



POINT BEACH & DUNES WETLAND TYPES

Andy Clark

Coniferous swamp, alder thicket, sedge meadow, forested ridge and swale, interdunal wetland

MANITOWOC COUNTY



POINT BEACH & DUNES

Property Owners: WDNR, Woodland Dunes Nature Center
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Coastal Wetland Inventory Primary Site, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, The Nature Conservancy Priority Conservation Area, WI Bird Conservation Initiative Important Bird Area

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ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem is an important coastal wetland complex near the city of Two Rivers that comprises Point Beach State Forest and three separate State Natural Areas: Point Beach Ridges, Wilderness Ridge and Woodland Dunes. Most of the land is owned by the state, while other portions are managed for conservation values by private organizations. This site offers excellent examples of ridge and swale habitat, a Great Lakes coastal wetland type characterized by dry ridges separated by wet swales paralleling the Lake Michigan shoreline. These ridges are remnants of former beach lines that formed as water levels fell during post-glacial times. Many rare plants and animals have been documented at this site, including a number of plants that are endemic to Great Lake shorelines.

FLORA & FAUNA

Ridges at this site vary from upland forest types to coniferous swamp of yellow birch, beech and hemlock with understory plants like shining club-moss, spinulose wood fern, American starflower, naked miterwort and yellow bluehead lily. The swales at this site vary from forested with white cedar and tamarack swamp to shrubby with alder, dogwood and willow, to herbaceous marsh and sedge meadow communities. The swales at Wilderness Ridge State Natural Area feature diverse sedge meadows containing more than 28 species of sedges and many species of grasses. West of the Point Beach ridge and swale habitat, Molash Creek drains a large, forested wetland with some areas of

second growth black ash, green ash, trembling aspen and white cedar and other areas characterized by black ash, tamarack and white cedar swamp. Molash Creek flows southward out of this disturbed swamp and then eastward to Lake Michigan through higher quality alder thicket and southern sedge meadow. Rare plants documented at this Wetland Gem site include sweet colt's foot, common bog arrowgrass, slender bog arrowgrass, swamp pink, sticky false asphodel and white adder's mouth.

This site provides important nesting and migratory stopover habitat for a variety of birds. Large numbers of ducks, loons, and grebes gather in lake waters adjacent to this site, especially in the fall. Tens of thousands of landbirds and raptors use the area during both spring and fall migration. Songbirds, especially warblers and thrushes, make use of the forested portions of the site during migration. Bird species that breed at the site include eastern wood-pewee, wood thrush, hooded warbler, ovenbird, American redstart, Blackburnian warbler and Canada warbler. Rare and unusual bird species documented at this site include piping plover, red-shouldered hawk, black-crowned night heron and common barn owl.

THREATS

In the State Forest portion of this site, public trails, campground areas and portions of the beach and dunes receive heavy recreational use and associated impacts. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Invasive species, particularly reed canary grass, are present and require monitoring and management. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash trees.

ACCESS

For details, visit the Point Beach Ridges, Wilderness Ridge and Woodland Dunes pages of the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.

Sources:

- Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
- Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)
- Great Lakes Ecoregional Plan (TNC)
- Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)



Blackburnian warbler — Brian Hansen