

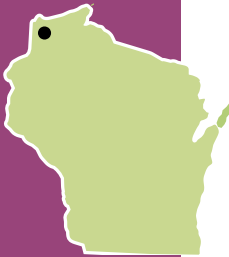


BRULE GLACIAL SPILLWAY WETLAND TYPES

Eric Epstein

Coniferous swamp, coniferous bog, alder thicket, sedge meadow, spring runs/seeps

DOUGLAS COUNTY



ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This riverine Wetland Gem comprises more than 2500 acres of diverse, high quality wetlands within the Brule River State Forest. Here the upper Brule River meanders through extensive coniferous swamp, coniferous bog, alder thicket, shrub swamp and sedge meadow. Groundwater connections at the site are illustrated by numerous groundwater seeps and spring runs that deliver clean, cool water to these wetlands and the river. The site remains in nearly pre-settlement conditions, with some areas of old growth, because the wet and sloped ground conditions discouraged logging that was once common in surrounding areas. The Brule Glacial Spillway features one of the best examples of undisturbed alder thicket in the state and supports numerous rare plants and animals.

FLORA & FAUNA

Coniferous swamp at the site, some portions of which are at or approaching old growth conditions, is dominated by northern white cedar. Balsam fir, tamarack, black spruce and black ash are the other main canopy trees. The shrub layer is dominated by mountain maple, speckled alder and alder-leaved buckthorn. The groundlayer is species

rich with plants like goldthread, twinflower, Labrador tea, bunchberry, and various sedges, ferns and orchids. Many species of rare plants are found here, including fairy slipper, yellow lady's slipper, northern black currant, marsh willowherb, autumnal water-starwort, sheathed sedge, and the state endangered Lapland buttercup.

This Wetland Gem supports a diversity of birds, including olive-sided flycatcher, boreal chickadee, golden-crowned kinglet, Lincoln's sparrow, northern saw-whet owl, and black-backed woodpecker. Rare and unusual birds include northern goshawk, Le Conte's sparrow, evening grosbeak, Cape May warbler, yellow-bellied flycatcher, gray jay and bald eagle. The site also supports several rare insects, including the jutta arctic butterfly and the ski-tailed emerald and zebra clubtail dragonflies. An abundance of amphibians are associated with the site's many groundwater springs.

THREATS

Recreational use could damage the site's most sensitive resources. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash trees.

ACCESS

This Wetland Gem is best viewed by canoe. Visit the Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.



Golden-crowned kinglet — Scott Franke

Sources:

- Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)
- Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)
- Great Lakes Ecoregional Plan (TNC)
- Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)

BRULE GLACIAL SPILLWAY

Property Owner: WDNR
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, 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.



wisconsinwetlands.org