



FORT MCCOY WETLAND TYPES

Lowland hardwood swamp, coniferous swamp, alder thicket, forested seep

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MONROE COUNTY



FORT MCCOY

Property Owner: Department of Defense – U.S. Army
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

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wisconsinwetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Driftless Area Wetland Gem features high quality riverine wetlands associated with Clear Creek and Silver Creek within the Fort McCoy Military Installation in Monroe County. Forming the headwaters of the La Crosse River, these pristine streams are coldwater, spring-fed, and exceptionally clear, and support healthy populations of native brook trout. Groundwater seepages throughout the floodplain corridors provide important microhabitats that support a diversity of plants, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. The location of the site in the vegetation tension zone, a transitional zone between southern and northern flora in Wisconsin, also contributes to the site's considerable plant diversity. Wetlands at Fort McCoy are surrounded by high quality and diverse uplands, including sand prairie and one of the least disturbed oak barrens remaining in the state. This matrix of wetland and upland habitats at Fort McCoy supports more than 800 plant species as well as diverse and abundant wildlife.

FLORA & FAUNA

Floodplain areas at the site are characterized by lowland hardwood swamp and coniferous swamp dominated by

white pine and red maple. A shrub layer consisting of speckled alder is present with skunk cabbage, cinnamon fern and jewelweed dominating the groundlayer. Sedges dominate the open areas and shrubby areas are dominated by speckled alder and winterberry. Other plants include marsh marigold, marsh blue violet, northern violet, bluejoint grass, rattlesnake manna grass, hummock sedge, stalk-grain sedge, and sensitive fern. The site also supports several rare plants, including bog bluegrass, long sedge, tufted hair grass, and Massachusetts fern.

More than 260 species of birds use the high quality wetland and upland habitats of Fort McCoy. Bald eagle, osprey, common loon, sandhill crane, ruffed grouse, barred owl, whip-poor-will, and pileated woodpecker are just a few species commonly found here. Two state threatened turtle species – Blanding's turtle and wood turtle – nest at the site. The federally endangered Karner blue butterfly is fairly common due to the presence of its host plant, wild lupine, in upland areas of the site. Gray wolf, deer, beaver, rabbit, squirrel, and furbearers like fisher, otter and beaver are some of the mammals that use Fort McCoy wetlands.

THREATS

Military training can be disruptive to natural landscapes, though Fort McCoy Natural Resource Branch works to prevent encroachment of invasive species and minimize polluted runoff in order to maintain pristine wetland habitat conditions and a high quality brook trout fishery. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees.

ACCESS

Access to Fort McCoy Training Areas is restricted due to military training requirements and resulting safety concerns. Contact the Public Affairs Office at (608) 388-2407 for details.

Sources:

Fort McCoy Natural Resources Branch
 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)



Karner blue butterfly — Mike Reese