



Wisconsin, naturally

GRANDMA LAKE WETLANDS

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Notable: A trek across a spongy, quaking bed of floating vegetation rewards visitors to Grandma Lake Wetlands with a truly wild experience. Imbedded deep in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is a pristine, 44-acre soft-water lake encircled by a wide zone of open bog rich in plant and animal diversity. The peaty mat is woven of sphagnum mosses, rushes and grass-like sedges that provide habitat for a suite of unusual plant species adapted to the wet, acidic ecosystem. “Carnivorous” plants, including narrow-leaved sundew, purple pitcher plant and horned bladderwort, evolved different strategies to ensnare insects using liquid-filled pitfall traps, sticky tentacles or trapdoor-like mechanisms. Chemicals released by the dissolving insect carcasses help supplement the plants in this nutrient-poor environment. Other distinctive vegetation of the bog includes members of the waxy-leaved heath family such as bog rosemary, bog laurel, leatherleaf, Labrador tea and small cranberry. Orchids find refuge in the mosses and rushes, among them the magenta-colored dragon’s-mouth orchid and moccasin flower. The lake, dotted with white water lilies and water shield, is a favorite haunt of black terns, common loons and American bitterns. Grandma Lake Wetlands is owned by the U.S. Forest Service and was designated the 305th State Natural Area in 1996. It is also recognized as a “Wetland Gem” by the Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

How to get there: From the intersection of Highway 139 and Elm Street in Long Lake (Florence County), go south on Highway 139 1.9 miles, then east on Tie Mill Road (Forest Road 2402) for 3.4 miles, then south on Forest Road 2158 (Grandma Lake Road) 0.5 mile to a small pull-off on the west side of the road marked by a brown breeding bird survey fencepost. Walk west along the footpath 0.2 mile to the bog mat. Bring knee-high rubber boots or footwear that can get wet. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search “Grandma Lake Wetlands” for a map and more information.

