



The Driftless Area is a unique unglaciated landscape. The land in this part of the state is ancient compared with 10,000 years of ice-free land in the rest of the state. Rare species are numerous owing to the diversity and quality of habitats.

Driftless Area Important Natural Features—
 Large River Systems, Southern Forests, Prairie and Savanna, Springs, Cliffs and Talus Slopes, Relict Conifers, Bog Relicts, and Dendritic Landforms.

Lower Black River
Jackson, Monroe, Trempealeau, and LaCrosse Cos.
24,000 acres

Ecology & Significance

- Wisconsin Responsibility – Mod High
 - Irreplaceable Features – Mod High
 - Diversity of Natural Features – Mod High
 - Rare Species – Several
 - Conservation Concern Species – Moderate
 - Vulnerability to a Warming Climate – Mod Low
 - Conservation Status – Some
- This site has promising conservation opportunities.

The Black River below the dam at Black River Falls to the confluence with the Mississippi River is the area of conservation concern. Smaller in size than the Lower Wisconsin and Lower Chippewa River sites, the Black River and its associated terraces and forests harbor many of the same habitats and species of concern as these larger projects.

Along the river are quality patches of floodplain forest with dominate silver maple. Numerous oxbow lakes provide additional diversity elements. In other places, abundant sandy outwash has dry prairie and oak barrens habitat. Adjacent uplands are large enough to host forest interior birds.

Flora and Fauna

One of the last refuges for the highly endangered eastern massasauga (pictured below) is in the floodplain of the lower Black River.

Yellow-crowned night-herons, Acadian flycatchers, cerulean warblers, and prothonotary warblers all breed here. The site also supports red-headed woodpeckers, blue-winged warblers, and field sparrows. Waterbirds congregate in late summer and thousands of landbirds migrate through, particularly in the spring.



Photo courtesy USF&WS

Black River Savanna supports a diverse sand prairie and barrens flora on the sandy, semi-open river terrace of the Black River. The flora is dominated by such representative plants as Junegrass, little bluestem, western sunflower, leadplant, lance-leaved loosestrife, bee balm, sky-blue aster, heath aster, goat's-rue, and American germander. Rare and uncommon species include prairie parsley and prairie larkspur.



Photo courtesy Wisconsin DNR



E-mail: greatnaturewi@gmail.com
 Web: greatnaturewi.com
 Phone: 608-790-6821