Travel Directions:

From the Syracuse area:
Take I 81 north to exit 40, then NY 193 west to NY 3 and drive north four miles. Turn left (west) on Stony Creek Road and drive 1.5 miles. Turn left at Grandjean Road. Where the pavement ends, take the left fork at the "El Dorado Nature Preserve" sign.

From the Watertown area:
Take NY 3, south, approximately 15 miles to Danley Road. Drive southwest on Danley until it ends. Turn left onto Stony Creek Road. At top of hill, turn right onto Grandjean Road. Where the pavement ends, take the left fork at the "El Dorado Nature Preserve" sign.
EL DORADO HABITATS

The rugged El Dorado shoreline was shaped by glacial action in two key ways: the rocky shore was exposed thousands of years ago as the last glacier retreated, and the dunes formed when sand deposits were piled up by the westerly winds.

At the south end of the preserve, Black Pond and its surrounding marshes formed in the shelter of the newly established dunes. To the north, wave action pushed up a berm of sand and cobbles on the bedrock beach, sheltering an inland band of wet meadows. Farther inland, old pastures have grown up into dense red cedar woodlands.

El Dorado's diversity of habitats provides a unique opportunity for visitors to see a wide variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and songbirds.

A Vital Rest Stop

El Dorado provides a vital stopover for fall migrating shorebirds traveling thousands of miles from the Arctic to South America. The undeveloped shore offers seclusion, rocky perches, and food so birds can rest and replenish energy reserves. This layover is crucial to survival during the next leg of their journey -- the Atlantic Coast.

In the spring and fall, migrating songbirds also find abundant food and shelter in continuous brushy and forested habitats along the shore. Use the calendar below to know what to expect in various seasons.

Birds and More

Birds are not the only wildlife you may see along the way. Reptiles and amphibians sun themselves. Frogs inhabit wet areas and can almost be deafening when they call. How many different calls do you hear? Deer graze the fields and bed down within the shelter of the cedars. Butterflies feed on the nectar provided by the wildflowers that bloom from spring to fall. Watch for Monarch Butterflies migrating along with the birds.

Calcareous Shoreline Outcrop - Small spaces around rocks, bumps and holes on the surface, crevices, and stranded mats of algae harbor a store of insects and crustaceans. Look for Sandpipers, Yellowlegs, Terns, Gulls, and Waterfowl.

Red Cedar Woodland - Migrants and resident songbirds feed and rest in the dense cedars. Look and listen for White-throated Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, and Rufous-sided Towhee.

Wet Meadow - In the spring and fall as much as two feet of water floods the meadow. Lush grass and sedge stands abound with insects. Listen for the call of frogs and toads, the song of the Red-winged Blackbird and Swamp Sparrow, and the buzzing of millions of crickets.

Marsh - Nestled in the shelter of the dunes, the marshes make ideal nesting habitat for Black Tern, Bitterns, and other birds. Watch for Northern Harrier gliding over the cattails, wading Great Blue Heron, and, if you are lucky, maybe even a Bald Eagle.