


The Rio Creek Woodlands

A wildlife habitat project area



The Rio Creek Woodlands are located near the Lake Michigan shoreline in east-central Kewaunee County. The area is known for several large forested wetlands, which occur in low areas shaped by glaciers that traveled across the landscape over 10,000 years ago. The site comprises one of the largest complexes of forested habitat in eastern Kewaunee County. Several forest types that have become locally uncommon are found in this area, including mature sugar maple forests and tamarack swamps. This area provides important wildlife habitat, wonderful recreational opportunities, and a beautiful landscape for area residents.



■ Priority Conservation Site
■ Lake Michigan Watershed Boundary

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Ecological Significance:

The Rio Creek Woodlands are located within the Ahnapee River Watershed. This means that the area contributes water to the Ahnapee River which, eventually, flows into Lake Michigan. Many migrating songbirds use the Lake Michigan shoreline as a stopping point for food and rest on their spring and fall journeys. The Rio Creek Woodlands are especially important for these birds because they offer great sources of food and shelter. The mosaic of forest and grassland in this landscape provides an important variety of habitat for area wildlife. In addition, many areas present excellent opportunities for wetland restoration and enhancement efforts.

Potential Threats:

A potential threat to the Rio Creek Woodlands is the invasion of exotic species, such as common reed grass and glossy buckthorn. Exotic species are plants and animals that are not native to the area (oftentimes arriving from other continents) and that are able to outcompete and harm native species. Another potential threat to this landscape is the fragmentation of existing habitat areas. Fragmentation disrupts habitat and is sometimes caused by extensive rural housing development.

Current Activities:

The Rio Creek Woodlands Habitat Area has been identified as *Conservation Priority Site* by Glacial Lakes Conservancy and now by the Wisconsin DNR because of its many outstanding qualities. Glacial Lakes Conservancy is available to work with willing landowners in this area who wish to engage in land conservation practices while keeping the land private.



Sugar maples in the fall. Photo credit: Patrick Robinson