



BRAZEAU SWAMP WETLAND TYPES

Andy Clark

Coniferous swamp, lowland hardwood swamp, alder thicket, sedge meadow, marsh

OCOONTO COUNTY



ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Brazeau Swamp, one of the largest wetland complexes in the state at more than 10,000 acres, is composed largely of wooded wetlands including both coniferous swamp and lowland hardwood swamp community types. The site also hosts extensive alder thicket and high quality sedge meadow. Pestigo Brook drains this vast swamp, which is located within the basin of glacial Lake Oconto. While some of this wetland complex is on private lands, Brazeau Swamp comprises large areas of protected lands in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and the Peshtigo Brook State Wildlife Area including two State Natural Areas: Peshtigo Brook Meadow & Woods and Waupee Lake. Several rare plants have been found in these wetlands. Brazeau Swamp is one of the best examples of a large cedar swamp in northern Wisconsin.

FLORA & FAUNA

The western section of Brazeau Swamp includes Waupee Lake State Natural Area, a small and unspoiled lake surrounded by extensive coniferous swamp and lowland hardwood swamp. Canopy species include white cedar, tamarack, black spruce, balsam fir, black ash, red maple, paper birch, yellow birch and eastern hemlock. Understory species include bunchberry, three-leaved goldthread, Labrador tea, false Solomon's seal, gaywings and cinnamon fern. Around the lake are open wetlands dominated by sedges, bulrushes, bluejoint grass, marsh fern, marsh cinquefoil, swamp betony and poison sumac. Marsh

vegetation, present along the lake margins, includes softstem bulrush, cattail, yellow pond lily and white water lily. Because of calcareous groundwater inputs, Waupee Lake's margins support an unusually high number of rare plant species. Peshtigo Brook Meadows & Woods State Natural Area features a series of sedge meadows that are highly intact. Dominant plants include lake sedge, tussock sedge and woollyfruit sedge. Other plants include bluejoint grass, Buxbaum's sedge, marsh fern, swamp loosestrife, marsh skullcap, water horsetail and northern bog goldenrod. Shrub species include bog birch, alder, white meadowsweet and slender willow.

Bird species that use Brazeau Swamp for breeding habitat include black-billed cuckoo, alder flycatcher, brown thrasher, golden-winged warbler, mourning warbler, field sparrow, olive-sided flycatcher, sedge wren, Nashville warbler, veery and sandhill crane. Rare and interesting bird species documented at the site include merlin, loggerhead shrike, warbling vireo, Le Conte's sparrow and yellow-bellied flycatcher. Amphibians found at the Swamp include leopard frog, wood frog, green frog and bullfrog. Numerous dragonflies also make use of these extensive wetlands.

THREATS

Development and agriculture in the watershed may contribute to water quality and fragmentation problems. Increasing use of recreational vehicles in the Swamp has created impacts. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifers. Invasive plants, especially reed canary grass and Phragmites (common reed grass), are also of concern.

BRAZEAU SWAMP

Property Owners: USDA Forest Service, WDNR
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, WI Bird Conservation Initiative Important Bird Area

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Nashville warbler — Brian Hansen

ACCESS

Visit the State Natural Areas Program website for details: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.

Sources:
 Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
 Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
 Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)



Wood frog — Kate Redmond