

DBC Hotspot

Cantigny Park, Wheaton

Cantigny Park features stunning gardens, two award-winning museums, a golf course and restaurants, good walking trails, and excellent birding. The main entrance is on Winfield Road, just south of Roosevelt Rd. (Rt. 38). From I-88, take the Winfield Road exit and go five miles north.

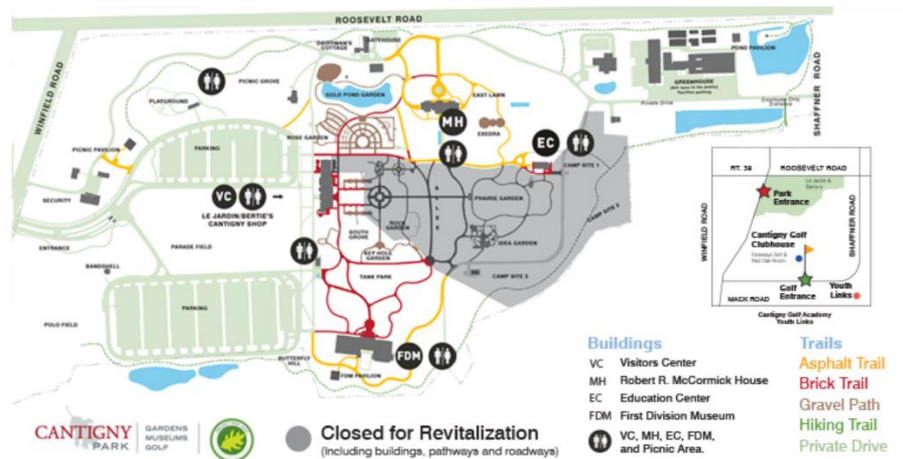
Habitat type/site overview

Cantigny's 500 acres feature good habitat diversity, including open woodland, small wetlands, ponds, constructed native prairie, display gardens and golf course. The property is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, a designation that its conservation-minded managers take seriously. Of course, being a public park with many attractions, Cantigny is a different kind of birding venue. It is not "wild" like a forest preserve. On nice days, it can be a very busy place so plan to arrive when the gates open.



Topography

Cantigny topography is flat with a few gentle inclines. Paved and crushed stone pathways are wheelchair accessible. A two-mile hiking trail is woodchipped. If desired, Cantigny can be birded without ever leaving a hard surface! Butterfly Hill, near the First Division Museum, overlooks the park and golf course and is worth the short climb. An enlarged view of this map is available at www.cantigny.org.



Birds



The all-time site list contains 185 species. One of them is Wild Turkey—small groups are often seen on the grounds, delighting even the nonbirding visitors. Cantigny is perhaps best known for two specialty birds: Red-headed Woodpecker and Purple Martin. The woodpeckers favor the golf course habitat with its large oaks. You might also find them in the oaks behind the First Division Museum. A thriving martin colony,



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located at Cantigny Golf, can be observed May through July (enter on Mack Road). Fifty Eastern Bluebird houses dot the landscape as well. The park's Chimney Swift tower, erected in 2012 and located in the prairie area, has met with mixed success. For water-loving species, check the pond at the far northeast corner of the park, and around the edges of recently built wetland areas with native aquatics—Gold Pond (north of the Visitors Center) and the water detention area that borders the south parking lot and golf course. Cantigny's colorful gardens—especially the Idea Garden and Pollinator Garden—are hummingbird magnets in late summer.

Best time to go

Monthly bird walks held March through December are popular, sometimes attracting 40 or more birders. One of the summer bird walks includes an up-close tour of the Martin colony. Birding is best when the park first opens. Hours vary by season—check Cantigny.org or call 630-668-5161.

Amenities

If the birding is slow, Cantigny offers other options. The Visitors Center has a gift shop, café, information kiosk and a movie theater that plays a short welcome video. Additional restrooms are located throughout the property, including the picnic/playground area and Education Center. Admission to McCormick House, a historic home museum, and the First Division Museum is included with parking.

Access

Cantigny is open to the public. Regular parking is \$5, weekends \$10, May through September. The fee is waived for monthly bird walks, and for those entering park on foot or bike. Park free on the first Wednesday of the month. For safety, birding on the golf course is not permitted, except during guided walks. The Purple Martin colony at Cantigny Golf may be observed any time without charge (entrance on Mack Road). Use the lower golf parking lot and walk across the lane.

Site contributors

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