



**BELDEN SWAMP WETLAND TYPES**

Open bog, coniferous bog, alder thicket, fen

*Eric Epstein*

DOUGLAS COUNTY



### ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Belden Swamp is a large, undisturbed, acid peatland that straddles the divide between the Mississippi River and Lake Superior watersheds in Douglas County. The swamp forms the headwaters of both the Spruce River, which flows southwest to the St. Croix River, and the Black River, which flows north to Lake Superior. This wetland complex features the largest remaining undisturbed open bog in Wisconsin and is part of one of the largest roadless blocks in the state. The open bog is surrounded by extensive coniferous bog and some areas of fen and alder thickets. Numerous rare plant and animal species thrive in these remote, high quality wetlands.

### FLORA & FAUNA

Vegetation varies throughout the site, likely reflecting varied subsurface drainage patterns. Open bog areas are carpeted by sphagnum moss and dominated by wire-leaved sedges and low growing bog shrubs including bog birch, bog laurel, bog rosemary, leatherleaf and small cranberry. Black spruce and tamarack dominate coniferous bog areas with an understory characterized by Labrador tea and sphagnum moss. Alder and willow dominate a shrubby zone on the upland edge of the wetland. Sedges at the site include three-seeded sedge, woollyfruit sedge, mud sedge, few-seeded sedge, boreal bog sedge, beaked sedge, tall cottongrass, tussock cottongrass, and tawny cottongrass.



*Jutta arctic butterfly — Eric Epstein*

Belden Swamp provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife. Resident birds include palm warbler, yellow warbler, savanna sparrow, Lincoln's sparrow, hermit thrush, veery, and sedge wren. Rare and unusual bird species documented at the site include American bittern, Le Conte's sparrow, Nashville warbler, northern harrier and yellow-bellied flycatcher. The site also supports a number of rare butterflies including bog copper, bog fritillary, purple lesser fritillary, and jutta arctic. Rare and unusual mammals recorded at the site include timber wolf, moose and American marten.

### THREATS

Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Increased motorized recreation or road construction in the area could significantly degrade the unusually wild character of this sensitive area.

### ACCESS

Visit the Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program website: [dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna).



*Nashville warbler — Brian Hansen*

# BELDEN SWAMP

**Property Owner:** Douglas County  
**Recognitions & Designations:** WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Coastal Wetland Inventory Primary Site

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**Sources:**  
 Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)  
 Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)  
 Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)