

Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebe, Surf Scoter, and Eurasian Wigeon. Recently, Greater White-fronted Geese and Canvasbacks have wintered on the lake. At peak migration, diving ducks can number into the thousands.

The diverse habitats in the rest of the park attract landbirds year-round. Of particular mention is the marsh on the north end of the lake. Walk the Tanglewood Self-guided Trail and surrounding areas to search for rails and Marsh Wrens in spring. In spring 1999, up to three pairs of Yellow-breasted Chat set up territory here. Search the scrubby Russian olive and willow thickets for Bell's Vireo; at least four pairs were on territory at the entrance of the park in the spring of 1999. Other birds easily found along the entrance road in late spring and summer include Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Yellow Warbler. In spring 1999 Louisiana Waterthrush and Kentucky Warbler set up territories on the southwest side of the lake along the road through the woods. Veeries bred here in the late 1970s and early 1980s. To get to the park, follow the signs from the LeRoy exit on I-74

**3.** The **Saybrook Area** contains many privately owned fields readily utilized by grassland birds. Henslow's, Savannah, and Grasshopper Sparrows, Sedge Wren, Bobolink, Short-eared Owl, and Upland Sandpiper have bred in the fields around the small town of 1000 people, and all but the latter have probably bred there within the last two years. Most of these fields are between Saybrook and Arrowsmith. Western Meadowlarks (on average four pair) sing in spring and summer near the intersections of 1500N and 3500E between Colfax and Saybrook.

**4.** The **ParkLands Foundation** recently purchased the land on the west side of Henline Creek just upstream from its confluence with the Mackinaw River. The other side of the creek is privately owned, but maintained as part of The Mackinaw River Project by The Nature Conservancy. The landowners welcome those enjoying nature here. It is best in spring and fall for migrant warblers and vireos. A small parking area is on the south side of the road just east of the bridge. The area is just east of the intersection of 2150 N and 2975 E., between Colfax and Lexington.

**5.** **Henline Pit**, an old gravel pit surrounded by 10-foot tall willows is just north of Colfax.

Although privately owned, families have used it for fishing and recreation for decades. I've been told that everyone (if behaving properly) is welcome here. It offers interesting birding year-round.

Look for sparrows in the willows during fall, winter,

and spring. The pit has also been good for bittern, snipe, rails, and ducks. Flooded fields along County Route 8 (2450 N) east of Lexington attract shorebirds, ducks, and migrating raptors in spring. Ducks start to come through in March and continue until late May. The most common ducks seen include teal, shovelers, Mallards, Gadwalls, pintails, and Red-breasted Mergansers. Yellowlegs, snipe, American Golden-Plover, and Pectoral Sandpipers arrive the first week of April and usually remain through May. The more interesting shorebirds are present in mid May. The spring 1998 counts included 37 Short-billed Dowitchers, 14 Dunlin, 8 Semipalmated Plovers, 30 Least Sandpipers, and 30 Semipalmated Sandpipers. A late day search of the area in early May will often reward you with views of large flocks of American Golden-Plovers. One day at sunset in 1997, flocks numbering well into the hundreds wheeled around to land in a particular field to join the thousands that had already congregated there for the night. Hawks will sometimes dive at the immense flocks of plovers.

Rarer species observed near the Henline Pit the last couple years include Ruddy Turnstone, five Black-bellied Plovers, and Merlin. The fields adjacent to and across the road have been great for sparrows (including Henslow's) and both longspurs. In particular, Smith's Longspurs favor the no-till cornfields full of foxtail grass. The pit is just south of the intersection of 2450 N and 3200 E.

**6.** The original **ParkLands, the Merwyn Preserve** is just west of Lexington. This huge preserve is open in all seasons to naturalists. It is good for warblers in migration and seems to be the best spot in the county for Black-throated Blues. Walks through the prairie remnant in the southwest corner of the preserve can often yield a Yellow Rail in the appropriate seasons. Redpolls tend to favor the weedy areas in winter, and Sedge Wrens like the grasslands during summer. Bell's Vireo bred here a few years ago, and a chat was on territory in summer 1999. To get to ParkLand's Merwyn Preserve, go west from the Lexington exit on I-55 about five miles. The preserve is on the north side of the road after you cross the Mackinaw River. Look for wooden signs.

**7.** **Lake Bloomington** is known for waterbirds including gulls and terns. The spillway at the northern end can be good for shorebirds. The huge marsh at the southern end of the lake is worth a look. Least Bitterns and Virginia Rails may breed here. Birds found at the Lake include Eared Grebe, Henslow's Sparrow, and Snow Bunting. Just a few miles south of here, near the town of Towanda, a Burrowing Owl wintered from January to late March in 1988, and a flock of several hundred Smith's Longspurs