

hillside and into the bog. This bog covers several acres and has a dense growth of vegetation, including skunk cabbage, marsh marigold and, the main attraction for the hummingbirds, jewelweed or touch-me-not. You can't miss the numerous yellow or orange pendant-shaped blooms.

Depending on spring and summer precipitation, the area can have several inches of standing water or be practically dry. Bring boots to be safe. My initial discovery of the area was truly a memorable one as I walked among 50 to 75 hummingbirds. Birds were feeding and chasing (up to four at a time) all around me. Several times I was almost hit by the tiny sprites as they buzzed or hovered right in front of my face.

If you continue east past the parking lot and railroad tracks you will see another small parking area (#13) where you can gain access to Collison Marsh, a woodland swamp and bog, much like the hummingbird area, but more extensive. This fine



*Northern Harriers are among a host of breeding species visitors may encounter while birding the Middlefork River Valley State Natural Area in central Illinois. This trio of harrier fledglings was photographed by Steven D. Bailey in Kennekuk Cove County Park (which will be featured in a later issue this year).*

natural area has no trails, but bring a compass, head south from the parking area, and explore. Various birds breed here including Barred Owl,

Wood Thrush, Cerulean and Kentucky Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

#### **Breeding birds of Kickapoo State Park**

All six woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Wood Thrush.

Red-eyed, Warbling, and Yellow-throated Vireos, both tanagers, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, five species of flycatchers including Acadian, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, both orioles, at least seven breeding warblers including American Redstart, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-throated, Cerulean, Northern Parula, Kentucky, and Prothonotary.

#### **Specialty birds found in Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area**

Breeding warblers include: Northern Parula, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Blue-winged, Yellow, Yellow-throated, Prairie (rare), Cerulean, Prothonotary, and Kentucky Warblers, American Redstart, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Yellow-breasted Chat with June records for Black and White, Chestnut-sided, and Hooded Warblers; more than 15 species of sparrows including Lark, Vesper, Savannah, Grasshopper, and Henslow's, and Field (all breeding), as well as Lincoln's, LeConte's, and Clay-colored (in migration).

**Other interesting birds** include Wood Duck (breeding), Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Wild Turkey, Spotted Sandpiper, American Woodcock, Black-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Long-eared Owl, Whip-poor-will, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Bank Swallow, Sedge Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, White-eyed Vireo, Bell's Vireo, both tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Dickcissel, both orioles, and Carolina Wrens. Brown Creeper, both kinglets, Purple Finches, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Winter Wrens can be found commonly in migration and in winter.

**Rare finds** have included Least Bittern, Golden Eagle, Mississippi Kite, Yellow Rail, Chuck-will's-widow, Northern Shrike, Connecticut Warbler, Smith's Longspur, and Red Crossbill.