

## Cardinal Bluff

The Cardinal Bluff nature preserve is 14 acres of scenic bluffland, located within the village limits of De Soto, Wisconsin, in Crawford County. The preserve overlooks the Mississippi River and includes not only scenic wooded blufflands but also steep cliffs and dry prairie. Dry prairie is a globally vulnerable natural community and includes conservative prairie species of hoary puccoon, leadplant and birdsfoot violet. On the north side of the preserve, a native oak and hickory stand dominates the landscape. The property also provides habitat for migratory songbirds and a variety of other species.

This property was donated to the Conservancy by the McDowell family in 2011. Prior to their donation, it was in the McDowell family for over 100 years. The 14 McDowell siblings donated the land to become a public nature preserve and outdoor classroom. It was named for the cardinals one of the McDowell brothers saw there. Now a memorial bench along the hiking trail honors those McDowell siblings no longer with us.

## Public Access

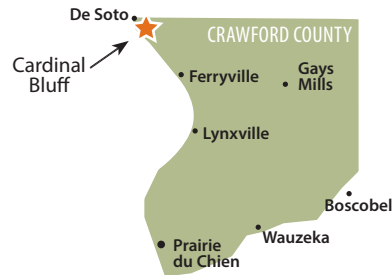
Dogs and bikes are NOT allowed on this property. Visitors must follow our **Recreational Use Policy** as well as all federal and state laws and local ordinances. Use either link to see the policy: [mississippivalleyconservancy.org/resources/policies](http://mississippivalleyconservancy.org/resources/policies)



Please respect landowners near Conservancy tracts by observing property boundaries.

## Plants and animals found here

- Hoary Puccoon
- Leadplant
- Birdsfoot violet
- Little bluestem
- Bur oak
- White oak



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## TRAIL MAP

## Cardinal Bluff

Cheney St., De Soto, Wisconsin



## Key to Symbols

-  Parking
-  Trail
-  Point of interest  
(numbers are on map only, not on trail)
-  Overlook with bench
-  Tract boundary
-  Street

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2025-0210

## Cardinal Bluff (northeast end of Cheney St, De Soto, WI)

A short hike (0.6 mi round trip) along a wooded trail that climbs a bluff 340 feet for a beautiful river view and a look at some interesting rock formations.

**How to get to the parking area from La Crosse (approximately 24 mi from the intersection of 14/61/35 at south end of La Crosse):** Follow US Hwy 35 for 23 mi south through Stoddard and Genoa to De Soto. Turn left on STH 82 and go 0.1 mi. Turn right on S. Mill Park Dr. and go 0.3 mi. Turn left on Cheney St and go 0.15 mi. Park in the grassy area behind the kiosk. **DO NOT PARK IN GRAVEL TURNAROUND.**

- 1** Start from the parking area and walk southeast along Cheney St to a sign between two trees at **2**.
- 2** Enter the forest on a narrow trail and continue walking southeast, passing a small ridge on the right.
- 3** Once past the ridge, the trail starts winding up the bluff.
- 4** A bench marks an overlook of the Mississippi River. Slightly to the north are sandstone rock formations. Head northeast along a ridge for more rock formations.
- 5** After the rock formation here, the trail goes a little farther and dead-ends. Return to the parking area the way you came.

