



The Blaine Preserve – a diverse wetland in the metro

November 2013 Snapshots

There is a protected space that replicates how the metro would have looked during pre-European settlement ... and it's all within earshot of 35W.

The Blaine Preserve (Preserve) is an impressive site that is covered in a rich diversity of native plants and sprinkled with Minnesota's most rare plants and endangered species.

The Preserve started as a Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) wetland bank site. Lynda Peterson, BWSR Wetland Specialist, said landowner Brad Moen approached the agency in 2007, wanted the land to be preserved, and cited an existing threatened and endangered plant species population.

"The 130-acre site was comprised of farmed uplands, wetlands and woodlands of various ecological quality before we started restoring it," Peterson said. "Over five years, the site was restored through prescribed burns and management of invasive species. They didn't even have to plant any rare species – they just came up on their own."

During the five years of restoration, wetland credits were deposited into the bank for the landowner to sell in the open market. The Rice Creek Watershed District was the local unit of government that oversaw bank development, in partnership with BWSR.

Additionally, Peterson said the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had been involved throughout the entire process of the wetland bank establishment and that BWSR encouraged DNR staff to purchase the site for a Scientific and Natural Area due to the long-term management needed to require the rare natural community. DNR purchased the site in 2012 and established a 63-acre perpetual conservation easement – the Blaine Preserve.

According to the DNR, the goals of the Preserve are to maintain the high quality fen and protect the endangered species. There is also a need to remove invasive species such as buckthorn, spotted knapweed, and canary grass. This will be achieved through controlled burns and removal by cutting and pulling.

Today at the site, visitors will witness 300 different types of plants and 13 rare species. The preserve is open to the public for activities with minimal impact on the environment such as hiking, bird-watching, photography, snow-shoeing or simply enjoying the plant-life.

Want to know more? Check out the DNR's website: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snas/detail.html?id=sna02036>.



Pictures: (Top) Blaine SNA has highest known population of Cross-leaved milkwort (Polygala cruciate) in Minnesota. (Bottom) Blaine Preserve has second largest population of Twisted yellow-eyed grass (Xyris torta).