



NICHOLS CREEK WETLAND TYPES

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Coniferous swamp, sedge meadow, seep, spring run

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

The North Branch of the Milwaukee River begins as Nichols Creek, a small stream meandering through a more than 600-acre high quality wetland complex in the Nichols Creek State Wildlife Area. The site features extensive coniferous swamp habitat with areas of sedge meadow habitat. These wetlands are loaded with groundwater connections, including seeps and spring runs, contributing to the river's clean, cool water and its ability to support wild populations of trout. This reach is the portion of the North Branch with the best habitat and water quality and has been recognized by the state as an *Outstanding Resource Water*. This Wetland Gem provides excellent wildlife habitat as well as recreational opportunities.

FLORA & FAUNA

The site features extensive coniferous swamp habitat dominated by northern white cedar. Other trees include black ash, tamarack and yellow birch and understory plants include marsh marigold and skunk cabbage. This forested wetland is unusual in that it is currently free of

exotic invasive species and the cedars are reproducing. In most coniferous swamps, heavy deer browsing limits or eliminates cedar regeneration. Areas of sedge meadow are dominated by tussock sedge and smooth sawgrass. Patches of speckled alder and red osier dogwood are also present.

This high quality habitat supports abundant wildlife. Common species include white-tailed deer and spring peepers. Wetland and upland bird species found at Nichols Creek State Wildlife Area include sandhill crane, Cooper's hawk, eastern bluebird, blue-winged warbler, field sparrow, clay-colored sparrow and bobolink. The area has not been thoroughly studied; many other species could be present at different times of the year. These wetlands are critical to maintaining a wild population of brown trout in Nichols Creek itself.

THREATS

Runoff from low-density development and agriculture in the Nichols Creek watershed threatens water quality at the site. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens continued regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Future

invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash stands.

ACCESS

Visit the State Wildlife Areas website: www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/wildlife_areas/nichols.htm



Skunk cabbage — Gary Shackelford

Sources:

- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- Wisconsin State Wildlife Areas (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory (WDNR)
- North Branch Milwaukee River Wildlife & Farming Heritage Area Feasibility Study (WDNR)
- Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts

NICHOLS CREEK

Property Owner: WDNR
 Recognitions & Designations: WI Land Legacy Place, WI State Wildlife Area, Outstanding Resource Water

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