



## ASNV Birding Hotspot Fact Sheet

# RIVERBEND PARK

**LOCATION:** 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls, VA 22066. Riverbend Park is in Fairfax County, Virginia and borders the Potomac River.

**DIRECTIONS:** From I-495, take Exit 44 Georgetown Pike (Route 193) west 4.5 miles to a right on River Bend Road for 2.2 miles to a right on Jeffery Road. Proceed one mile to the Visitor Center entrance or 1.5 miles to the Nature Center entrance. From the West, take Georgetown Pike (Route 193) to left on River Bend Road and follow the directions as noted above to the visitor center.

**ACREAGE:** 418

**HISTORY:** Riverbend Park was established in 1974. It is part of the Fairfax County Park system and is administered by the Fairfax County Park Authority.

**ECOSYSTEM TYPE, HABITATS, & ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE:** Riverbend Park has two miles of Potomac River frontage and borders GREAT FALLS NATIONAL PARK (see separate Fact Sheet). There is a 10-mile trail network within the park, parts of which merge with the Great Falls Park trail network. The park's various habitats include mixed hardwood forests and edge habitat of various elevations, a large meadow, and floodplain. The floodplain soils support a wide variety of wildflowers, including Virginia Bluebells, trilliums, and bloodroot. The large meadow not only attracts a wide variety of bird life but also numerous species of butterflies that visit the varied plant life. Animal life includes whitetail deer, raccoons, and foxes.

**BIRDS AND BIRDWATCHING:** The varied habitat at Riverbend provides for diverse bird life and year-round bird watching activity. It is a stopover for spring and fall migrants and is considered a "hotspot" for warblers. In addition to warblers such as Black-and-White, Common Yellow-throat, Kentucky, Northern Parula, and Prothonotary, the park hosts Baltimore Orioles, Belted Kingfishers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Towhees, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, and Wild Turkey. On rare occasions, American Woodcocks are found in the meadow. Migrating and

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Last Updated 3/24/2009  
Compiled by Jay Hadlock

over-wintering waterfowl and gulls can be found on the Potomac River. These include American Black Ducks, American Coots, Buffleheads, Canada Geese, Herring Gulls, Pied-billed Grebes, Ring-billed Gulls, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, and the occasional Lesser Black-backed Gull, Red-necked Grebes, Redhead Ducks and Tundra Swan. There is always the chance of seeing an American Bald Eagle and various species of hawks. Periodically, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) sponsors bird walks at the park. ASNV members also conduct bird counts and surveys at Riverbend. 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 activities.

**CONSERVATION CHALLENGES:** The overall health of the Potomac River has gradually improved, but continuing development upriver and increasing demands for river water for consumption are cause for concern. Parkland is secure from development, and the surrounding area is mostly built out. Park Authority budget constraints affect the amount of maintenance, habitat creation, and restoration work that can be done on the property. The Friends of Riverbend Park ([www.forb.org](http://www.forb.org)) work to help protect the park.

**CONSERVATION WORK AT THE SITE:** There are often volunteer opportunities for work at the park. Call the park office for additional information.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** The park telephone number is 703-759-9018.

**FEES AND HOURS OF OPERATION:** There is no entry fee. However, one is under consideration for later in 2009. Park gates are opened at 7 A.M. daily and are closed and locked shortly before sunset. Signs posted at various places within the park note the current closing time. The park is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. There is a fee-based boat launch ramp. Use of the boat launch ramp depends on river conditions. It is best to call ahead for information about boat launch ramp availability and fee.

**FACILITIES:** Visitor center hours are seasonal: 11-4 weekdays and weekends, closed Tuesday, Jan.-Feb.; and 9-5 weekdays and weekends, closed Tuesday, Mar.-Dec. The restrooms at the visitor center are open every day. There is ample parking at the visitor and nature center. The nature center is only open for scheduled programs and groups by reservation. Please call the park for more information.