

continue north .3 mile to a small parking area and the Bunker Hill Canoe Access site.

Return to 900E and continue north. Watch for Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Kingbird, and Eastern Bluebird along utility lines. A small parking lot just east of the intersection of 900E and 2350N provides another access area from which to hike into the Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area, following the old cinder road leading to and along the river. It is an especially good area during migration. The successional areas are good for Willow (breeding) and Alder (late May-early June), Flycatchers, as well as Mourning and Connecticut Warblers (late May). If you make it to the river, there is a steep, eroding bank where a Bank Swallow colony has nested for several years.

Head back north on 900E to 2400N which faces east toward the river. Look for the large wooden Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area sign and proceed .5 mile to the parking lot south of the road. You may want to use the restrooms here (there also is a phone) since services are limited in the wildlife area. The successional fields just south of the parking lot and north of the skeet-shooting area across the road have been a reliable spot for nesting Bell's Vireos as well as Willow and Alder Flycatchers, Yellow Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. A trail also starts at the parking lot and leads to a small campground near a pond.

Continuing north on 900E, you will pass a large, old cedar grove on your right. Drive to parking area #6, where the road jogs west. This area is excellent in migration and especially in winter. Long-eared Owls roost here

virtually every winter. Short-eared and Northern Saw-whet Owls have occasionally been found. Barred, Great Horned, and Eastern Screech Owls are permanent residents in the grove or nearby deciduous woods. All three accipiters have wintered here. In early spring, late fall, and winter, this is a good area to find feeding and roosting Brown Creep-



*Visitors can enjoy many scenic views like this one while birding the Middlefork River valley in central Illinois. Photo by Steven D. Bailey.*

ers, Winter and Carolina Wrens, both kinglets, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Purple Finches, Fox, Lincoln's, and White-throated Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Following the jog north .6 mile, you will come to parking area #7 on the east side of the road, just before Higginsville Bridge over the Middlefork River. The fields across

from the parking lot and for a mile or so south along the river are the most reliable in the county for breeding Lark Sparrows. The area also is good for Vesper, Savannah, Grasshopper, and Field Sparrows.

The main canoe access site to the Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area is just past this parking lot, on the northwest side of Higginsville Bridge. The pine plantation north of the bridge and on around the curve has produced many of the same species as found in the cedar grove mentioned earlier, including the six owls and three accipiters.

For your last stop in the Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area, return south to where the road jogs at the intersection of 900E and 2500N. Turn west along 2500N and go 1.5 miles to the small village of Collison. Just past the railroad tracks, turn north along the main road (720E) through town. After going 1.2 miles, turn right at the first road (2600N) crossing the highway. Go exactly 1 mile to a small parking lot on the north side of the road just before the railroad tracks. The fields and woods are good for migrants.

Just north of the parking area is a bog that provides probably the most unique avian attraction of the Middlefork valley. Each fall, from mid-August to late September, from about 30 to 50 or more Ruby-throated Hummingbirds gather before heading south. This apparently is one of the largest concentrations in the state.

To reach this spot, walk due north from the parking lot about 50 yards, to the edge of the woods and brushy field. Continue north into the woods and down the small but steep