



Wisconsin, naturally

WEDDE CREEK SAVANNA STATE NATURAL AREA



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Notable: Oak barrens. That's the term Wisconsin ecologists use to describe a special type of savanna characterized by scattered, open-grown black oaks with an understory of prairie grasses and wildflowers growing on droughty, sandy soils. At Wedde Creek Savanna, large black oaks with spreading branches share the tree canopy with a few jack pine and stunted oak grubs. The meager ground layer supports clones of the grass-like Pennsylvania sedge, along with flowering spurge, hairy hawkweed, June grass, goat's rue, dotted horsemint and bird's-foot violet. Patches of wild lupine add vibrant color to the spring landscape and provide habitat for the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly, whose caterpillars feed exclusively on lupine. This is a fire-dependent landscape, requiring periodic prescribed burning to maintain its open aspect. A half-mile-long stretch of Wedde Creek threads its way from north to south through the natural area, downstream of its spring-fed origins in the low hills of the Johnstown Moraine to the west. Wedde feeds into Chafee Creek, which in turn, joins the Mecan River, all of which are prime trout waters. The 38-acre Wedde Creek Savanna lies within the Mecan River Fishery Area and was designated Wisconsin's 581st State Natural Area in 2008.

How to get there: From the intersection of Interstate 39 and County Highway E in Westfield, go north and east on E 6.9 miles, then north on County Highway Y 4.3 miles, then west on Deerborn Avenue 0.5 miles to a parking area south of the road. Walk south into the site. There are no trails in the natural area, but the site is open and easy to walk through. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Wedde Creek Savanna" for a map and more information.

