

August 93
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original vegetation

Natural Heritage information for Wells Creek Watershed

Natural Communities:

Six different natural community types exist within the Wells Creek watershed: Oak Forest, Maple-Basswood Forest, Floodplain Forest, Oak Woodland Brush, Bedrock Bluff Prairie and Willow Swamp. These remnant natural communities are concentrated in the lower third of the watershed.

A significant tract of Maple-Basswood Forest lies within the statutory boundaries of Frontenac State Park. Sugar maple, basswood and northern red oak dominate the canopy of these north-to east-facing slopes. Wells Creek flows through a large tract of Floodplain Forest before emptying into Lake Pepin. Seasonally flooded, this lowland forest is dominated by silver maple, cottonwood and black willow. A mix of oak species, including northern red oak, bur oak, northern pin oak and white oak occurs in Oak Forests scattered throughout the lower part of the watershed.

A few Bluff Prairies persist on the south- to west-facing slopes within the watershed. On these steep slope where shrubs have not encroached prairie species are common including big and little bluestem, Indian grass, side oats grama, prairie dropseed, porcupine grass, plains muhly, birdfoot coreopsis, gray goldenrod, silky aster, prairie violet and leadplant.

One parcel of Willow Swamp extends along Highway 61 and the railroad track. This wet shrub community is dominated by willows and red-osier dogwood; herbaceous species are those characteristic of emergent marsh.

Rare Species:

Several state-listed plant and animal species have been documented within the watershed. The following is a listing of the species and their status:

Endangered:

Kitten-tails (Besseya bullii)

Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus)

Threatened:

Sterile sedge (Carex sterilus)

Valerian (Valeriana Edulis ssp. ciliata)

Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)

Special Concern:

Squirrel corn (Dicentra canadensis)
Canadian black snakeroot (Sanicula canadensis)
Ginseng (Panax gumquefolium)

Red-shouldered hawk (Buteo lineatus)

Fox snake (Elaphe vulpina)
Racer (Columber constrictor)
Gopher snake (Pituophis melanoleucus)