

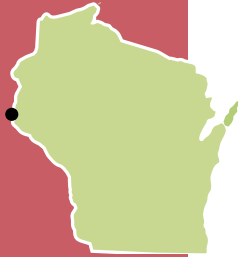


LOWER ST. CROIX RIVER CORRIDOR WETLAND TYPES

National Park Service

Floodplain forest, marsh, fen, alder thicket, forested seep

POLK/ST. CROIX COUNTY



LOWER ST. CROIX RIVER CORRIDOR

Property Owners: National Park Service, 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, National Scenic Riverway

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

This riverine Wetland Gem features a corridor of high quality floodplain wetlands within the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway from Cedar Bend near the town of Osceola to the St. Croix Islands Wildlife Area where the Apple River meets the St. Croix. This stretch of the river has little development and features some of the best examples of floodplain forest in the region with many sloughs, oxbows and backwaters. The corridor has patches of other wetland habitat types, including marsh, fen, alder thicket and forested seeps. These wetlands support a number of rare plants and a tremendous abundance and diversity of wildlife species, particularly migratory birds. Human visitors also flock to this popular destination for canoeing, fishing, rock climbing and hiking along the scenic shoreline.

FLORA & FAUNA

Silver maple dominates the canopy of floodplain forest in this corridor. Other canopy species include black and green ashes, hackberry, American elm, basswood, ironwood, red oak, cottonwood, black willow and yellowbud hickory. The understory is dominated by wood nettle, grasses and sedges; other herbaceous plants include cardinal flower, ostrich fern, ironweed, fringed loosestrife and false dragonhead. Marshy areas feature river bulrush, rice cutgrass and prairie cordgrass. Rare plants include Assiniboine sedge and the state endangered bog bluegrass.

More than 240 species of birds have been documented in the St. Croix Scenic Riverway, including bald eagle,

osprey, northern harrier, great blue heron, belted kingfisher, killdeer, greater and lesser yellowlegs, American and least bittern, blue-winged teal, wood duck, hooded merganser, common goldeneye, northern shoveler, American redstart, Nashville warbler, yellow warbler, and sedge and marsh wrens. These floodplain forests provide critical habitat for several rare bird species including the state threatened red-shouldered hawk and the beautiful prothonotary and the cerulean warblers. Numerous amphibians and reptiles are found here, including spotted salamander, Cope's gray treefrog, green frog, northern leopard frog, painted turtle, snapping turtle, map turtle and softshell turtle. Mammals using these wetlands include beaver, muskrat, otter and black bear.

THREATS

Increasing development in the watershed and on the bluffs above the floodplain threatens this high quality riverine system. Heavy recreational use may create impacts. Invasive plants, including reed canary grass, are also of concern at this site. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash stands.

ACCESS

This area is best seen by canoe. Visit the National Park Service St. Croix Scenic Riverway website: www.nps.gov/sacr.



Spotted salamander — Rich Staffen



Muskrat — Brian Hansen

Sources:

- St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (NPS)
- 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)