

# Northwest Wisconsin Barrens

A landscape of global significance

Produced by:  
Friends of Crex  
Friends of the Bird Sanctuary  
Friends of the Namekagon Barrens  
Wildlife Area  
Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society  
St. Croix River Association

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## Bountiful, Beautiful Barrens

Early settlers called the vast expanses of area lacking mature trees “barrens”. While appearing to be barren due to the scarcity of older forests, the grassy and brushy landscape contains a rich diversity of plants and animals. In fact, in Northwest Wisconsin over 200 species of plants and 225 species of birds and other animals have been identified as present on barrens.

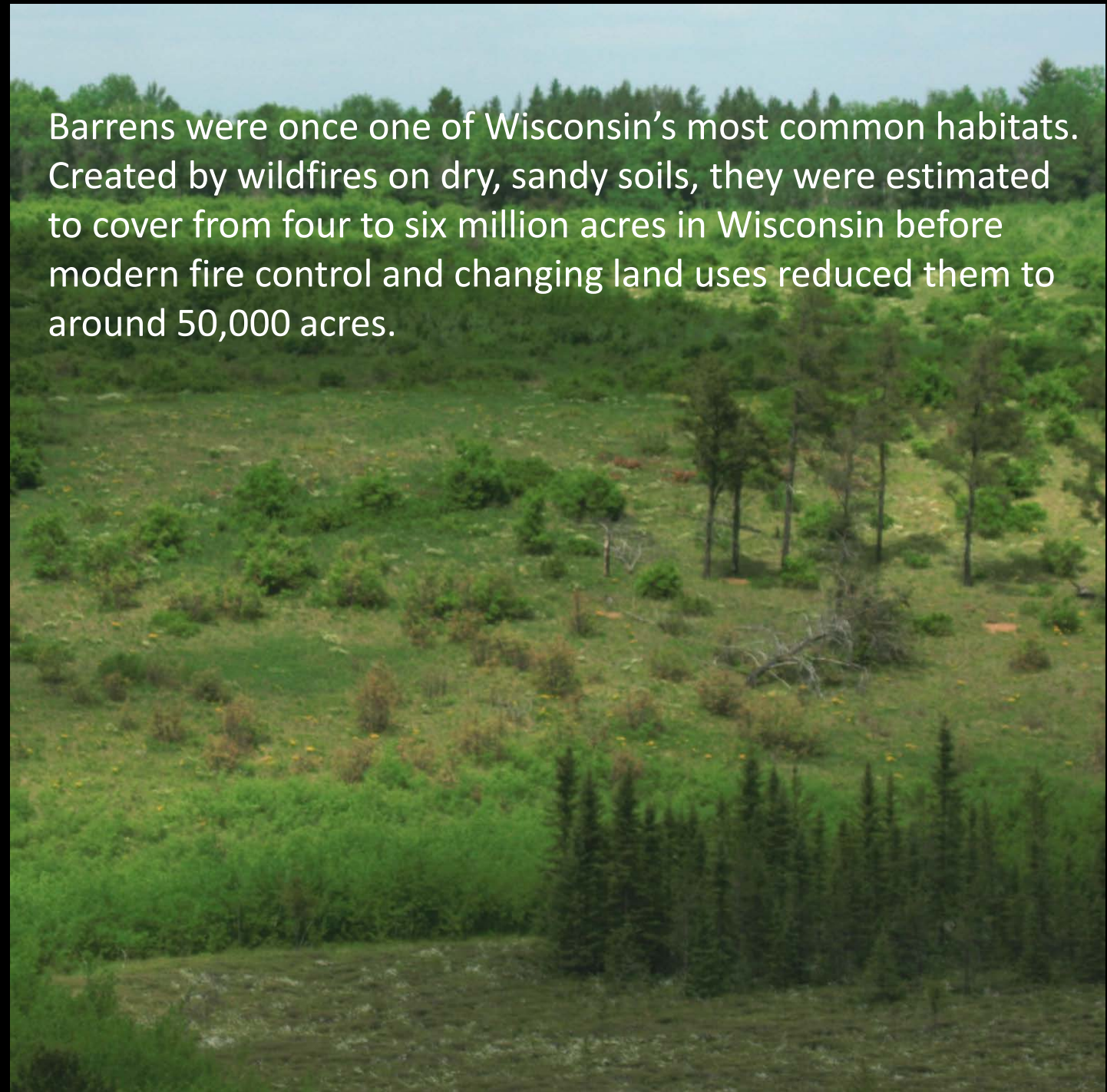






## Wisconsin Barrens

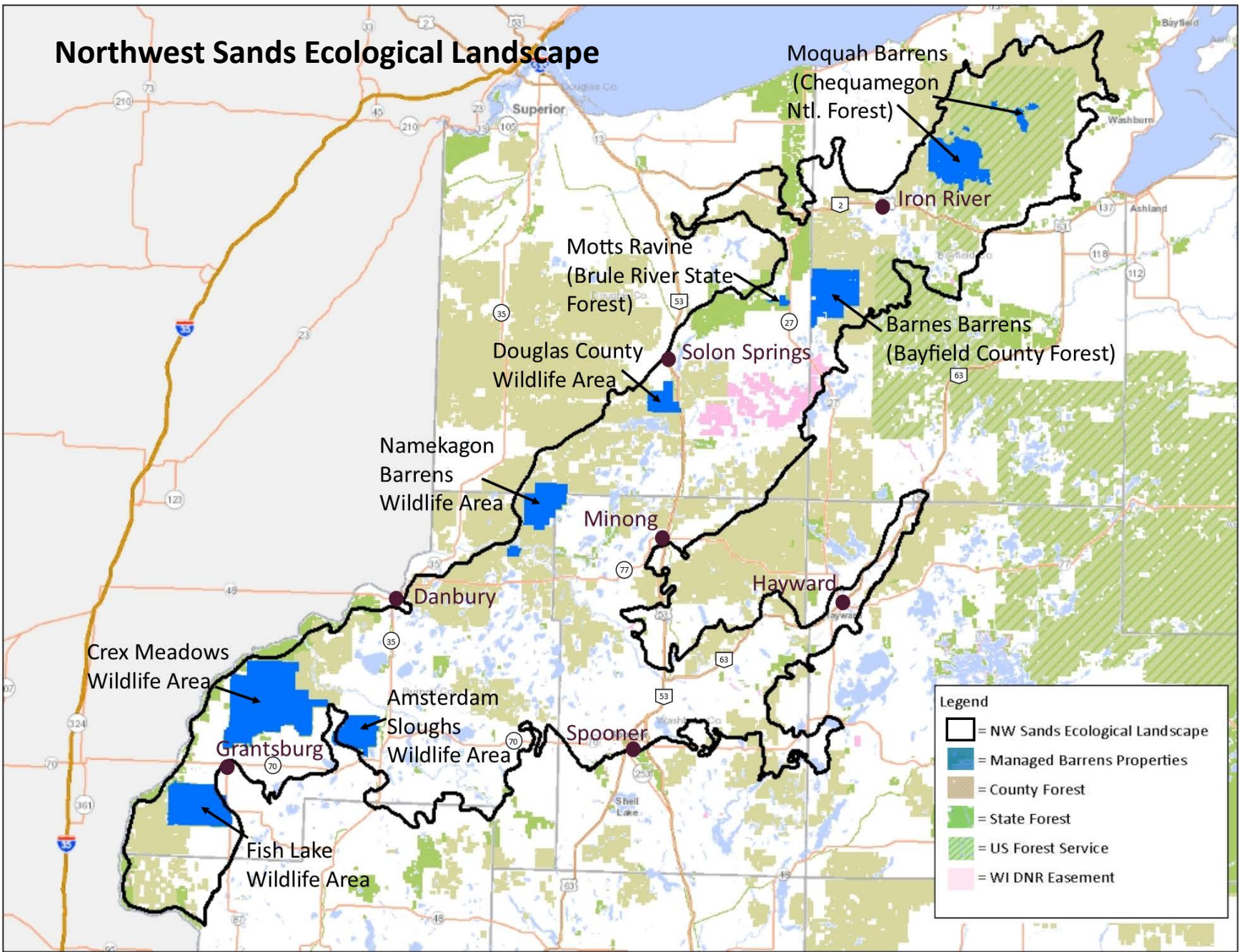
Barrens were once one of Wisconsin's most common habitats. Created by wildfires on dry, sandy soils, they were estimated to cover from four to six million acres in Wisconsin before modern fire control and changing land uses reduced them to around 50,000 acres.





