

The canoe launch at Distillery has been a fairly reliable spot to find Yellow-throated Warblers in spring and early summer. Check the sycamore trees just west (downstream) from the boat launch. Also look and listen for Cerulean Warbler, Northern Parula, and nesting Yellow-billed Cuckoo. In spring, this is an excellent location to find Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

Across the river at LIB, trails wind through stands of taller scrub vegetation, most notably hawthorn. This area is attractive to White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Blue-winged Warblers. The trail also borders some oxbow marshes and enters floodplain forest along the river. As compared to Distillery, LIB tends to be better for migrant passerines. A good place to find migrants is the trail that runs under the high power lines between the parking lot and the river. Turn left (downstream) along the river, passing through the forest (good for thrushes here, particularly Veery) and out through the tall scrub in the northwestern portion of the property. Barred Owl and Wood Thrush are among the nesting species.

In winter, LIB often has flocks of Cedar Waxwings, lingering Hermit Thrushes (in the floodplain forest and scrub at the edge), occasional Northern Shrikes, Northern Mockingbirds, and a number of species of sparrows, including Song, Swamp, American Tree, White-crowned, and White-throated.

Kinnikinnick Conservation Area

Kinnikinnick is in northwestern Boone County, just northwest of the town of Caledonia. Take IL 173 west of Caledonia to Caledonia Road and turn north, proceeding 3.2 miles to the entrance, which is on the left just after you cross Wyman School Road.

Kinnikinnick has a variety of habitats, including hardwood forest with ravines through which a creek passes. This is an excellent location

to find migrating passerines in both spring and fall. Carolina Wrens are occasional in the ravines in spring and early summer and, rarely, in winter. It is likely that you will see and/or hear a Veery in spring and early summer on the slopes. I found a Worm-eating Warbler one spring, and Pileated Woodpeckers are seen and heard intermittently. Acadian Flycatchers also nest here.

There are two extensive tracts of conifers which hold owls in winter. Check here for Cooper's Hawk and, rarely, Northern Goshawk, plus Barred and Great Horned Owl. The pines occasionally attract crossbills in winter, but, more commonly, Pine Siskins. A Pine Grosbeak was reported here in February 2009, and awaits documentation.

NOTE: BCCD closes Distillery, LIB, and Kinnikinnick on some selected fall weekends to allow hunting on the properties. Please call the headquarters number at the end of this article to check for closure dates before planning a fall weekend birding trip to those properties.

Cooling Sod Farm

This sod farm is located on Wheeler Road, south of US 20, just east of Cherry Valley, Illinois. The sod fields attract migrating Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Upland Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, American Golden-Plovers and, more recently, Brewer's Blackbirds, from late July through September. In December, Baumann Park in Cherry Valley (Winnebago County) attracts gulls, but the gulls frequently loaf out on the sod farm in Boone County. The presence of gulls is probably related to nearby dumps on the Winnebago-Ogle County lines to the southwest of Cherry Valley.

From I-90, exit at MM 61 toward I-39. Take the Harrison Avenue exit east, toward Belvidere. Cross back under I-39, cross the Kishwaukee River bridge at Cherry Valley, and keep going east about 1.5 miles to Wheeler Road (there is a gas station on the corner). Turn south on Wheeler and, almost immediately,

you will be passing through the sod farm property. Early morning is best because the sun will be behind you. Look west, where the fields are most extensive. The traffic is fast on Wheeler, so pull out only on the gravel pads that lead to the fields so that you can get completely off of the roadway.

**DO NOT ENTER THE SOD
FARM PROPERTY--
IT IS PRIVATE AND POSTED.**

About 1.5 miles on Wheeler, you will come to Rossiter Road. Turn right and scan for the next three-tenths of a mile before coming to Cherry Valley Road. Turn right on to Cherry Valley Road. In about one-fourth of a mile you will come to a gravel driveway that leads into the sod fields. There is an irrigation pump building at the intersection of the gravel driveway and Cherry Valley Road. Here is a very spacious area where you can pull off and scope to the north and northeast. This spot is particularly good in mid-to late-afternoon.

Spencer Conservation Area

This is another property owned by the Boone County Conservation District. It is on the southwest side of Belvidere, and is connected to Belvidere Park along the Kishwaukee River by a foot trail. This is a reliable spot for Orchard Orioles, and Sandhill Cranes have nested on the north side of the property behind the flooded gravel pit. Olive-sided Flycatchers are often seen in this park in late-May to early June, and in September. This area can be productive in migration and for winter residents, particularly near the gravel pit before the water freezes.

Belvidere City Parks

Belvidere Park, on Appleton Road in southwest Belvidere, is a fairly typical urban park set on the shores of the Kishwaukee River. There is a dam in the park, and the water below the dam is open all winter, even in the coldest weather. The open water below the dam attracts