

RAT-MARSH RIVER INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Please take a moment to describe something of value (what's important, valuable and worth restoring or preserving) to you in the Rat-Marsh River Watershed. Please be descriptive and specific.

SUBMISSION FROM NATURE CONSERVANCY CANADA

The Rat River Swamp represents an important regional biodiversity conservation area.

The Rat River Swamp was identified as a high-priority conservation site by the Nature Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy (US) through the Superior Mixed Forest ecoregional planning process (Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregional Planning Team 2002).

The Rat River Swamp represents the most productive marsh complex for Least Bittern in Manitoba (Hay 2006). Least Bittern is listed as Threatened under Canada's *Species At Risk Act*. Several other species listed under federal or provincial endangered species legislation occur within the marsh complex or immediately adjacent: Western Prairie Fringed-orchid, Great Plains Ladies'-tresses, Yellow Rail and Riddell's Goldenrod. Several other provincially rare species also occur (e.g. Showy Lady's-slipper, Gray Dogwood).

The variety of habitat types within the Swamp contribute to the diversity of species observed there. NCC field surveys have identified at least seven distinct habitat types: Northern Mixed Cattail Marsh, Wet Aspen Forest, Mesic Tallgrass Prairie, Dry Tallgrass Prairie, Floodplain Forest, Wetland Prairie, and the Aquatic system of the Rat River.

The large amount of public and private conservation land in the Rat River Swamp is notable. Crown lands within the Rat River Swamp combine with the Pansy Community Pasture, Nature Conservancy of Canada lands, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation lands, St. Malo Game and Fish lands, the Rat River WMA, and the north block of the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve to create a nearly-contiguous block of virtually uninhabited and largely-natural land that is in excess of 12,000 ha (>29,600 ac).

References:

Hay, S. 2006. Distribution and Habitat of the Least Bittern and Other Marsh Bird Species in Southern Manitoba. M.N.R.M. Thesis. Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 86 pp. plus appendices. Available online at:
<http://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/dspace/handle/1993/226>

Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregional Planning Team. 2002. The Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregion: A Conservation Plan. The Nature Conservancy, Madison, Wisconsin. 75 pp. + appendices.