

# Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program

## Waubesa Wetlands (No. 114)



Photo by Cal Dewitt

### Resource links:

#### Location

Dane County. T6N-R10E, Section 7, 8, 17, 18. 567 acres.

#### Description

Located in an old lobe of Lake Waubesa along its southwest shore, Waubesa Wetlands is one of the highest quality and most diverse wetlands remaining in southern Wisconsin. Nine major springs and numerous smaller ones located within and around the area provide the wetland with an abundance of high quality water. The extensive wetlands and high quality of the water contribute significantly to the water quality of Lake Waubesa. Two inlet streams are also present - Murphy Creek and Swan Creek. Peat deposits - up to 95' deep in places - underlie a mix of sedge meadow, fen, and shrub-carr communities. The sedge meadow is a complex of different species that vary in abundance and structure in response to the complex hydrological system. Other parts of the site feature quaking sedge mats, calcareous fens, springs and streams with submerged aquatics, and deep spring cones lined with filamentous algae and purple-colored bacteria. The carbonate rich fens feature numerous species including grass-of-parnassus, Riddell's goldenrod, northern bog aster, lesser fringed gentian, and sage willow. Other abundant wetland species are common lake sedge, tussock sedge, American woolly-fruited sedge, common bur-reed, swamp loosestrife, American water horehound, blue-joint grass, and numerous asters. Bird life is diverse and features four rare species: least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), and black tern (*Chlidonias niger*). Other birds include sandhill crane, green heron, marsh and sedge wren, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, and willow flycatcher. Waubesa Wetlands is owned by the DNR, The Nature Conservancy, and Dane County. It was designated a State Natural Area in 1974.