



FLAMBEAU RIVER STATE FOREST

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

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.



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FLAMBEAU RIVER STATE FOREST WETLAND TYPES

Drew Feldkirchner

Ephemeral pond, floodplain forest, coniferous swamp, coniferous bog, marsh, alder thicket, lowland hardwood swamp, forest seep

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

The North and South forks of the Flambeau River meet in this State Forest, which comprises more than 90,000 acres of protected public lands. The Forest is characterized by many high quality and beautiful water features including diverse and extensive wetlands. While the site has excellent examples of various northern wetland types, the site is recognized as a Wetland Gem largely because of the many examples of ephemeral ponds found here. Because of their small size and transient nature, ephemeral ponds are typically not recognized by the public as wetlands though they are protected under state law in Wisconsin. The Flambeau River State Forest, which has protected these lands since the 1930s, boasts many ephemeral ponds embedded within the forest matrix and associated with the Flambeau River floodplain.

FLORA & FAUNA

High quality and diverse wetland habitats are associated with both forks of the Flambeau River and the site's several streams and lakes. Mason Lake, Evergreen Lake and Swamp Lake located in close proximity in the northeastern portion of the site are surrounded and connected by a variety of wetland habitats. Swamp Lake, for example, has a marshy shoreline surrounded by coniferous bog habitat dominated by tamarack and black spruce trees underlain by leatherleaf shrubs, sphagnum moss and other northern bog species. The shoreline habitat also includes small areas of alder thicket dominated by speckled alder. Other areas of this

site feature coniferous swamp habitat characterized by white cedar, hemlock and yellow birch and with scattered ephemeral ponds. The Forest supports a number of rare wetland plants including swamp pink, blunt-lobed grape fern, assiniboine sedge, sparse-flowered sedge, swamp bedstraw and the state endangered mountain cranberry.

Ephemeral ponds are highly productive with floating and emergent vegetation during their short wet periods. During the wet period they provide critical fish-free breeding habitat for many species of invertebrates, frogs and salamanders. They also provide feeding, resting and breeding habitat for a variety of songbirds and a source of food for many mammals. Ephemeral ponds contribute in many ways to the biodiversity of the Flambeau River State Forest.

Mammals found at this site include white-tailed deer, raccoon, black bear, otter and wolves. The site provides habitat for waterfowl and game birds like ruffed grouse. Rare birds using the site include bald eagle, osprey, red-shouldered hawk, Louisiana waterthrush, cerulean warbler, Connecticut warbler and Cape May warbler. The Forest's wetlands are important to maintaining healthy riverine and lake habitat for a diversity of fish, including musky, sturgeon, trout, walleye, bass and various panfish.

THREATS

Wetlands at this site are high quality because they are embedded within such a large area of protected land. Recreational use may impact the site's sensitive resources. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees, particularly white cedar. Invasive species like common reed, purple loosestrife, reed canary grass and watercress also threaten native wetland plant communities at this site.

ACCESS

Spring is the best time to view ephemeral ponds at this site. Other areas of the site provide excellent paddling opportunities. Visit the State Forests website: www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/stateforests/SF-Flambeau/

Sources:

Flambeau River State Forest Regional and Property Assessment (WDNR)
Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)



Northern spring peeper — Allen Blake Sheldon