# A Globally Significant Landscape

Pine and oak barrens have been reduced throughout North America and are now considered globally threatened. The sandy region of Northwest Wisconsin is considered the best chance to save barrens and the numerous species of plants and animals that inhabit them. Much of the Northwest sands is in public ownership and can be managed for forest and barrens habitats. These public lands are open for hunting, birding and wildlife viewing.





## Rare Habitat for Rare Wildlife

Some plant and animal species present on barrens are only found on this type of habitat. The long distances between areas managed for barrens has caused many of these species to become isolated from others of their kind, and they are in danger of extinction. This has been recognized as a problem for over 30 years, but a potential solution has only recently been identified.





## Public Lands Managers and Foresters to the Rescue

Potential habitat corridors, which contain fragmented forests of various growth stages, have been identified to reconnect current managed barrens properties. These forests can be managed as rolling barrens, which would be made up of large blocks of forest that are harvested and regenerated in a planned way. These blocks of temporary barrens would provide stepping stones of critical habitat for wildlife to move between the larger managed barrens properties.

Working together foresters, public land managers and wildlife biologists can protect these rare species into the future.



## Rolling Barrens: Large blocks of forest at different growth stages surrounding a core barrens





Learn more about each of these organizations and the barrens of Northwest Wisconsin by visiting these websites:

Friends of Crex: [www.crexmeadows.org](http://www.crexmeadows.org)

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society: [www.wisharptail.org](http://www.wisharptail.org)

Friends of the Bird Sanctuary: [www.fotbs.org](http://www.fotbs.org)

Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area: [www.fnbwa.org](http://www.fnbwa.org)

The St. Croix River Association: [www.stcroixriverassociation.org](http://www.stcroixriverassociation.org)

Northwest Sands Ecological Landscape:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/lf/LF0040nwsands.pdf>

Northwest Sands Corridor Plan: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/documents/nwsandsplan.pdf>

Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan:

[dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/documents/stgrplan.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/documents/stgrplan.pdf)

USFS Moquah Wildlife Area:

[www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/regions/eastern/MoquahPineBarrens/index.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/regions/eastern/MoquahPineBarrens/index.shtml)

*Special thanks to the photographers who provided their work for this book:*

*Cover photo: Dale Bohlke*

*Page 4: Pasqueflower: Kim Wheeler, Bullsake: LouAnn Wheeler*

*Page 5: White-tailed Deer and Black Bear: Steve Russell, 13-lined ground squirrel and Coral Hairstreak: Kim Wheeler*

*Page 6: historic wildfire and prescribed burn: WI-DNR*

*Page 7: Namekagon Barrens South Unit : Kim Wheeler*

*Page 8: Birders: Kim Wheeler*

*Page 10: Sharp-tailed Grouse and Upland Sandpiper : Kathy Java*

*Page 11: Kirtland's Warbler: Nick Anich, Connecticut Warbler: John Menge, Karner Blue Butterflies on Leadplant: Kim Wheeler*

*Page 12-13: rolling barrens photos and Sharp-tailed Grouse: WI-DNR, Summer Barrens: Dale Bohlke*

*Page14: Wood Lily: Mark Nupen*

