

bago County Forest Preserve District has acquired extensive holdings of excellent habitat, running from the Wisconsin state line to Shirland.

Several major private land holders have not disrupted the forest and marshes on their property, and one has embarked on a program of wetland set-aside that will restore extensive habitat for non-game species, although it will be hunted in the fall. The Sugar River Alder Tract is one of the highlights of the area, featuring nesting Lark Sparrows on the sand prairie, along with Grasshopper, Vesper, and Savannah Sparrows, plus Sandhill Cranes back in the wetlands near the river. After sundown, it features the displays of American Woodcock, plus the songs of Whip-poor-will and Barred Owl. The pines here once attracted one of the two records of Chuck-will's-widow in the county. (The IOS Annual Meeting in June will feature a Friday night trip here.)

Just downstream, Sugar River Forest Preserve is best known for its nesting Yellow-throated Warblers, which have bred here for nearly 20 years. Cerulean Warbler, a species of special concern, can easily be found in the forest at the yoke of the loop road. Barred Owls are often heard, and sometimes seen, during the day, and fly-by or calling Pileated Woodpeckers are a real possibility. Other species of interest include Acadian Flycatcher, Kentucky and Mourning Warblers, Prothonotary Warbler, Ovenbird, and an occasional Summer Tanager. Red-shouldered Hawks nest on private property across the river.

Pecatonica Forest Preserve, on the Pecatonica River, is the most reliable location for Prothonotary Warbler in the bottomland oxbow swamps. Plus you'll find other river bottom species, including Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Pileated Woodpecker and Barred Owl. A trip here should yield Sandhill Crane, plus a view of Bald Eagle (a pair nests on private property near here, and are sometimes



The Hooded Warbler is a rare breeder at Rock Cut State Park. Photo by Dennis Oehmke.

Below: The Red-shouldered Hawk breeds near the Sugar River Forest Preserve. Photo by Dennis Oehmke.



visible from the road). Pecatonica Wetlands Forest Preserve holds 1400 acres which have been recently acquired over the past six years. Wetlands are being restored with help from Ducks Unlimited, providing excellent new birding opportunities. The grassland and wetland restorations now feature both Sedge and Marsh Wrens, Sandhill Cranes, occasional Red-shouldered Hawks, Prothonotary Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush and, at this season, both Willow and Alder Flycatchers. A pair of Brown Creepers nested here in 1999. Western Meadowlarks can often be found in the western portion of the county in the Pecatonica area.

The preserves along the Kishwaukee River including Black-hawk Springs Forest Preserve are excellent for Sandhill Crane, as well as several locations for flycatchers, and warblers, including Yellow-throated, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, and, rarely, Northern Parula. Trips to the Kishwaukee River might produce Osprey at this season, but no nests have been confirmed yet. The Espenscheid Forest Preserve holds White-eyed Vireo and Yellow-breasted Chats in early June.

Boone County

Garden Prairie Slough, near the town of Garden Prairie, in Boone County, is privately owned, and usually birding must be done from the road. (IOS hopes to have confirmed permission to enter for the Annual Meeting field trip.) This wetland has attracted its share of rarities in the past (Garganey and two records of Black-necked Stilt) as well as more

commonly American and Least Bitterns, Virginia Rail, Sora, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Sandhill Cranes also nest in the surrounding wetlands, and this is the most likely place to find lingering migrant shorebirds in June.

Ogle County

Lowden Miller State Forest really hit the birding map when Dr. Scott Robinson and his crew from the Illinois Natural History Survey did the first thorough field work on nesting birds in the forest. (See *Meadowlark* 4:16-18). Roughly 20 species of warblers have nested here including Black-throated Green, Prothonotary, Hooded, Blue-winged, Canada, Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided, Mourning, Kentucky and Yellow-throated. Wood Thrush and Veery nest here, too, plus Least and Acadian Flycatchers. Singing Blue-headed Vireo, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper and Winter Wren have also been recorded here during the breeding season. As this former tree farm continues to undergo habitat change, the bird life will change with it. For more information, call (815) 732-7329.

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