



TURTLE-FLAMBEAU-MANITOWISH PEATLANDS WETLAND TYPES

WDNR

Coniferous bog, coniferous swamp, open bog, sedge meadow, shrub carr, patterned peatland

IRON COUNTY



TURTLE-FLAMBEAU-MANITOWISH PEATLANDS

Property Owner: WDNR
Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, WI Bird Conservation Initiative Important Bird 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

This large Wetland Gem comprises more than 25,000 acres of diverse and high quality northern wetlands in the Manitowish Peatlands, a large managed area within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, and the Turtle-Flambeau Patterned Bog State Natural Area. These wetlands flank the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, which was created in 1926 by flooding lowland wetlands at the junction of the Turtle and Manitowish Rivers. The site features a variety of wetland plant community types including coniferous bog, coniferous swamp, open bog, sedge meadow, shrub carr and the rare patterned peatland. This Wetland Gem is important because of its size, quality and diversity as well as the abundant and diverse wildlife it supports.

FLORA & FAUNA

This site provides excellent examples of several northern wetland types, but the patterned peatland is of the greatest interest because this type is extremely rare in Wisconsin. Patterned peatlands are complex and are created by mineral-rich water flowing in linear, open-water swaths called “flarks.” “Strings,” or narrow zones of vegetation growing on sphagnum moss-covered peat ridges, alternate with flarks. These landforms create considerable diversity in microhabitat conditions (e.g., nutrient availability and pH), which results in high plant diversity including both bog and fen species. Herbs

and shrubs dominate this patterned peatland plant community with few trees present. Rare plant species include dragon’s mouth orchid, white bog orchid, and sparse-flowered sedge.

Mammals using this site include white-tailed deer, black bear, fisher, beaver and river otter. The flowage has the highest density of breeding pairs of bald eagle, osprey and common loon in Wisconsin. Other rare bird species found at this site include common loon, merlin and black tern. These wetlands help support a healthy fishery in the flowage, which includes black crappie, smallmouth bass, muskellunge and walleye.

THREATS

Watershed forestry practices and flowage water level management may impact these wetlands. The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage is one of northern Wisconsin’s most popular backcountry destinations; recreational use may impact sensitive wetland habitats and species. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site’s conifer trees.

ACCESS

Some areas of this large site are accessible by canoe. For details, visit the State Natural Areas Program website: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.



Black tern chick — Jack Bartholmai



Osprey — Dennis Malueg

Sources:

- Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
- Wisconsin’s Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (WDNR)