



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.

### Ecology & Significance

Wisconsin Responsibility – High  
 Irreplaceable Features – Moderate  
 Diversity of Natural Features – Mod High  
 Rare Species – Several  
 Conservation Concern Species – Mod High  
 Vulnerability to a Warming Climate – Mod Low  
 Conservation Status – Unknown

This site has promising conservation opportunities.

The Maxville Bluff Prairies opportunity area is like no other landscape in the state. A thin layer of dolomite overlays thick sandstone. On the lower slopes are thick deposits of eroded sands. These steep rugged hills support deep soil sand prairies near the base, thin soiled sandstone bluff prairies, oak barrens and oak woodlands.

The 1940 air photo shows every southwest-facing slope dominated by prairie. The hills tops had savannas and the northeast facing slopes were covered with oak woodland.

### Flora and Fauna

The continuous change in natural communities depending on slope and aspect provides habitat for many rare species. Species with very limited ranges in the world, such as Hill’s thistle, fragile prickly pear cactus, and prairie fameflower thrive on the Maxville Bluff Prairies. Rare invertebrates along with lizards, prairie voles and Bell’s vireos produce young on the site. On cool spring mornings, migrating birds flock to the openings to forage on insects warming in the openings.



Photo courtesy Wikipedia.com

The Maxville Bluff Prairies opportunity area presents a real challenge for conservation. The land is mostly owned by farmers and recreationists. Their primary and sometimes sole reason for their love of the land is white-tailed deer hunting. Recent studies have shown that better nutrition means bigger deer and the combination of thinning the forest along with frequent prescribed burning provides as much if not better nutrition than supplements.



Photo Courtesy Wisconsin DNR



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