



FISH LAKE MEADOW WETLAND TYPES

Brynda Hatch

Sedge meadow, coniferous bog, open bog, shrub carr

BURNETT COUNTY



FISH LAKE MEADOW

Property Owner: WDNR

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

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wisconsinwetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem comprises several thousand acres of wetlands within the Fish Lake State Wildlife Area near the Minnesota border in northwest Wisconsin. This vast northern sedge meadow bordering the 200-acre Fish Lake and extending southward is part of the former glacial Lake Grantsburg. The site features gently rolling topography and many flat basins that make the meadow very wet, with areas of standing water of a few inches up to a foot in depth. The site provides stopover habitat for many thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds during migration. Fish Lake Meadow, along with the larger Crex Meadows to the northeast and several other public properties, form a highly valuable habitat corridor for myriad wildlife species.

FLORA & FAUNA

Sedge meadow is the key wetland type at this Wetland Gem, though coniferous bog, open bog, and shrub carr habitats are also present. Wire-leaved sedges and rushes dominate the sedge meadows; species include woollyfruit sedge, cordroot sedge, mud sedge, beaked sedge, few-seeded sedge, cottongrass and bluejoint grass. Bog islands are characterized by leatherleaf shrubs

and a groundlayer of sphagnum moss. Larger islands of shrubs include speckled alder, white meadowsweet, black chokeberry, bog birch and willows. Other plants include round-leaved and narrow-leaved sundews, marsh cinquefoil, bog St. John's wort, steeplebush, and a few trees, including paper birch, red maple and tamarack.

Fish Lake Meadow supports an abundance of wildlife, particularly birds. Thousands of sandhill cranes and other migratory birds use these wetlands in the fall. Drawdown of flowages provides excellent foraging habitat for a variety of shorebirds. Rare and interesting birds include trumpeter swan, yellow rail, yellow-headed blackbirds, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, Le Conte's sparrow, Wilson's phalarope, American bittern, black tern, upland sandpiper, sedge wren, sharp-tailed grouse and northern harrier. This site is part of a larger corridor that is considered prime habitat for recovery of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly.

THREATS

This fire-dependent landscape requires controlled burns to prevent the encroachment of shrubs and trees. Heavy recreational use may impact these wetlands. Invasive species are also of concern.

ACCESS

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



Ring-necked duck — Dennis Malueg

Sources:

Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)
The Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregion: A Conservation Plan (TNC)
Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)