



NORTH BAY WETLAND TYPES

Gerald H. Emmerich, Jr.

Marsh, sedge meadow, fen, shrub carr, coniferous swamp, forested seep, ridge and swale

DOOR COUNTY



NORTH BAY

Property Owner: The Nature Conservancy, Door County Land Trust
Recognitions & Designations: Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance, WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Coastal Wetland Inventory Primary Site, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, The Nature Conservancy Priority Conservation Area

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ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem is a very large site encompassing approximately 4,700 acres and a significant stretch of undeveloped Lake Michigan shoreline (8500 feet). North Bay supports several high quality coastal wetland communities that are dynamic and change in response to interaction of the rise and fall of ground water and Lake Michigan water levels. A number of springs and spring runs originate within the more inland coniferous swamp habitats of the site. Three Springs Creek, the site's major spring-fed creek, flows through the center of the site and into Lake Michigan through a large marsh at the north end of the bay. Many rare plant and animal species occur here, and the bay is an important stopover site for migratory birds as well as an important spawning site for many Lake Michigan fish. Because of North Bay's high quality coastal wetlands, this site comprises one of the most ecologically valuable stretches of Great Lakes shoreline.

FLORA & FAUNA

The north end of the bay features a large emergent marsh dominated by softstem bulrush, hardstem bulrush, wire rush, cattail and bluejoint grass. Other wetland communities near the water's edge include sedge meadow and a large calcareous fen. The site also contains a complex of Lake Michigan dunes and associated ridge

and swale topography which features wetlands unique to this region. Further inland, the site contains extensive coniferous swamp habitat characterized by white cedar, tamarack, balsam fir and black ash. Wetlands of the site support a number of rare and threatened plants species including slender bog arrowgrass.

North Bay provides critical habitat for a wide diversity of migratory and nesting waterfowl species including bufflehead, redhead, hooded mergansers and northern pintail. This site is one of the few known nesting sites in Wisconsin for the common goldeneye. Six species of rare birds use this area for nesting and foraging including bald eagle and osprey. A variety of shorebirds are also known to use the area. This site supports a large breeding population of the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly, as well as other rare butterflies and dragonflies. North Bay is an important spawning area for a large portion of Lake Michigan's whitefish population. The Bay's outlet streams also provide important habitat for many other game fish species including northern pike, yellow perch, smallmouth bass, trout and chinook salmon.

THREATS

Threats to these wetlands include watershed development, invasive species and ATV use. Declining Lake Michigan water levels have altered these and other coastal wetlands in recent years and may continue to do so if this pattern continues with global climate change. 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

For details, visit the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.



Hooded merganser — Gary Shackelford

Sources:

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