



Wooten's Landing Wetlands Park

Location: Harwood, Maryland

Address: 4550 Sands Road, Harwood, MD 20776 (410) 741-9330

GPS: Longitude 76° 41' 27.27" W Latitude 38° 51' 20.93" N

URL: <http://www.aacounty.org/RecParks/parks/community/wootenlanding.cfm#UkXiJ-TD-zk>

SITE DESCRIPTION:

Wooten's Landing Wetland Park is a small portion of the overall Jug Bay Sanctuary that includes about 140 acres along the Patuxent River near Harwood, MD. Wooten's Landing is north of Jug Bay and just north of Maryland Route 4. The site includes a kayak/canoe landing on the River, wetlands, and opportunities for birding, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing.

Park open all year from sunrise to sunset.

Rating: 

Upside: Beautiful natural setting; primary environment includes wetlands and river frontage; known locally as a birding hotspot.

Downside: Unimproved site with no paved pathways or facilities; no benches or other resting spots; limited accessibility; relatively remote location.

REVIEW:

I first heard of Wooten's Landing from one of the birder/photographers on the Anne Arundel Bird Club Facebook site. The park sounded like quite the birding hotspot so we decided to check it out. The park was relatively easy to find with GPS. Sands Road is a bit of a winding road through a rather remote neighborhood

and the signs at the park are not very big. We passed it and had to back track to find the entrance. On the day we visited, there was an "open house" going on sponsored by the managing park at Jug Bay Sanctuary so we cut our visit short. It was not likely we would see many birds about when there were so many volunteers and others moving in and out of the area.

Parking is a bit confusing. There are several rough mowed spaces right at the entrance that gives the impression that the only parking available is there. However, if you proceed through the gate and further into the park, there are additional areas to park near an old building about a ¼ mile into the park.

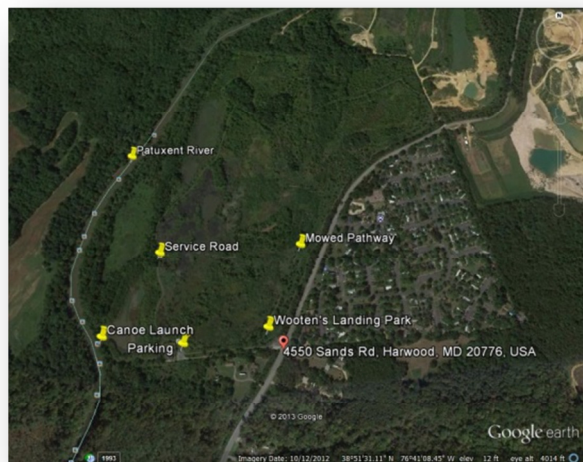
There is basically one hiking trail that is merely a mowed pathway that is combined with an old service road to circle the park acreage. If you do not park by the building near the entrance, you can drive through the wetlands on the old service road around the bottom of the park. I did not see any signs indicating that only authorized vehicles could do so but it is a single lane road so we had to proceed carefully. Since the road and mowed path are pretty rough, driving around the bottom of the park allowed me to access the park a little bit more than I would have been able to do so on foot. There is an observation deck overlooking one of the wetlands and there is a bench for resting on the deck. There are wetlands on both sides of the trail/road at this point. On the park side, the pond/wetlands





did have water but we did not spot any birds or wildlife. The pond/wetlands on the river side of the road were pretty dry but did contain flowering shrubs that were attracting plenty of butterflies.

The park includes a “carry in” kayak/canoe landing that provides access to the Patuxent River. There did appear to be a couple fisherman’s paths along the river’s edge that might allow some birding opportunities closer to the water. As noted above, an open house was being held and the area near the canoe launch was filled with volunteers setting up tables and preparing for the festivities. We also drove down to Route 4 to the ancillary Patuxent Wetlands Park. There was quite a bit of activity here as this seemed to be a popular fishing and canoe launching spot on the Patuxent. There was also quite a bit of traffic noise here by the highway overpass.



Overall, Wooten’s Landing is a popular birding spot within Anne Arundel County but it is probably not going to be too popular with the general public and those with accessibility issues until (unless) improvements are made to the park. For younger and stronger birders, that is a good thing; fewer improvements to the park mean fewer people and probably more birds. For older birders, it is not so good but you could consider it for a quick “car birding” adventure if you’re down in that area and have a little time to drive in and bird the wetlands by the roadside. There are no facilities here – not even porta-potties. The location is rather remote with the neighborhood being almost rural in nature. The nearest store is five or so miles south closer to Route

4. It was relatively busy the day that we were there but there are usually very few people about and there have been reports of vandalism to cars parked nearer to the road there. I would not recommend the park to those with accessibility issues or to women birding alone.



Canoe Launch



Marsh Wetlands



Hiking Trails