



# WISCONSIN'S WETLAND GEMS

Mink River Estuary—Clint Farlinger



## WHAT ARE WETLAND GEMS?

*Wetland Gems* are high quality habitats that represent the wetland riches—marshes, swamps, bogs, fens and more—that historically made up nearly a quarter of Wisconsin's landscape. Critically important to Wisconsin's biodiversity, these natural treasures also provide our communities with valuable functions and services as well recreational and educational opportunities. They are landscapes that both preserve the past and inspire for the future.

Wisconsin Wetlands Association's list of 100 *Wetland Gems* includes 93 sites selected for their ecological value. These sites are distributed throughout the state and include examples of all of Wisconsin's wetland community types. We have dubbed an additional seven *Workhorse Wetland Gems*, sites that illustrate how wetlands deliver priceless services such as flood attenuation, water quality protection, and fish and wildlife habitat. Look inside for more on the purpose of this project, how sites were selected, ideas for citizen and community involvement, a visitor's guide, and a list and map of the *Wetland Gems* sites.

Visit our website for more information on this project: [www.wisconsinwetlands.org/gems.htm](http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/gems.htm).



Green Darner Dragonfly—Ken Tapp



Gail Epping Overholt

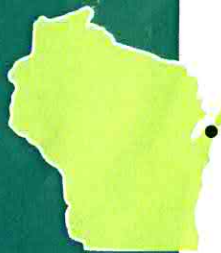


KANGAROO LAKE WETLAND TYPES

Coniferous swamp, lowland hardwood swamp, sedge meadow, marsh, shrub carr

Julie Schartner

DOOR COUNTY



KANGAROO LAKE

Property Owners: The Nature Conservancy, Door County Land Trust  
 Recognitions & Designations: WI State Natural Area, WI Land Legacy Place, WI Wildlife Action Plan Reference Site, The Nature Conservancy Priority Conservation Area

Funding for this project provided by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant #NA07NOS-4190064.

Wisconsin Wetlands Association  
 wisconsinwetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Kangaroo Lake, the largest lake on the Door County peninsula, is a shallow lake fed by Piel Creek, which flows in on the north end of the lake. Piel Creek's headwaters begin in unusual spring-fed calcareous fen habitat several miles upstream of the lake. While the southern end of Kangaroo Lake is highly developed and receives heavy recreational use, a causeway built in the late 1800's separates the northern end, which has remained undeveloped in part because of the extensive wetlands there. Kangaroo Lake's high quality wetland communities provide important habitat for a number of rare and endangered species, including a reproducing population of the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly in the Piel Creek fen.

FLORA & FAUNA

Lowland hardwood and coniferous swamp surround the northern shoreline of the lake and the corridor of Piel Creek. Common trees in this swamp include white cedar, black ash, tamarack, black spruce and balsam fir. Characteristic shrubs include speckled alder, willows and meadowsweet and common understory herbs include three-leaved goldthread, dewberry, naked miterwort and American starflower. Kangaroo Lake's waters and shoreline soils have high levels of calcium, supporting plants that can tolerate calcareous environments such as shrubby cinquefoil, hoary and bog willow, twig rush and wire-leaved sedges. Floating sedge mats surrounding the shore include plants like woollyfruit sedge, water sedge,

bluejoint grass and the native swamp loosestrife. A shallow marsh area in the northernmost part of the lake features emergent and floating-leaved plants including bulrushes, wild rice and bullhead lily.

Marsh habitat provides breeding habitat for Virginia and sora rails and sandhill cranes as well as migratory and nesting habitat for many species of waterfowl. Numerous rare and endangered species use wetlands at Kangaroo Lake including the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly, Ohio goldenrod, dorcas copper butterfly, bald eagle, osprey and Caspian tern.

THREATS

The Kangaroo Lake watershed is characterized by a matrix of agricultural, residential and forest land. Agricultural practices in the northern part of the Kangaroo Lake watershed could affect water quality entering these wetlands. Heavy deer browsing pressure threatens the regeneration of the site's conifer trees. Growing recreational use and development in the area could also lead to impacts. The highly invasive Phragmites (common reed grass) is found in localized areas on site. Future invasion by the emerald ash borer beetle threatens the site's ash stands.

ACCESS

These wetlands are best accessed and enjoyed by canoe. For details, visit the State Natural Areas Program website: [dnr.wi.gov/org/land/et/sna](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/et/sna).



Virginia rail — Dennis Malueg



Piel Creek fen in winter — Terrie Cooper

Sources:  
 Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program (WDNR)  
 Wisconsin Land Legacy Report (WDNR)  
 Great Lakes Ecoregional Plan (TNC)  
 Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes (WDNR)