



Brian Peters, Gerard Fuehrer



MEAD WORKHORSE WETLAND FUNCTION RECREATION & EDUCATION



MEAD WILDLIFE AREA

Property Owner: WDNR

Wetland Types Present: marsh, sedge meadow, shrub carr, coniferous bog, floodplain forest

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WETLANDS ARE DESTINATIONS FOR RECREATION & EDUCATION

Outdoor recreation is the most popular and fastest growing leisure activity in the United States, and Wisconsin is at the forefront of this trend thanks to the scenic beauty and quality of our state's waters and natural areas. Wetlands provide a wealth of recreational opportunities for Wisconsinites and out-of-state visitors, including hunting, fishing, paddling, hiking, birdwatching and wildlife viewing. Wisconsin's marshes, swamps, bogs, fens and more are also peaceful places to escape the fast pace of life and to simply relax and enjoy the scenery. Wetlands located near population centers, particularly those associated with nature centers and state parks, are especially valuable for the educational opportunities that they offer to Wisconsin families, schools and communities.

EXPLORE & ENJOY MEAD WILDLIFE AREA

Every year, thousands of Wisconsinites and out-of-state visitors travel to the George W. Mead Wildlife Area, which features more than 33,000 acres of wetlands, forests and grasslands. A variety of wetland habitats – sedge meadows of woolgrass, marsh milkweed, bluejoint grass, spotted joe-pye weed, and a variety of sedges; marshes of coontail, bladderwort, bur-reed, wild rice, arrowhead, and various bulrushes; shrub carrs of dogwood, willow, tag alder, elderberry, and bog birch; coniferous bog of black spruce and tamarack with a groundlayer of sphagnum moss; and rich floodplain forest along the Little Eau Pleine River of silver maple and black ash and a groundlayer of nettle, jewelweed and cardinal flower – support abundant and diverse wildlife. Mead is home to more than 267 species of birds, including ducks, geese, swans, herons, bitterns, gulls, terns, loons, grebes, plovers, sandpipers, rails, wrens, warblers and more. Various turtles, including the state threatened Blanding's turtle, as well as frogs, dragonflies and mammals use Mead's wetlands.

Wildlife and humans alike flock to this haven in the middle of the state. With more than 70 miles of trails, Mead provides easy access for hikers, bikers, birdwatchers and hunters. Open water areas are accessible for non-motorized boating and fishing. This site has become an excellent place for Wisconsinites to learn about wetlands and other natural habitats. Mead annually serves more than 4,600 students from 40 different schools and 1,300 adults with its no-charge educational programs. The Stanton W. Mead Education &

Visitor Center provides the perfect setting and resources for families, school groups and others to begin their exploration of all that Mead has to offer. A variety of fun and educational public events are held at Mead each year, and a citizens group called The Friends of the Mead/McMillan Association support Mead's staff in increasing public understanding, appreciation, support, and enjoyment of natural habitats and wildlife.

ACCESS

Visit the Mead Wildlife Area website: www.meadwildlife.org.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE RECREATION & EDUCATION VALUE OF WETLANDS

All Wetland Gems, and many other wetlands of the state, provide recreational opportunities that vary based on ease of access, availability of trails and boat launches, habitat sensitivity, and other factors. Wehr, Schlitz Audubon and River Edge Nature Centers in Milwaukee County; Riverbend Nature Center in Racine County; Cedarburg Bog in Ozaukee County; UW-Madison Arboretum in Dane County; Horicon Marsh in Dodge County; Crex Meadows in Burnett County; and Lake Superior Visitors' Center in Ashland County are all excellent centers for wetland education and exploration. Many other nature centers (www.naturenet.com/directory.asp) and state parks (www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/LAND/parks) offer opportunities for wetland recreation and education.

Sources:

Wisconsin State Wildlife Areas Program (WDNR)
The Friends of Mead/McMillan Association
Brian Peters, WDNR Wildlife Technician
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: Wetland Functional Values



Wetland exploration — Erin O'Brien, Laura England