



SPIDER LAKE WETLAND TYPES

Steven Spickerman

Lowland hardwood swamp, coniferous swamp, alder thicket

ASHLAND COUNTY



ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Spider Lake, located within Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Ashland County, features a high quality, undisturbed stand of lowland hardwoods dominated by black ash and grading into coniferous swamp to the northwest. The site is considered one of the best hardwood swamps in the region because it is relatively large (283 acres), has a wide diversity of age and size classes among canopy trees, and has unaltered hydrology. These wetlands are home to a diverse assemblage of plants and animals and several species that are rare in Wisconsin including the state threatened timber wolf.

FLORA & FAUNA

This Wetland Gem comprises a high quality lowland hardwood swamp dominated by black ash of various age and size classes; some of the older ash trees are more than 130 years old. Other canopy tree species include red maple, paper birch, white cedar and white spruce. Underneath the canopy lies a dense shrub layer made up of speckled alder, mountain maple, red osier dogwood and winterberry. Groundlayer vegetation includes mosses, cinnamon fern, marsh marigold, swamp

saxifrage, creeping snowberry, and fringed, swollen, and three-fruited sedges. Tree tip-up pools (pools created in the former root zone of fallen trees) and other small pools of standing or slowly moving water are common. In the northwest portion of the site, the lowland hardwood swamp grades into coniferous swamp dominated by northern white cedar, hemlock and yellow birch.

A diversity of bird species use these wetlands, including ruffed grouse, American woodcock, veery, swamp sparrow, black-and-white warbler, black-throated green warbler, northern waterthrush, northern parula, great-crested flycatcher and yellow-bellied flycatcher, a species of special concern in Wisconsin. Of particular note are the presence of a great blue heron rookery and the gray jay, a bird of northern coniferous forests. Mammals known to inhabit the area are white-tailed deer, showshoe hare, black bear and red squirrel. The state threatened gray wolf (timber wolf) also uses these habitats.

THREATS

Remote location and difficult access have limited human use and impacts. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash stands.

ACCESS

There is no direct access to this site. For details on how to hike into the site (topo map and compass required), visit the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.

SPIDER LAKE

Property Owner: USDA Forest Service
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area,
USDA Forest Service Natural Research Area

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Gray wolf — John & Karen Hollingsworth