



WEST SHORE GREEN BAY WETLAND TYPES

Emmet Judzewicz

Marsh, sedge meadow, low prairie, shrub carr, lowland hardwood swamp, interdunal wetland

OCONTO/BROWN COUNTY



WEST SHORE GREEN BAY WETLANDS

Property Owner: WDNR
 Recognitions & Designations: WI Land Legacy Place, WI Coastal Wetland Inventory Primary Site, WI Bird Conservation Initiative Important Bird Area

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Wisconsin Wetlands ASSOCIATION

wisconsinwetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

This Wetland Gem, part of the Green Bay West Shores State Wildlife Area, comprises a series of important coastal wetland complexes along the west shore of Green Bay from the Suamico River delta in the south to the Oconto River delta in the north. These wetlands are highly productive waterfowl areas, serve as valuable stopover habitat for migratory birds, and play important roles in maintaining healthy fish populations in Green Bay. The West Shore Green Bay Wetlands are significant due to both to the extent of the wetland habitat and the use of the site by many native and rare animals.

FLORA & FAUNA

Extensive emergent marshes along the shoreline are particularly important, though the site also has good quality sedge meadow, shrub carr and lowland hardwood swamp habitat. Abandoned river oxbows and interdunal wetlands formed by beach ridge and swale topography add to the complexity and diversity of the site. Common marsh plants at this site include cattails, softstem bulrush and rice cutgrass. Lowland hardwood swamp areas include aspen, oak and white birch, or elm, ash, red maple and white pine. Shrub carr areas are a mixture of alder, dogwoods and willows. Rare plants documented at the site include Indian cucumber root, pale green orchid and northern wild raisin.



Northern pike — David Marshall

The West Shore Green Bay Wetlands provide diverse habitat for a wide range of birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates. These wetlands are important breeding habitat for marsh birds and excellent habitat for migrating waterfowl and shore birds. Great blue heron and great egret are among the colonial nesting birds that use the site. Rare and unusual birds documented at the site include yellow rail, black-crowned night heron, red-necked grebe, and Caspian, Forster's and common terns. These wetlands are among the few areas on the Bay where bullfrogs have been recorded. The rare wood turtle and rare butterflies, including the swamp metalmark, mulberry wing and broad-winged skipper, have also been documented at this site. Many Green Bay fish species, including northern pike and the state threatened fish greater redhorse and longear sunfish, use this site for spawning grounds and other habitat needs. The West Shore Green Bay Wetlands have become even more important to this wide diversity of animals as wetland habitat in the southern part of the bay has been degraded over time by pollution, fill and invasive species.

THREATS

Past ditching activities have altered the site's hydrology and scattered private inholdings create fragmentation concerns. Water quality is also a concern for the health of these wetlands as agriculture, forestry and development activities in the watersheds that feed the site's rivers contribute sediment and other pollutants. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Ongoing work is needed to control and prevent the further spread of invasive species, particularly Phragmites (common reed grass), which has expanded dramatically during the low water levels experienced in Green Bay in recent years. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash stands.

ACCESS

Visit the State Wildlife Areas webpages: dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/wildlife_areas. Maps are provided for various units of the Green Bay West Shores State Wildlife Area.

Sources:

Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)
 Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)
 Wisconsin Important Bird Areas (WBCI)