

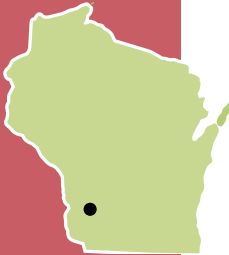


KICKAPOO VALLEY RESERVE WETLAND TYPES

Floodplain forest, lowland hardwood swamp, sedge meadow, marsh, shrub carr, forested seep

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VERNON COUNTY



KICKAPOO VALLEY RESERVE

Property Owners: Ho-Chunk Nation, State of Wisconsin
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, National Park Service National Natural Landmark

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.

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve in the heart of the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin comprises more than 8500 acres of protected habitats including 1450 acres of riverine wetlands. Sandstone cliffs and forested bluffs tower over the valley and the meandering Kickapoo River. The floodplain of this low gradient, warmwater river features a complex of high quality wetland habitat types. With one of the most diverse collections of wetland and upland plant communities in the state, the Kickapoo Valley Reserve supports abundant and diverse wildlife, particularly birds. This Wetland Gem is exceptionally scenic and provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities including canoeing, birdwatching, hiking, biking, fishing and hunting.

FLORA & FAUNA

In the floor of the Reserve valley, the Kickapoo River floodplain features a rich mosaic of wetland habitats. Sedge meadow and marsh habitats characterize river meanders and old river oxbows. Flanking the river channel is floodplain forest dominated by silver maple, green ash, and American elm; shrub carr is also present. Groundwater seepages are commonly associated with bedrock outcroppings on the valley hillslopes, and support a number of rare plants. More than 25 rare plant species have been documented at the Reserve.



Bull frog — Allen Blake Sheldon

This Wetland Gem provides habitat for more than 100 species of birds including bald eagle, wood duck, mallard, blue-winged teal, northern shoveler, hooded merganser, American bittern, great blue heron, great egret, green heron, Nashville warbler, yellow warbler, black-throated green warbler, palm warbler, American redstart and northern waterthrush. Rare birds include red-shouldered hawk, cerulean warbler, Louisiana waterthrush and Acadian flycatcher. A variety of reptiles and amphibians also use the site, including snapping turtle, painted turtle, eastern spiny softshelled turtle, Blanding's turtle, bull frog, green frog, leopard frog, chorus frog, spring peeper and Cope's gray tree frog.

THREATS

Polluted runoff from poor agricultural practices in the watershed threatens water quality. Increasing recreational use of the Reserve may lead to impacts to sensitive natural resources. Invasive plant species like reed canary grass and purple loosestrife are of serious concern. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash trees. Power line development would pose a significant threat to the birdlife and forested wetland communities at this site.

ACCESS

Visit the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center website at kvr.state.wi.us.

Sources:

- Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)
- The Prairie-Forest Border: An Ecoregional Plan (TNC)
- Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)



Red-shouldered hawk — Scott Franke