



## ASNV Birding Hotspot Fact Sheet

# LEESYLVANIA STATE PARK

**LOCATION:** Prince William County, Virginia, 25 miles south of Washington, D.C.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Interstate 95, take exit 156 (Dale City/Rippon Landing/Rte. 784) and travel east to U.S. Route 1. Turn right at the intersection with U.S. Route 1 and get in the left lane as soon as possible. Turn left at the Route 1/Neabsco Road (Route 610) intersection and travel about two miles to the park entrance on the right.

**ACREAGE:** 508 acres

**HISTORY:** Leesylvania opened in 1992 and is part of the Virginia State Park system. The Lees of Virginia, a national historical society, secured the donation of land for the park from noted philanthropist Daniel K. Ludwig. Leesylvania is named for the Lee family who built a plantation on this site in the 1700's. The park includes various plantation era ruins and the remains of a Civil War Confederate artillery battery.

### **ECOSYSTEM TYPE, HABITATS, & ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE:**

Leesylvania Park is on a peninsula bordered by the Potomac River, Neabsco Creek, and Powells Creek. There are four hiking trails within the park. Of particular interest to bird watchers are the one-mile long Bushey Point Trail and the Lee's Woods trail that circles up thru the woods just north of the main parking lot. There are various places along the Potomac to view bird activity on the river. The Park's various habitats include mixed hardwood forests, river frontage, tree covered and open picnic areas, and various open areas.

**BIRDS AND BIRDWATCHING:** The varied habitat, and location on a peninsula, provides for diverse migratory and year round bird life. The park is one of the stopover points along the Potomac for spring and fall migrants and over wintering waterfowl. Because there is active day-use of the park by picnickers and boaters from the late spring thru summer months and tapering off into the early fall, most bird watching activity is more rewarding during the late summer, winter, and spring. The park is one of the many

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warbler “hotspots” existing along the Potomac. Warblers seen here include Black-and-White, Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue and Green, Blue-wing, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Prothonotary, and Yellow. The park hosts Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Belted Kingfishers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Towhees, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers. There are great viewing opportunities for over-wintering waterfowl, gulls and year round residents such as American Bald Eagles. One somewhat unique viewing point is a fishing pier at the north end of the park. It is anchored on the Virginia shore and extends into the river that is part of Maryland. It, and other viewing points along the river and creeks, offer great views of Royal and Caspian Terns, Bonaparte’s Ring-billed, Greater Black-back, and Herring Gulls, Osprey, the often large rafts of various species of ducks that gather on the Potomac. During an especially cold winter that freezes the Potomac, one might see 50 or more American Bald Eagles standing on the ice or crowded around any open areas. Periodically, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) sponsors bird walks, bird counts and other birding activities such as an annual waterfowl count at the park. Please check the ASNV Web site ([www.audubonva.org](http://www.audubonva.org)) or contact the ASNV office (703) 256-6895 for information about walks or participating in other bird related activities. The JULIE J. METZ WETLANDS BANK (a separate Fact Sheet) is along Neabsco Road on the way to Leesylvania and is a productive bird watching site.

**CONSERVATION CHALLENGES:** The overall health of the Potomac River has gradually improved but keeping it healthy is a constant challenge. Parkland is secure from development.

**CONSERVATION WORK AT THE SITE:** State park employees are responsible for conservation work at the park.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** The office telephone number is 703-670-0372. The park Web site: [www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/leesylva.htm](http://www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/leesylva.htm) has extensive information about the park including a link to Mapquest.

**FEES AND HOURS OF OPERATION:** The entrance fee is \$4 per car weekdays and \$5 weekends. The park is open dawn to dusk. There is a fee-based boat launch ramp. Call the park for availability and fees.

**FACILITIES:** There is a park store (open April-October) and a visitor center with restrooms at each location. There is ample parking throughout the park.