



Funding for this project provided by The McKnight Foundation, which seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations through grantmaking, coalition-building and encouragement of strategic policy reform.



**Wisconsin  
Wetlands**  
ASSOCIATION

wisconsinwetlands.org



Richard Bautz, Eric Epstein



## BLACK RIVER WETLAND TYPES

Floodplain forest, forested seep

### ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem is located along the Black River near its confluence with Morrison Creek within the Black River State Forest in Jackson County. The Black River is high quality because the floodplain corridors and associated wetlands for the main river and several tributaries are protected within public lands, including the Black River State Forest and Jackson and Clark County Forests. This corridor supports large tracts of high quality floodplain forest. Morrison Creek itself is a high quality stream that meanders through extensive floodplain forest in its last miles before flowing into the Black River. Groundwater seeps are common in this forest. The site provides excellent wildlife habitat including important nesting and stopover habitat for a variety of songbirds and migratory waterfowl. These wetlands help support a diverse warm-water fishery and high quality recreational opportunities in the Black River corridor.

### FLORA & FAUNA

High quality floodplain forest characterizes the corridor along the mainstem of the Black River and Morrison Creek near their confluence. The canopy is dominated

by silver maple and green ash, with elm, river birch and a number of other tree species. The groundlayer features a rich assemblage of herbaceous plants – springtime in this forest is marked by an abundance of flowering spring ephemerals. Low spots feature plants characteristic of floodplain forest including ostrich fern, wood nettle, green dragon, cardinal flower and false dragonhead. Groundwater connections are evidenced by a number of forested seeps characterized by skunk cabbage.

These forested riverine wetlands provide excellent habitat for many bird species, including forest interior songbirds and forest raptors because they are bordered by extensive stands of upland forest. Among the noteworthy birds are red-shouldered hawk, cerulean and prothonotary warblers, yellow-billed cuckoo, blue-gray gnatcatcher, American redstart and yellow-throated vireo. Floodplain forests of this region provide habitat for a number of reptiles and amphibians, including Blanding's turtle, wood turtle, pickerel frog and four-toed salamander. The Black River and its floodplain serve as an important north-south corridor for mammals like black bear, timber wolf and fisher.



Four-toed salamander — Tim Wilder

### THREATS

Future timber harvest in the state forest must be carefully done to avoid impacts on this riverine wetland corridor. Recreational use, particularly via ATVs, may impact the site's sensitive resources. Invasive species are also of concern; future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash trees.

### ACCESS

This Wetland Gem is best enjoyed by canoe. Visit the Black River State Forest website: [dnr.wi.gov/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver](http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver).

### Sources:

Biotic Inventory and Analysis of the Black River State Forest / Meadow Valley Landscape (WDNR)  
 Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)  
 Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)  
 The Prairie-Forest Border: An Ecoregional Plan (TNC)