



OAK RIDGE LAKE WETLAND TYPES

Tom Kerr

Marsh, sedge meadow

ST. CROIX COUNTY



OAK RIDGE LAKE

Property Owners: USFWS, WDNR
Recognitions & Designations: WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, USFWS National Waterfowl Production 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.

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Oak Ridge Lake is a large prairie pothole lake located three miles east of the town of Star Prairie in St. Croix County. While the lake itself is only 150 acres, more than 3,000 acres of protected uplands make this Wetland Gem one of the few true prairie pothole lakes in Wisconsin with some level of permanent protection. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are continuing to restore more land in surrounding uplands to prairie and other native habitat types, providing a more fully functioning ecological landscape. As one of USFWS's 42 Waterfowl Production Areas in this eight-county wetland management district, Oak Ridge Lake provides excellent habitat for myriad wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl.

FLORA & FAUNA

Expansive marshes are the primary wetland habitats at Oak Ridge Lake. The site features a variety of submergent, floating and emergent aquatic plants with extent and

abundance that varies based on water depth. In deeper areas, coontail, duckweeds, sago pondweed and various other pondweeds dominate while cattail, hardstem and softstem bulrush, common bur-reed, arrowhead, smartweed and various sedges grow in shallow areas.

Marshes of Oak Ridge Lake support a variety of amphibians, reptiles and mammals, but the site is best known for its rich bird life. The site is managed by USFWS as a Waterfowl Production Area, and is a major stopover site during migration for a variety of waterfowl, waterbirds and songbirds. Bird species using the site include trumpeter swan, tundra swan, mallard, green-winged teal, blue-winged teal, northern shoveler, short-eared owl, northern harrier, bald eagle, willow flycatcher, yellow-headed blackbird, sedge wren, marsh wren and the state threatened Le Conte's sparrow.

THREATS

Increasing recreational use for hunting and other activities may impact wetlands at the site. Invasive species, including reed canary grass, are also of concern.

ACCESS

Visit this USFWS St. Croix Wetland Management webpage: www.fws.gov/Midwest/StCroix/public_use_opportunities.html.



Blue-winged teal — Jack Bartholmai

Sources:
 St. Croix Wetland Management District Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS)
 Great Wisconsin Birding & Nature Trail Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)