

Salisbury State Park, Salisbury, MA

By Sandy Selesky

Only good during the winter months (November through March is best).

Directions:

Rt. 495 north to exit 55 (Salisbury/95 to Newburyport).

Turn right at end of exit ramp, which is East 110. Go about 3.3 miles to 4th set of lights. Turn left towards Salisbury Beach and make right at the 2nd light (sign for 1A towards Salisbury Beach). Go a couple of miles through 2 sets of lights until you come to a new townhouse development on the right. Just past this, turn right at the sign for Salisbury Beach State Park (and campgrounds).

Site Guide

Travel the roads in the park looking for birds, owls, hawks, ducks, etc. If you turn left towards the end of the straight road, there are parking lots for the beach. Turn right off the straight road with the campground on your left to get to the boat ramp area. In the winter, drive in and out of the roads of the campground looking for winter birds such as horned larks, snow buntings, Lapland longspurs (all usually on the ground), tree sparrows, white-winged crossbills (usually in the fir trees eating seeds from the pine cones in flocks of 20-50), perched merlins, red-tailed hawks, or sharp-shinned hawks on top of the pine or deciduous trees there. On the way to the boat ramp you might see a seal out in the field (and out of the water) – they also sometimes come up on the sandy beach behind the wall in the back of the campground. Short-eared or snowy owls may perch in the sand dunes, on trees, or on posts by the parking lots or in the fields on the right when coming into the park. They sometimes even perch on the boardwalk railing, maintenance house fence, telephone pole, house behind the dunes, or even on a picnic table in the campground as a snowy owl did this past winter. If you want to practice flight shots, bring a loaf of bread and a friend. Have the friend throw pieces of bread to all the gulls that sit in the middle of the main parking lot at the end of the main road on the left while you take a continuous stream of flight images as they take to the air above you and compete for food.



Again, keep going back. Every day is different, every weekend is different. You never know what you're going to find. The winter of 2008-2009 has been one of the



best winters for bird photography at Salisbury Beach State Park (MUCH better than Plum Island/Parker River NWR) than I can ever remember. Last year hardly anything was happening here. So you just never know. Don't just come for a couple of hours. You need to stay the entire day – or at least an entire afternoon until dusk – to get the full benefit. Nothing may be going on from 12-3. You might then get 4

different exciting species and hundreds of great images between 3-dusk. If you're an early morning person, get there early. The best action tends to occur mornings and late afternoons although exciting experiences have also occurred in the middle of the day. You just don't know which is why you need to devote many hours roaming around until something catches your eye and the fun begins!