

Southern Illinois. Not much of a drop in the lake is needed before a huge, wonderful, open area of mud flats is created. In fact, a one inch drop in the water level can expose acres of new flats, prime habitat for shorebirds.

Shorebirding at Rend Lake can be especially exciting in late summer and fall when migrating shorebirds can see the mud flats from a great distance. The migration begins; however, in March with the return of Lesser Golden Plovers and Pectoral Sandpipers and, except for a few weeks in

River have become natural beaches. Occasionally, wind and wind action have shaped long finger-like projections that extend out into the lake. Such an area is Honker's Point, on the west side of the lake. Here, Sanderlings, Red Knots, Piping Plovers, and a variety of gulls and terns come to feed and rest. Old gravel roads marked by orderly rows of tree stumps have become pebble beaches, attracting Ruddy Turnstones that flip over the stones searching for sustenance.

Some parts of the lake with more relief are ripped with

limestone to prevent erosion. Look for Spotted Sandpipers in these areas and someday maybe Purple Sandpipers.

Another man-made niche, rectangular ponds formed by the collapse of long-wall mining under the land surface, seem to be favored by Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpipers.

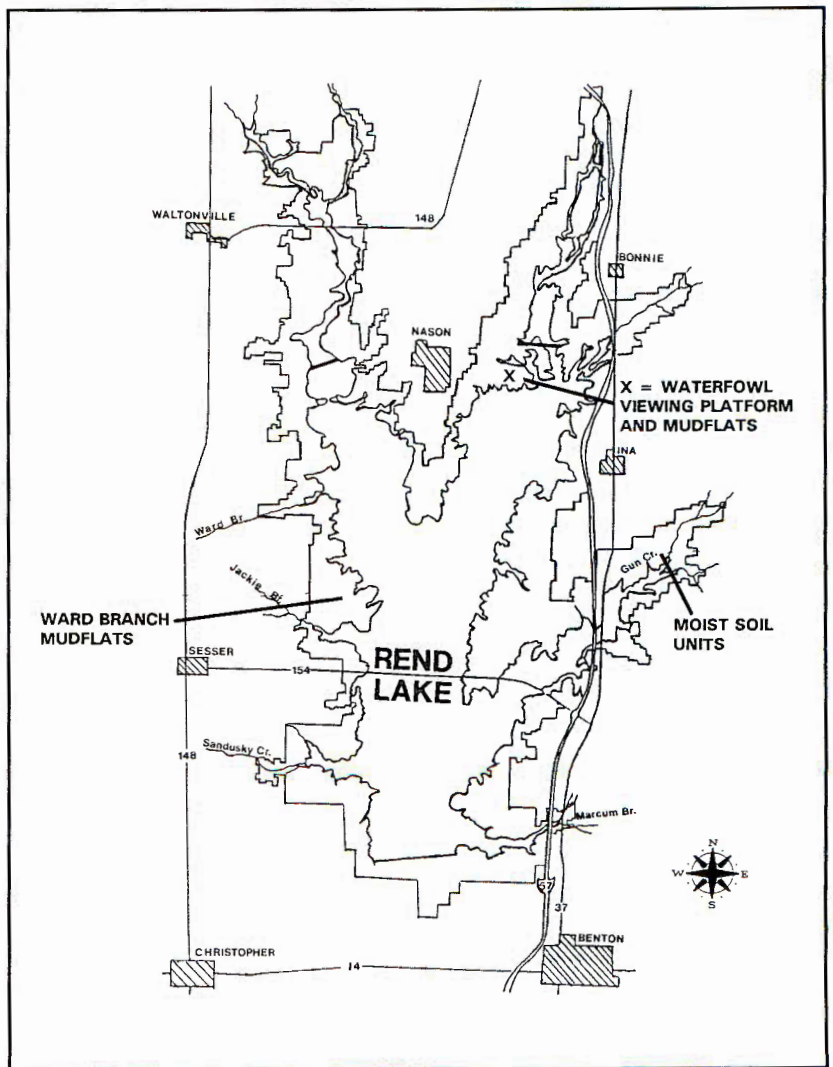
Newly created moist-soil units at Gun Creek where water levels can be controlled at certain times of the year hold great promise as habitat for Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary and Pectoral Sand-

*'Thirty-five species of shorebirds including Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, American Avocet, and Red-necked Phalarope have been sighted at Rend Lake.'*

June, doesn't end until early December when the last of the Least Sandpipers and Dunlins depart.

The mud flat habitats can vary with the weather conditions, though, and a promising mud flat can disappear after a period of heavy rain. One summer, five inches of rain fell in the area, hiding the mud flats and thus, greatly lowering the number of shorebirds seen.

The surrounding diverse habitat also attracts shorebirds. Sandy ridges built up along the old meanders of the Big Muddy



*Meadowlark*