



DES PLAINES RIVER FLOODPLAIN & MARSHES WETLAND TYPES

Ryan Marquart

Marsh, floodplain forest, low prairie, shrub carr

KENOSHA
COUNTY



DES PLAINES RIVER FLOODPLAIN & MARSHES

Property Owners: Village of Pleasant Prairie, Kenosha/Racine Land Trust
Recognitions & Designations: WI Land Legacy Place, WI Wildlife
Action Plan Reference Site

Funding for this project provided by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant #NA07NOS4190064.

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Located in southern Kenosha County just east of I-94 and north of the state line, this site along the Des Plaines River comprises several hundred acres of marsh, floodplain forest, low prairie and shrub carr habitat. In the spring and fall, this area is a significant stopover site for waterfowl in the central migratory flyway. The river has a wide floodplain and undergoes large fluctuations in flow that sometimes result in flooding problems across the border in Illinois. Protection and further restoration of wetlands in this corridor offers many ecological, flood control and recreation benefits. Local involvement and partnerships for further protection of these wetlands have grown in recent years. Kenosha/Racine Land Trust has identified more than 500 acres for future acquisition and protection and has recently made its first land purchase.

FLORA & FAUNA

The Des Plaines River Floodplain & Marshes site features a diversity of emergent aquatic vegetation dominated by cattails and various sedges. Other species include water plantain, river bulrush, wild iris, water hemlock, angelica, marsh bellflower, bottle gentian, and spotted joe-pye weed. A number of rare, threatened or endangered species have been identified in this area, including the state endangered purple milkweed.



Great egret — Dennis Malueg

A total of 216 bird species have been documented at this site. In spring and fall, large numbers of migratory waterfowl use these wetlands as stopover habitat. A number of rare species have been observed at this site, including the great egret (state threatened) and red-shouldered hawk (state threatened). In addition to birds, 36 species of mammals, 13 species of amphibians, 5 species of turtles (including the state threatened Blanding's turtles), 11 species of snakes, and numerous fish have been documented in the floodplain.

THREATS

This site is located approximately halfway between Milwaukee and Chicago and thus is in relatively close proximity to several million people. Historical and ongoing watershed land use alterations, including agricultural practices and urban/suburban development, have exacerbated water quality and flooding problems at this site and in downstream reaches of the river. Recreational use of the area exacerbates the spread of invasive species, particularly reed canary grass, in these wetlands.

ACCESS

Visit the Village of Pleasant Prairie Parks Department website: www.pleasantprairieonline.com/parksandrec.



Blanding's turtle — Allen Blake Sheldon

Sources:

- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR) Comprehensive Plan for the Des Plaines River Watershed (SEWRPC)
- State of the Southeast Fox River Basin Report (WDNR)
- Kenosha/Racine Land Trust