



RICE CREEK WETLAND TYPES

Coniferous swamp, fen, sedge meadow, marsh

Eric Epstein

VILAS COUNTY



ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in Vilas County, this Wetland Gem comprises a two-mile stretch of Rice Creek surrounded by a large wetland complex (435 acres) of coniferous swamp, fen and sedge meadow. Marsh vegetation grows within this warm, slow-moving creek. The beautiful, high quality wetland habitats at this Gem site support a wide diversity of plants and animals, including a number of rare species.

FLORA & FAUNA

Marsh habitat growing within the creek features extensive and lush beds of wild rice and other aquatic plants. Adjacent to the creek is high quality fen that is fed by groundwater seepage. This fen features a diversity of species including American woollyfruit sedge, bog birch, pitcher plant, bog buckbean, three-leaf Solomon's-seal, alpine cottongrass and marsh

cinquefoil. The fen also supports at least seven species of orchids and the rare bog arrowgrass. A large coniferous swamp flanks the fen. Northern white cedar dominates the canopy, but several other species are present, including balsam fir, black spruce, tamarack, black ash, red maple, white spruce, yellow birch, paper birch and hemlock. The understory includes scattered mountain maple and alder shrubs as well as a diversity of herbaceous plants including heart-leaf twayblade, blunt-leaved orchid, naked miterwort, three-leaved goldthread, yellow bluebead lily, early coralroot and striped coralroot.

The Rice Creek wetland complex supports a diversity of bird species including barred owl, red-breasted nuthatch, pine siskin and winter wren. Rare birds documented at the site include gray jay and yellow-bellied flycatcher. The rare bog copper butterfly is also found here.

THREATS

Impacts from watershed forestry practices and recreational use of this State Forest may affect sensitive wetland resources. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees.

ACCESS

The area is best accessed by canoe. For details, visit the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.



Bog copper — Mike Reese

RICE CREEK

Property Owner: WDNR
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area,
WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site

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