



TURTLE VALLEY WILDLIFE AREA

Property Owner: WDNR
Wetland Types Present: marsh, sedge meadow,
low prairie, ephemeral pond

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, and the **Wisconsin Coastal Management Program** and **National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant # NA07NOS4190064.



NRCS

TURTLE VALLEY WORKHORSE WETLAND FUNCTION WILDLIFE HABITAT

WETLANDS SUPPORT WILDLIFE

Wetlands are often cited as the most productive ecosystems on Earth because of their great capacity to capture and use the sun's energy as well as to recycle energy and nutrients. A strong food web base, made up of plants, algae and microbes, means that wetlands can support an abundance of wildlife. Many mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and insects rely on wetlands as feeding grounds, nesting habitats, spawning grounds, travel corridors and more. Two-thirds of the 12 million waterfowl of the continental U.S. reproduce in the prairie pothole wetlands of the Midwest. In Wisconsin, three-quarters of wildlife species use wetlands during some stage of their life cycle, and more than a third of the state's threatened and endangered species depend on marshes, swamps, bogs, fens and other wetland habitats. Turtle Valley Wildlife Area exemplifies the value of wetlands as wildlife habitat.

TURTLE VALLEY & WILDLIFE

Spanning the headwaters of Sugar and Turtle Creeks in northwest Walworth County, the Turtle Valley Wildlife Area comprises 2300 acres of restored wetlands and prairies. Once drained by an extensive network of tile and ditches, the area now features more than 1800 acres of open wetland habitats, including shallow marshes, sedge meadows and low prairies. Ephemeral mud flats are exposed when water levels are low. Prairies with native grasses and flowers surround the wetlands and buffer the wetlands from disturbance. Turtle Valley is now home to abundant and rich wildlife, including more than 120 species of breeding and migratory birds that flock to the valley in tremendous numbers. The site provides especially good habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds like

mallard, redhead, wood duck, blue-winged teal, hooded merganser, ruddy duck, killdeer, lesser yellowlegs, and several species of sandpiper. Numerous rare, threatened and endangered birds use these wetlands including American bittern, Forster's tern, Wilson's phalarope, king rail, great egret and whooping crane. Rare reptiles like the state threatened Blanding's turtle are also found here. A wildlife area of this size and quality is especially valuable in the rapidly urbanizing southeastern portion of the state.

WETLAND RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

The Turtle Valley restoration project began as a collaborative effort between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and WDNR in 1999. WRP is the largest source of funds for wetland restoration in Wisconsin, and Turtle Valley is the state's largest WRP restoration to date. The project would not have been possible without the involvement of many partners, including U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Walworth County Land Use & Resource Management Department, Pheasants Forever, and private landowners.

MULTIPLE VALUES

While the main purpose of this extensive wetland restoration effort was to provide wildlife habitat, these wetlands were also designed to store floodwaters and to filter sediment and other pollutants. The wetlands of Turtle Valley thus provide significant water quality and water quantity benefits to the Rock River basin. The site also provides outdoor recreation and educational opportunities such as hiking, hunting and wildlife viewing for all of southeastern Wisconsin.

ACCESS

For details, visit the Wetlands Reserve Program's Wisconsin webpage: www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp.html.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE WILDLIFE HABITAT VALUE OF WETLANDS

All Wetland Gems, and many other wetlands of the state, provide important wildlife habitat. The wide diversity of wetland habitat types represented among Wetland Gem sites is critical to supporting the state's wealth of wildlife.

Sources:

Wetlands Reserve Program Wisconsin Office (USDA-NRCS)
Wisconsin State Wildlife Areas Program (WDNR)
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: Wetland Functional Values



Ruddy duck — Brian Hansen