



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.

A cuesta refers specifically to a ridge with a long and gentle backslope that conforms with the dip of a resistant rock. The outcrop of the rock forms a steeper or even cliff-like escarpment. The Soils of Wisconsin references sands in the Mauston area as green sand, which developed from eroding sandstones. Thus the name greensand cuesta is applied to this series of features. Thin soiled sandstone bluffs contain prairie species, oak barrens, oak woodlands, and numerous cliff communities.

Flora and Fauna

The continuous change in natural communities depending on slope and aspect of the escarpment provides habitat for many rare species. Low shrubs characteristic of oak barrens, including early low blueberry, huckleberry, sweet gale, are common. A few prairie and barrens plant species are present especially on the crest of escarpment bluffs. Rare invertebrates along with lizards, and numerous bird species, especially cliff swallows (see below) nest on the site.



Photo courtesy Wikipedia.com



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Photo Courtesy Wisconsin DNR

The Greensand Cuesta 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.