Moraine in the western half of the County and in scattered small areas throughout the remainder of the County.

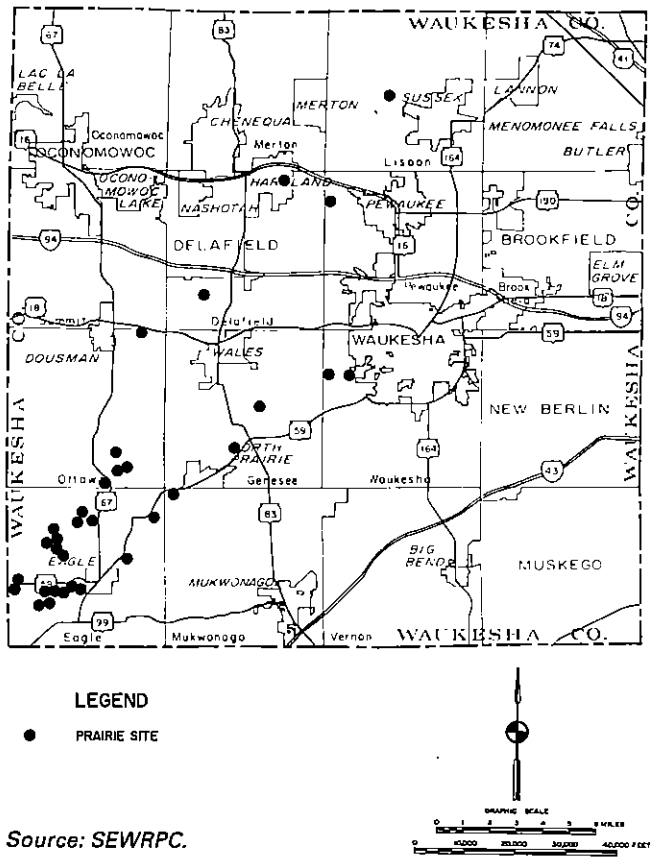
PRAIRIES

Prairies are open, treeless or generally treeless areas dominated by native grasses. Such areas have important ecological and scientific value and consist of four basic types: low prairies, mesic or moderately moist prairies, dry prairies, and oak openings. The low prairies typically occupy ancient glacial lake beds; mesic prairies tend to occur on glacial outwash plains, the glacial till of recessional moraines, and the loessial, windblown depositional soils which cover the dolomitic bedrock; dry prairies occur on well-drained soils, usually on steep hillsides; oak openings are savannahs dominated by dry prairie grasses, with between one and 17 oak trees, usually bur oaks, per acre.

Prairies existing in 1990 are shown on Map 25, with 34 sites covering a combined total of approximately 280 acres, a very small portion of the total land area of the County, located mostly in the southwestern quarter of the County. Very few native prairies are left in Waukesha County, although they once covered large portions of the County. The loss of native prairie and oak openings was primarily a result of agricultural practices, urbanization, and the suppression of the wildfires which had served to restrain the advancing shrubs and trees which shade out prairie plants.

Map 25

PRAIRIES IN WAUKESHA COUNTY



LEGEND

● PRAIRIE SITE

Source: SEWRPC.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Wildlife in Waukesha County includes such upland game and nongame species as rabbit, squirrel, and woodchuck; predators such as fox and raccoon; game birds, including pheasant; and such marsh fur-bearers as muskrat. Other nongame species include such songbirds as the cardinal and wood thrush, and such marsh and shorebirds as the great blue heron and killdeer. In addition, waterfowl are present and deer are found in some areas. The remaining habitat and its wildlife residents provide opportunities for recreational, educational, and scientific activities and constitute an aesthetic asset to the County.

The complete spectrum of wildlife species native to Waukesha County has, along with its habitat, undergone tremendous alterations since the settlement of the County. The change is the direct result of alteration of the environment of the County by European settlers, beginning with the clearing of forests and prairies and the draining of wetlands and ending with extensive agricultural and urban land uses. This process, which began in the early 19th century, is still operative today. Successive cultural uses and attendant management practices, both rural and urban, have been superimposed on the land and have also affected the wildlife and wildlife habitat. In agricultural areas, these cultural management practices include draining land by ditching and tiling and the expanding use of fertilizers and pesticides. In the urban areas, cultural management practices that affect wildlife and their habitat are the use of fertilizers and pesticides, road salting, heavy traffic producing disruptive noise levels and damaging air pollution, and the introduction of domestic animals.

Inventories of wildlife habitat in the Southeastern Wisconsin Region were conducted jointly by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning