

A. Giant City State Park

Habitat

- Creeks
- Upland forest
- Bottomland forest
- Pine plantations
- Park lawns
- Bluffs and canyons

Target Birds

- Wild Turkey (resident)
- Cuckoos: Yellow-billed (summer) and Black-billed (migration)
- Mississippi Kite (summer)
- Hawks: Red-shouldered (resident) and Broad-winged (summer)
- Owls: Barred and Eastern Screech-owl (resident)
- Woodpeckers: Pileated, Hairy, Downy, Red-headed, and Red-bellied (resident)
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (winter)
- Flycatchers: Great-crested and Acadian (summer)
- Eastern Wood Pewee (summer)
- Eastern Phoebe (resident)
- Vireos: Warbling, Red-eyed, and Yellow-throated (summer)
- Carolina Chickadee (resident)
- Tufted Titmouse (resident)
- Wrens: Carolina (resident), House (summer), and Winter (winter)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet (winter)
- Thrushes: Wood (summer), Swainson's (migration), and Gray-cheeked (migration)
- Warblers: Pine, Kentucky, Hooded, Worm-eating, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Northern Parula (summer)
- Eastern warblers (migration)
- Tanagers: Summer and Scarlet (summer)
- Grosbeaks: Blue (summer) and Rose-breasted (migration)
- Orioles: Baltimore and Orchard (summer)

General Description

Throughout the park look for these common resident woodland birds of Southern Illinois: Wood Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Acadian Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, and American Robin. In the open areas bordering the woods you'll add Eastern Bluebird and American Goldfinch. Overhead you'll see Turkey and Black Vultures, and during the summer you may be able to spot breeding Broad-winged Hawk, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Kentucky and Worm-eating Warblers. Visitors to the park include Mississippi Kite and Bald Eagle. Wherever there are streams, look and listen for breeding Louisiana Waterthrush, which return every spring during the second or third week in March, and resident Eastern Phoebe.



This is a great place to look for woodpeckers and wintering sapsuckers before the trees leaf out in the spring. Even if you don't immediately spot them, you'll surely hear the cries of Red-bellied, Red-headed, and Pileated Woodpeckers on almost every visit. This is a good spot to practice your ID skills to differentiate between Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers.

As with many other heavily wooded areas in Southern Illinois, this is an excellent spot to witness the spectacle of migration. Numerous flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, wood warblers, and grosbeaks pass through the forest, brushy areas, and parklands.

Only the northern portion of this state park lies within Jackson County; this is the portion mapped out below with the five birding suggestions. These areas are only some of the many trails and birding locales in this large park—check the visitor center for a bird list, maps, and recent sightings by rangers and guests.



Giant City State Park

Birding Suggestions

1) Visitor Center

Check here for recent sightings, bird checklists, and maps. You may also wish to look at the natural history dioramas. The scattered trees in the parking area and surrounding lawn are good spots to check for Blackpoll Warbler and other migrants, resident Eastern Bluebird, and Chipping Sparrow. In the pine trees across the road from the parking lot are breeding Pine Warbler.

2) Stonefort Trail

This is a short trail leading from a stream-side parking lot to a bluff overlooking the valley. Around the parking lot and along the stream you'll hear and see birds typical of the wet, swampy hardwoods in Jackson County: Wood Duck, Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers, Acadian and Great-crested Flycatchers, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Parula, and American Redstart. Walking the trail during spring and fall will add migrating passerines to your bird list like Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

3) Trillium Trail

This is a wonderful trail in the spring for birding and looking at wildflowers. Pileated Woodpecker is almost always present; listen for their calls year-round and their drumming in the spring and summer. Red-bellied Woodpecker is the most common woodpecker of the low, swampy woodlands, and is especially easy to see in the wetlands between the Trillium Trail parking lot and the west entrance to the park. During the winter keep an eye out for Winter Wren; on warm days they may even start to sing. Other wintering birds include Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, the occasional Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated and Swamp

Sparrows, and finches. During the spring and summer, look for the same kind of birds listed under the Stonefort Trail.

4) Church Street

This road has lots of good upland forest and scrubby habitat. During migration there are numerous migrants, including a variety of thrushes, and Golden-winged, Blackpoll, Nashville, and Palm Warblers. Breeders along the route include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-throated and other vireos, Eastern Bluebird, and Wood Thrush. Breeding warblers are plentiful, and include Prairie, Worm-eating, Kentucky, Hooded, Northern Parula, and Yellow-breasted Chat. A small parking area with a grassy trail can be found 0.7 miles beyond the visitor center. Another 0.4 miles down the road (on the north side) is a picnic area with restrooms and a trail through the woods.

5) Campground Road

This road traverses upland forest, rolling topography, and several creeks. Birding is easy here, either by walking the road or taking some of the trails/service roads. Wild Turkey is frequently seen crossing or running along this road. The Cedar Trail takes off from the south end of the campground. Driving to the end of the road takes you to Grassy Lake, which is on the border of Union County. Just prior to reaching the end of the road you'll cross a stream with an old service road next to it, running south. Walking this road along the creek in early spring will turn up Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, and Eastern Phoebe. This entire area is excellent for migrants: flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, warblers, and grosbeaks. Breeding birds include five species of woodpeckers, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, and Worm-eating, Prothonotary, and Kentucky Warblers.

Driving directions to Giant City State Park birding locations

From Carbondale, you can reach this park by driving south on Route 51 (6.3 miles from Pleasant Hill Road) and enter from Makanda, or you can drive south on the Giant City and enter via the main entrance on the northeast side of the park. The directions here are from the main branch of the U.S. Post Office in Carbondale, on the east side of the city:

- **Area 1 (Visitor Center)**
 - From the post office, drive east 0.3 miles on E. Main Frontage Road.
 - Turn right on Giant City Road and drive south 10.4 miles to the visitor center parking lot.
- **Area 2 (Stonefort Trail)**
 - From the visitor center drive south 0.2 miles on Giant City Road.
 - Turn right on Giant City Lodge Road and drive northwest 0.5 miles.
 - Turn right on Stonefort Road and drive north and west 1.7 miles to the parking lot for Stonefort Trail.
- **Area 3 (Trillium Trail)**
 - From the Stonefort Trail parking lot, continue driving northwest 0.5 miles to the small lot for the Trillium Trail (on the left side of the road).
- **Area 4 (Church Street)**
 - From the visitor center, drive north 0.1 miles on Giant City Road.
 - Turn left onto South Church Road and drive west 0.7 miles to the first parking lot, on the left (south) side of the road.
 - The second larger lot with a picnic area is another 0.4 miles farther west, also on the left (south) side of the road.
- **Area 5 (Campground Road)**
 - From the visitor center, drive north 0.4 miles on Giant City Road.

- Turn right onto Campground Road and drive east 0.2 miles. The first parking lot is at on the right (south) side of the road. Indian Creek crosses the road at 0.7 miles. The campground is south of the road at mile 1.0. The parking area at the end of the road is at 1.6 miles.

Site Notes

Best Time to Visit: Spring is by far the most exciting time to go birding, with dozens of species of warblers and other passerines migrating through. In addition, early spring is a wonderful time to look at the multitudes of wildflowers, which are especially plentiful along the Trillium Trail.

Ownership: State of Illinois

Vehicle Access: Paved roads are all fine for passenger vehicles

Fees: None for day use, fee for camping

Camping: Large campground in the northeast corner of the park

Lodge and Cabins: About a mile south of the visitor center

Restrooms: Throughout the park at picnic areas, at the campground, at the lodge, and at the visitor center

Food: Giant City Lodge or Carbondale (10 miles to the north)

Gas: Carbondale



Red-headed Woodpecker