



BARK BAY & LOST CREEK BOG WETLAND TYPES

Eric Epstein

Open bog, coniferous bog, fen, marsh, coniferous swamp

BAYFIELD COUNTY



BARK BAY & LOST CREEK BOG

Property Owner: WDNR

Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Coastal Wetland Inventory Primary Site, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, The Nature Conservancy Priority Conservation Area, WI Bird Conservation Initiative Important Bird Area

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ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This coastal Wetland Gem, encompassing the Bark Bay Slough and Lost Creek Bog State Natural Areas, includes two adjacent bays along the shore of Lake Superior separated by rocky headlands and sheltered from the lake by coastal barrier sandspits. Wetlands at this site are extensive and high quality and support many rare, uncommon and representative species; Lost Creek Bog alone supports at least 14 rare species of plants, birds and butterflies. Lost Creek Bog is a coastal wetland complex made up of the drowned mouths of three small creeks where they empty into a lagoon at their junction in Siskiwit Bay. Fen surrounds the lagoon to the north and west and a coniferous swamp borders the site on the east. Open bog, marsh and sedge meadow are also present with indistinct boundaries between types. Bark Bay, which consists of a 28-acre lagoon surrounded by extensive coastal fen and open bog habitat, is fed by the Bark River, various springs and an unnamed stream.

FLORA & FAUNA

The fen habitats at these sites are characterized by woolly sedge, livid sedge, twig rush, sweet gale, water horsetail, bog bean, buckbean and alpine cotton grass. The open bog habitats are composed of sphagnum mosses, ericaceous shrubs, carnivorous plants and sedges; Bark Bay also

includes a scattering of small tamarack. Marsh habitat at Lost Creek is composed of emergent species like lake sedge, water arum, marsh cinquefoil and broad-leaved cattail, as well as submergent and floating species such as floating-leaved bur-reed, water milfoil, yellow water lily, common bladderwort, water marigold and pondweeds. Notably, this marsh contains the largest known population of the state endangered lake cress. Other rare plants recorded at this Wetland Gem are Michaux's sedge, downy willowherb, dragon's mouth orchid, livid sedge, and Hooker's orchid.

Two rare butterflies, the bog copper and bog fritillary, inhabit these wetlands. Birds recorded during the breeding season at this site include yellow-bellied flycatcher, evening grosbeak, merlin, bald eagle, northern harrier, yellow rail, sandhill crane, Brewer's blackbird and American bittern. Substantial numbers of shorebirds make use of this area during migration in late June through August. The shallow lagoon at Bark Bay supports mostly pan fish and northern pike and the three creeks that feed Lost Creek Bog support brook trout and minnows.

THREATS

While these wetlands are in excellent condition and protected through state ownership, they are not without threats. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Phragmites, the highly invasive common reed grass, has been documented at the site; control efforts are necessary to prevent its spread. Increasing motorboat traffic in the lagoon and nearby development are also of concern. Declining Lake Superior water levels have altered these and other coastal wetlands in recent years and may continue to do so if this pattern continues with global climate change.

ACCESS

These wetlands are best accessed and enjoyed by canoe. For details, visit the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.

Sources:

Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)
Priority Wetland Sites of Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin (WDNR)
Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)
Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregion: A Conservation Plan (TNC)
Douglas County Natural Areas



Bog copper — Mike Reese