

# BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

## Sedges

POST #57—January 19, 2023

With today's post, we have profiled at least a small part of the biodiversity of major groups of plants, animals, fungi, and beyond found in the Sax-Zim Bog! The last group with no representation up to this point are graminoids! Gramminoid is a fancy word that refers to long, slender grass-like plants including grasses, sedges, and rushes. Today, let's take a look at a few of the sedges found within the Sax-Zim Bog!

Sedges are a lovely group of plants. They also just so happen to be one of the more difficult groups of plants to identify! There is a fun mnemonic that helps to identify sedges from other graminoids: Sedges have edges! Grasses and rushes are both typically rounded in cross section, but sedges are triangular in cross section (hence, edges!). An important part of many biomes, sedges can be found in prairies, wetlands, bogs, marshes, fens, uplands, and lowlands. Diversity in the Sax-Zim Bog is quite high and we have documented 54 species of sedge to date. This constitutes over 1/3rd of the diversity of graminoids in the Bog!

Grasses, sedges, and rushes are important forage for herbivores of all kinds, from mammals to butterflies and moths. The roots of sedges and many grasses establish dense networks below the soil that retain moisture and help to stabilize soils especially along streams. Sedges are a flowering plant and their flowers are quite delicate, but not a significant nectar source to pollinators. The flowers of grasses and sedges are worthwhile to see and experience! Often, grass-like flowers are tiny, yellowish to white, but some species put out purplish and reddish flowers.

Below are photos and information on a few species of sedge found in the Sax-Zim Bog, which showcase the wide diversity of seed head shapes! Seed head shape and seeds are actually one of the best ways to identify sedges. However, not all sedges put out seeds every year, nor do those seeds stay on the plant for very long during the summer! It takes a patient botanist to get good at identifying these cool plants.

More information and identification of our featured sedges can be found in the photos below!

(Photos by Head Naturalist Clinton)



Meager Sedge (*Carex exilis*) is a sedge that reaches its western edge of distribution in Minnesota. This species is also listed as a species of Special Concern in the state of Minnesota due to its love of open peatlands and fens, which are declining across the landscape. Meager Sedge would be considered a locally common species because if you are in the right habitat, you are surely to find lots of this slender sedge!



Graceful Sedge (*Carex gracillima*) is a woodland species of sedge that is part of a group of three very similar sedges. To identify Graceful Sedge from Weak Sedge and Drooping Wood Sedge you have to look very closely at the seed heads and often individual seeds! Graceful Sedge is really a treat to see when you are out and about in the woods.



Fox Sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*) gets its name from the shape of its seed head! The dense and fluffy looking seed heads look similar to a fox tail. A common species, you can find Fox Sedge along the edges of most wet areas in our state.



Tall Bog Sedge (*Carex magellanica*) is an interesting sedge to be sure. Not only does it have a few different common names (like Poor Sedge, Boreal Bog Sedge, and Tall Bog Sedge) but it has a crazy distribution. While it prefers to grow in bogs or conifer swamps, you can find this species very far north (Canada, Alaska, Scandinavia, etc) and also very far south (southern South America)!



Great Bladder Sedge (*Carex intumescens*) is maybe one of the more obvious plant species on the landscape that you may or may not have noticed before! The large seeds look inflated (hence the name bladder), but are not filled with air. Another quite common species, you can find Great Bladder Sedge in a wide variety of habitats across the state (except for the SW corner!).