

Yellow-billed Cuckoos sing their varied songs throughout Jackson County in spring and summer, even into the night.

Emil Martinec took this photo of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in May 2007 in Illinois.



migration. The Mississippi River can be accessed from one of several spots at Wilkinson Island and adds migrating gulls and American White Pelicans to the list of species found here.

The Levee Road, which serves as the refuge's boundary, offers a scenic view of the refuge to the south and rural flatlands to the north. It also provides for elevated birding, increasing both the visual and audio possibilities. Depending on the season, birding from Levee Road can produce Horned Lark, Bobolink, House Wren, Northern Harrier, Fish Crow, Mississippi Kite, and accipiters. Least and Black Terns and shorebirds can be found in the flooded flatlands during springs with heavy rains.

Wilkinson Island is closed from dusk to dawn, but as night falls, birding along Levee Road continues with the seasonal sights and sounds of American Woodcock, numerous Eastern-Screech and Barred Owls, occasional Great Horned and Short-eared Owl, and thousands of migrating waterfowl overhead. And nothing beats the Levee Road view of a full moon rising over the Shawnee Hills.

For more information on areas within the Shawnee National Forest Mississippi Bluffs District, including any user fees which may apply, call (618) 687-1731 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/districts/west/

To acquire a map of the new Middle Mississippi River National

Wildlife Refuge Wilkinson Island Division or to find out more about one of the refuge's other three divisions, call (618) 763-4420 or visit www.fws.gov/midwest/MiddleMississippiRiver/wilkinson_island.html

A brochure mapping-out birding spots along the Mississippi River corridor in the southwestern tip of Illinois is in the works. It will connect locations from Jackson County south to Alexander County, describing a bit of area history, the habitats, and birding possibilities. A checklist for the corridor is being finalized as well.

And always be mindful of any hunting seasons that might coincide with the times and places you choose for birding.

— Rhonda Monroe Rothrock,
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Editor's Note:

Join IOS at its annual meeting in southern Illinois the last weekend in April, 2008. The meeting will be held jointly with the 2008 Birding Fest of Southernmost Illinois. You can use Rhonda's field guide above if you want to participate in a big day, one of the many events planned for this event. More details on the meeting are available on our Web site: www.illinoisbirds.org. Also visit www.birdingblitz.org/.



Belted Kingfishers can sometimes be difficult to find on a big day, but Rhonda Monroe Rothrock tells you in this article a reliable spot to find one in Jackson County.

This photo of the Belted Kingfisher was taken by Emil Martinec 21 October 2006 at North Pond, Chicago, Cook County.