

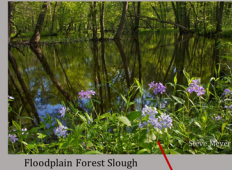
Lower Wisconsin Riverway

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Ramsar Wetland of International Importance



█ Wetlands
█ Lower Wisconsin State Riverway



What is Ramsar?

- International treaty for wetland protection & sustainable use
- Rigorous scientific basis to establish international significance
- Imposes no restrictions on use
- Status can help leverage protective & management measures
- 41 Ramsar sites in U.S, 6 in Wisconsin

The Lower Wisconsin Riverway

- 92 miles from Prairie du Sac dam to the Mississippi
- Lower Wisconsin State Riverway is 95,000a, public & private, overseen & protected by citizen Riverway Board
- Ramsar site includes all 45,000a of public land in the LWSR, some private; includes aquatic, wetland, & upland habitats
- >28,000a wetlands of 7 types. >18,000a floodplain forest
- High recreational use, with canoeing, sandbar camping, fishing
- Important cultural site, with 8 effigy mound groups.

Conservation Concerns

- Climate change, increased rain, floods alter hydrology
- High nitrates (2-20 mg/l) in backwaters and groundwater
- Ag/urban pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, stormwater
- Increased river recreation disturbs sandbars and islands
- Upstream dams obstruct fish passage, alter water flow
- Invasives: zebra mussel, rusty crayfish, New Zealand mudsnail, grass carp, bighead carp, many plant species
- Lack of fire drives plant succession in uplands and wetlands
- Forest diseases, succession, new flood regimes
- Interruption/fragmentation of communities and ecotones

Important example of regional wetland type:

- Floodplain forest

Significant & representative fish:

- One of Midwest's highest-quality sport and non-game warmwater fisheries
- 98 native spp, full complement of large riverine system spp, including backwaters

Important fish spawning grounds:

- Diverse, replicated, connected
- No dams to restrict movement
- For rare spp, e.g. starhead topminnow
- Production populates other rivers



Higgins Eye Pearly Mussel



High biological diversity:

- >800 plant, 39 mammal, 140 breeding bird, 38 herptile, 98 fish, 45 mussel native spp.
- >20 community types, replicated
- 18 State Natural Areas
- Aquatic-wetland-upland continua, interconnection, natural ecotones
- Highly ranked landscape in State conservation plans, e.g., WAP, IBA

Meets 7 of 9 Ramsar Criteria (only 1 is needed)

Rare species & threatened ecological communities:

- 44 rare plants, 121 rare animals
- 11 imperiled or vulnerable communities, mostly intact and interconnected

>1% of world population:

- Higgins' Eye Pearly Mussel

Plants & animals during critical life cycle stage or in adverse conditions:

- Extensive, diverse, interconnected habitats allow free movement between life stages and in response to changing conditions
- Birds: breeding, migration, winter
- Herps: breeding, feeding, winter
- Fish: spawning, feeding, flood/drought refuge
- Inverts: egg, larval, adult life stages

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