



STOCKTON ISLAND TOMBOLO WETLAND TYPES

Eric Epstein

Marsh, fen, coniferous bog, coniferous swamp, alder thicket, seasonally flooded basin, interdunal wetland

ASHLAND COUNTY



STOCKTON ISLAND TOMBOLO

Property Owner: National Park Service
 Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Coastal Wetland Inventory Primary Site, WI Bird Conservation Initiative
 Important Bird Area

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ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem, part of the Apostle Islands Sandscapes State Natural Area, is Wisconsin's only tombolo—a narrow piece of land created by current-deposited sands between an island and a mainland shore. The tombolo, stretching off the southeast end of Stockton Island to former island Presque Isle, is made up of two sandspits that enclose a large wetland and lagoon. A series of narrow, parallel sand ridges create swales that support a variety of wetland habitats including marsh, fen, coniferous bog, coniferous swamp and alder thicket. Because of the unique landforms and complex of natural communities at this Wetland Gem, the site boasts high overall species diversity as well as a high concentration of rare species.

FLORA & FAUNA

A fen mat at the site is composed of woolly sedge, the rare coast sedge, twig rush, brown and white beakrushes, sweet gale and buckbean. Along the upland margins of the wetland, a boggy mat of sphagnum mosses, ericaceous shrubs, sedges and scattered small tamarack trees occur. An interdunal wetland supports unusual flora including shore rush, Robbins' spikerush, twig rush, and

the carnivorous horned and northeastern bladderworts. In the northwest sector, a large isolated portion of the tombolo is quite acidic, dominated by ericaceous shrubs, including leatherleaf, few-seeded sedge and beaked sedge. Speckled alder is locally common. The tombolo supports three state threatened species—Michaux's sedge, shore sedge and English sundew.

Wetlands at this site are used extensively by migratory birds in the spring and fall. The Apostle Islands in general host tens of thousands of migrating passerines and raptors, and provide important nesting habitat for colonial waterbirds and a variety of breeding songbirds. Rare animal species recorded at Stockton Island Tombolo include four-toed salamander, Swainson's thrush, northern harrier, Blackburnian warbler, Cape May warbler, yellow-bellied flycatcher, merlin and red-breasted merganser. Stockton Island is also home to one of the densest populations of black bears in North America.

THREATS

This site is well protected, but should be monitored for invasive species and impacts of human use. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Declining Lake Superior 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.

ACCESS

Stockton Island, like all of the Apostle Islands, is accessible only by boat. Visit www.nps.gov/apis/planyourvisit/ for details on travel to the island, camping and foot trails that can be used to view wetlands at this site.



Black bear — Drew Feldkirchner

Sources:

Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)
 Priority Wetland Sites of Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin (WDNR)
 Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)
 Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)