs atop the levee to give you elevated views of forest, water, and more ag fields. From CR 404, take Area Road #1 to the Dawson Hole parking lot, which has nearby water, thickets, and mature forest. This mix of habitats makes for an excellent variety of bird possibilities.

Continue on #1, which parallels the Mississippi and offers your best views of the river. Then the road turns left and becomes Road #3 and into the forest. Stop where it crosses the Tressle Hole. This can be another bird-rich location. Nearby, you may also be rewarded by walking the short path to the Round Hole.

As you drive CR 404 eastbound atop the levee, be watching for water birds on your right. Stop at the Conran Dike Hole for a closer look. The long Bowman Hole offers more water bird possibilities. There are places to walk down the levee to the water's edge. You will not find extensive mudflats at Donaldson Point, but some shorebirds could be attracted to the margins of holes and sloughs. However, scanning the waters can be very productive for ducks, herons, and egrets.

Although it traverses the forest, County Road 405 has roadside thickets that are some of the best sparrow habitat on the area. From CR 405, you can drive a mile into the forest interior on Area Road #6 and all the woodland birds you might see. If you're ready for a walk in the woods, try Area Road #9, which is gated but leads a half mile to the river. And be sure to explore the short Road #13 that goes to a river slough. For more walking in the woods, there are seven trails totaling eight miles. Most are accessed from CR 405.

**Picnic Areas:** none

**Toilets:** none

**Camping:** There is a primitive camping area with picnic tables and fire rings.

**Hazards/Limitations:** During seasonal flooding, some portions of the area may not be accessible. All public use is prohibited when the Mississippi River is at or above 34 feet on the New Madrid gauge [https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?site\\_no=07024175](https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?site_no=07024175) .

The area is heavily used during the spring turkey season and the fall firearms deer season.

**Nearby Birding Sites:** Seven Island CA\*, Big Oak Tree State Park\*, Ten Mile Pond CA\* .

\*Sites with Birders' Guides

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