



ATKINS LAKE & HILES SWAMP WETLAND TYPES

Eric Epstein

Coniferous bog, coniferous swamp, open bog, marsh,
fen, alder thicket

FOREST/ONEIDA
COUNTY



ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Located within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, this Wetland Gem site is made up of a shallow, soft-water drainage lake surrounded by a vast complex of coniferous bog and other northern wetland plant communities. This site harbors what is considered to be one of the most ecologically diverse forested wetland complexes in the Northwoods. These high quality wetlands are home to a number of rare plant and animal species as well as several boreal plant and bird species that are uncommon in Wisconsin. This site is significant because of its large size as well as the diverse and largely undisturbed character of its wetlands.

FLORA & FAUNA

Atkins Lake is a 151-acre marsh covered by water lily and pondweed species as well as an abundance of watershield, the inflorescence of which gives the lake a red color. The lake edge features numerous species of sedges, rushes and spike rushes, as well as arrowhead, broad-leaved cattail and pickerel weed. Surrounding the lake are intermingled communities of open bog and fen dominated by Labrador tea, blueberry, creeping snowberry, sedge and sphagnum moss. Hiles Swamp is more than 1700 contiguous acres of coniferous bog with a canopy dominated by stunted black spruce and tamarack. The shrub layer is characterized by ericaceous shrubs like Labrador tea and the ground layer is a mat of sphagnum moss. In some areas, the sphagnum moss

is clumped in large hummocks separated by water trails, providing habitat for rose pogonia orchid, grass pink, white beakrush and several rare species including dragon's-mouth orchid, swamp pink and alpine cottongrass. Areas of alder thicket are found along the margin of the Eagle River as it meanders through the northern part of the swamp.

Animals inhabiting the area include muskrat, mink, beaver, black bear, and white-tailed deer. Abundant waterfowl and water birds, including common loon, wood duck, blue-winged teal and sandhill crane, visit the lake. Noteworthy among the resident birds are bald eagle, osprey, American bittern, black tern, and northern harrier. Several boreal bird species are found in the swamp, including palm warbler, Lincoln's sparrow, gray jay and boreal chickadee. Mink frogs and green frogs have also been documented along the margin of the lake.

THREATS

The surrounding land is National Forest, so threats to this Wetland Gem are relatively minor. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Two railroad beds fragment the swamp habitat and have affected the site's hydrology; the north side of each bed has significantly higher water than the south side. Growing recreational use of the site may impact sensitive habitats.

ACCESS

For details on access for the State Natural Area portion of this site, visit the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna. Other portions of the site are difficult to access.

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Property Owners: WDNR, USDA Forest Service
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area,
WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, USDA Forest
Service Research Natural Area

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Lincoln's sparrow — Scott Franke



Grass pink — Kate Redmond