



ST. CROIX & NAMEKAGON RIVER CORRIDOR WETLAND TYPES

National Park Service

Floodplain forest, lowland hardwood swamp, coniferous swamp, alder thicket, shrub carr, forested seep, coniferous bog, open bog, fen, marsh, ephemeral pond, sedge meadow

BURNETT/DOUGLAS COUNTY



ST. CROIX & NAMEKAGON RIVER CORRIDOR

Property Owner: National Park Service, WDNR
Recognitions & Designations: National Scenic Riverway, WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, The Nature Conservancy Priority Conservation Area, WI Bird Conservation Initiative Important Bird Area

Funding for this project provided by The McKnight Foundation, which seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations through grantmaking, coalition-building and encouragement of strategic policy reform.

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This riverine Wetland Gem, located within the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, comprises the confluence of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers and a corridor stretching from several miles upstream of the confluence on both rivers to the Minnesota border several miles downstream of the confluence. With its headwaters in the Brule River State Forest, the St. Croix is known to be one of the cleanest rivers in the Midwest and supports many rare species. This corridor features several types of high quality forested wetlands and a number of other non-forested types. The corridor supports a tremendous abundance and diversity of wildlife species and is also a popular paddling destination thanks to wildlife viewing opportunities and stunning scenery.

FLORA & FAUNA

Above the confluence of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, the St. Croix flows through a narrow valley with steep sides. Below the confluence, the river slows, widens and deepens, and flows through a wide valley with low banks and extensive floodplain wetlands. The main wetland types include coniferous swamp dominated by white cedar, lowland hardwood swamp dominated by black ash, and shrub swamp dominated by alder. The site also includes areas of sedge meadow and marsh along the river margins. Big Island State Natural Area within the corridor features coniferous bog in the lower and wetter parts of the island. Plant species include white spruce, marsh bluegrass, northern blueflag iris and woolgrass. Numerous forested seeps create groundwater connections and habitat complexity that increases diversity.

This Wetland Gem is a haven for wildlife of all kinds. More than 240 species of birds have been documented in the St. Croix Scenic Riverway, at least 160 of which nest here. Species include bald eagle, osprey, northern harrier, red-shouldered hawk, great blue heron, belted kingfisher, killdeer, greater and lesser yellowlegs, American and least bittern, blue-winged teal, wood duck, hooded merganser, common goldeneye, northern shoveler, American redstart, Nashville warbler, yellow warbler and sedge and marsh wrens. Numerous amphibians and reptiles are found here, including spotted salamander, Cope's gray treefrog, green frog, northern leopard frog, painted turtle, snapping turtle, map turtle (at its northern range limit here), wood turtle and softshell turtle. Mammals using these wetlands include beaver, muskrat, otter and black bear.

THREATS

Watershed and shoreline development upstream of this site threaten this high quality riverine system. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Invasive plants, including purple loosestrife and glossy buckthorn, are also of concern at this site. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash stands.

ACCESS

This area is best seen by canoe. Visit the National Park Service St. Croix Scenic Riverway website: www.nps.gov/sacr.



Common map turtle — Jerry DeBoer



Green frog — Allen Blake Sheldon

Sources:

- St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (NPS)
- Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- The Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregion: A Conservation Plan (TNC)
- Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)