

PENNSYLVANIA IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

SITE NAME CUSSEWAGO BOTTOM	COUNTY CRAWFORD, ERIE	SITE # 4
APPROX. SIZE 4,200 ACRES	OWNERSHIP PUBLIC (PGC) / PRIVATE	LAT. 41°45' LONG. 80°14'

DESCRIPTION

Cussewago Bottom is a north-south riparian corridor, approx. sixteen miles long and one mile wide, from Meadville north to the headwaters of Cussewago Creek. The IBA is bounded on the west by Route 98 and encompasses Cussewago Creek (a tributary of French Creek) and its west branch, SGL 269, and adjacent wetlands and low uplands. The creek is a low-gradient, meandering stream in a glaciated outwash valley and is subject to considerable water level fluctuations. This creates a bottomland situation where inundation of the flood plain is a common occurrence. Much of the site is heavily vegetated forested wetlands. Meandering flows have created cutoffs, backwaters, and oxbows in the drainage. Rare fish species such as the Hornyhead Chub, Redfin Shiner, and Longhead Darter have been observed here. This site is a unique, high-quality wetland that includes bottom lands and hardwood forests. *Directions:* From Meadville, take 98N.

BIRDS - SUMMARY

This site is a unique, seasonally flooded bottomland and riparian strip with an exceptionally high diversity of habitats and species, particularly in migration. At least 190 species have been observed in limited surveys of the Cussewago drainage; more than 200 probably occur on a regular basis. Characteristic bottomland species found here include Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos, Cerulean, Mourning, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers, and Northern Waterthrushes. Many species associated with mature forest (Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, etc.) and early-successional forest (Prairie and Golden-winged Warblers) are also found here.

REPRESENTATIVE BIRDS - BY CRITERIA

- 1e Over 190 species have been identified. High number of neotropical migrants.
 - 2 Bald Eagle (poss. B - 1 pair, W - 2-4 indiv.).
 - 3 Marsh Wren (B - 1±pair) , Pied-billed Grebe (B - 5±pair), Green-winged Teal (B - 4±pair).
 - 4a 4b Prime example of a lowland stream, flood plain and wetlands-uplands complex in glaciated northwest Pennsylvania, with extensive bottomland hardwood forest and a high diversity of habitat types.
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CONSERVATION / ADDITIONAL NOTES

A small portion of this site is managed as state gameland; most is in private ownership. Agricultural pollution (siltation and nutrient/chemical runoff), gas wells, lumbering, quarrying, filling, and residential development have all been identified as local threats, but have the potential to cause a cumulative effect that could, at some point, seriously degrade the integrity of the watershed as a whole. Many sections are virtually inaccessible, and relatively little floral or faunal data exists for the site. There are significant opportunities for monitoring of the birds and habitat and for conservation and management planning in this largely overlooked area.

LOCAL CONTACTS

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SUBMITTED BY:

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