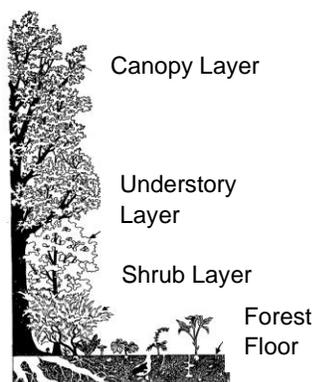




River Bluff Trail begins to the left of the Carl Pettice Canoe Access Road to the Middle Fork River. Before you begin hiking the trail, take a moment and walk down the canoe access road to the river. Once you are at the river by the sitting benches, notice the tall bluff over to your left. At the top of that bluff is our trail!

The trail begins with a small climb to the bluff area over the river. Eventually, the trail will split into two paths. Either direction will bring you back to this spot but this guide will follow the path to the left.



In a forest, there are many “layers” of plants growing at different heights. Our bottom layer is the forest floor where you may find fallen logs, wildflowers, box turtles, and chipmunks. There are not many shrubs growing along the trail, but you can find small trees growing in the understory layer.

Many of these trees are redbuds and young sugar maples. Redbud trees only grow 10-15 feet tall, whereas the young sugar maples will eventually grow to be a canopy layer tree and will be 30-50 feet tall.

Eventually, you will find a side trail that goes down a hill to the Wildlife Blind. This blind was built by a group of boy scouts and overlooks one of the Kennekuk marshes. If you quietly walk down the hill and sit behind the blind, the animals won't know you are there. You may see turtles, ducks, geese, herons, and other aquatic animals if you are patient and quiet!

River Bluff trail will make a loop to the right where the blue trail signs are posted, but if you take the path in front of you, you can walk out to see two marshes and the front of the wildlife blind. You can venture out to enjoy the marshes then come back to River Bluff Trail.



River Bluff Trail will now follow along the edge of the river up high on the bluff. Can you hear the river below? Can you see it through the trees?



Down below the trail in the floodplain forest along the river, bluebells can be found blooming in the middle of spring. Many white-barked Sycamore trees can also be found in the floodplain as well.

Further ahead, a scenic overlook can be found but don't get too close to the edge. It's a far drop to the river below! The Middle Fork River was classified as a National Scenic River in 1989. This classification provides 17.1 miles of river corridor federal protection of its outstanding scenic, recreational, ecological, and historical characteristics. It is one of the most pristine rivers in Illinois.

