



Eau Claire River
Eau Claire County
11,000 acres

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 – Mod 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 – Some
- This site has promising conservation opportunities.

More than fifteen miles of free-flowing mid-sized river is the central feature of the opportunity area. The landscape area runs from the Highway 27 bridge downstream to the Tower Ridge Recreation Area. Within the landscape are patches of county-owned recreation land the Beaver Creek Reserve.

The valley was carved through glacial sands and softer sandstone forming numerous cliffs, sand terraces, oxbow lakes and seeps, and sand bars along the river’s course. Ancient 1.9 billion year old rocks are exposed at Big Falls.

Flora and Fauna

Variety is the primary feature of the river corridor. Floodplain forest, oak barrens, towering white pines, seeps, tributary creeks, and cliffs are the natural communities that provide the habitat for abundant species concentrations. Over 150 bird species have been recorded nesting in the area, especially significant is a large population of Blue-winged Warblers.



Photo courtesy Wikipedia.com

Wild reaches of the river contain several rare aquatic invertebrates including the sand snaketail dragonfly. Lizards scurry along the south-facing terraces slopes and amphibians thrive in the oxbow ponds. In addition to warblers the landscape holds significant populations of Eastern towhee, bald eagle, eastern whip-poor-will, scarlet tanager, and tufted titmouse (here at its northern range limit). Oak barrens and terrace slopes harbor many prairie species including; coreopsis, blazingstars, flowering spurge, and several species of prairie grass.



Photo courtesy Wisconsin DNR



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