



Lower Chippewa River
Buffalo, Pepin, Dunn and
Eau Claire Counties
30,000 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.

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Ecology & Significance

- Wisconsin Responsibility – Mod High
 - Irreplaceable Features – Mod High
 - Diversity of Natural Features – High
 - Rare Species – Hundreds
 - Conservation Concern Species – High
 - Vulnerability to a Warming Climate – Mod Low
 - Conservation Status – Half Protected
- This site is a conservation stronghold.

The Lower Chippewa River corridor—its waters, marshes, islands, terraces and forests—is the most biologically diverse area in the state, when compared to other areas of similar size. The site is recognized as a National Natural Landmark.

The 52-mile section of free-flowing river changes attributes as it proceeds towards the Mississippi River. The upper sections have outstanding examples of floodplain savanna/prairie communities, wild rice marshes, shallow lakes and culminating with the largest tract of unbroken floodplain forest in the entire Upper Midwest.



Photo courtesy Wisconsin DNR

Flora and Fauna

One hundred twenty-five rare (endangered, threatened, and special concern species) find suitable habitat within the Lower Chippewa River corridor.

This area has been recognized as a core wildlife area for millennia. Both Dakota Sioux and Ojibwa peoples considered this location prime hunting grounds and fought many battles for the privilege to hunt the land.



Photo courtesy Wikipedia.com

Deep sand and gravel soils deposited as outwash from the last glacier provides the base for desert-like conditions in Wisconsin as exemplified by excellent populations of cactus and lizards. Breeding species in the floodplain forest and wetlands are phenomenal in abundance.

Furthermore, the location-legendary with waterfowl hunters-funnels countless ducks through the bottoms. Lesser known is the value to migratory songbirds. Radar imagery indicates that millions of migratory birds use the Lower Chippewa habitats to refuel.