



COMSTOCK-GERMANIA MARSH

Property Owner: WDNR

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

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



COMSTOCK-GERMANIA MARSH WETLAND TYPES

Eric Epstein

Sedge meadow, low prairie, fen, coniferous bog, marsh, shrub carr

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem comprises more than 630 acres in two adjacent wetland complexes that are both protected as State Natural Areas—Comstock Bog-Meadow and Germania Wet Prairie. Unusual combinations of hydrologic and nutrient conditions within the site support unique assemblages of plants. The term “bog-meadow” refers to the fact that the site has a mixture of plants typically found separately in sedge meadow, open bog and fen communities. These unique high quality wetlands support many rare species of plants and animals.

FLORA & FAUNA

Comstock Bog-Meadow is characterized by diverse, quaking sedge meadow. The southern end features a unique combination of plants typically favoring alkaline conditions growing along with acid bog species including twig rush, grass-of-Parnassus, marsh fern, pitcher plant, bladderworts and sundews. A small area of coniferous bog dominated by young tamarack occupies the southeast end of the wetland. The shrub layer is sparse with bog

birch and shrubby cinquefoil, and the ground layer consists of sphagnum moss and woolly fruit sedge with marsh fern, bluejoint grass, tussock sedge, cattail, alpine cottongrass and cranberry. A more typical sedge meadow community covers the northern and western ends of the site. Germania Wet Prairie features diverse low prairie habitat on floodplain terraces along the Mekan River. Lush vegetation includes grasses like prairie cordgrass, bluejoint grass and slender wheatgrass and a variety of herbs and flowering plants including wild bergamot, prairie blazing star, mountain mint, swamp thistle, Michigan lily, marsh bellflower, downy phlox, boneset, meadow-rue, pale-spike lobelia and royal fern. Some rare plants, including bog arrowgrass and livid sedge, are present in large numbers here.

These diverse wetlands support a variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, dragonflies and birds. Birds using the site include sandhill crane, sedge wren, bobolink, and a number of rare species like Le Conte's sparrow, Henslow's sparrow and the state endangered yellow rail.

THREATS

While site hydrology is relatively intact, there are potential impacts from ditches along adjacent roads. Low density residential development on surrounding lands and inappropriate use (namely off-road vehicles) may affect sensitive resources at the site. Invasive species are the biggest threat. Pockets of cattail marsh are invading open wetland communities. Areas of Phragmites (common reed grass) are rapidly expanding and reed canary grass is prevalent along the Mekan River.

ACCESS

Visit the Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.

Sources:

Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (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)
Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)



Yellow rail — Travis Mahan